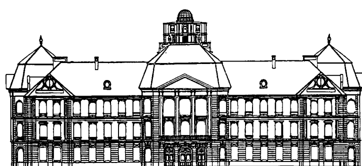
EGER JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES

VOLUME VI.

2000

EDITOR: LEHEL VADON



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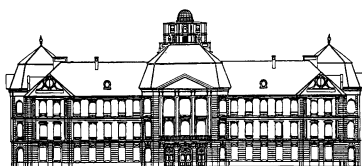

DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES
ESZTERHÁZY KÁROLY COLLEGE
EGER

ISSN 1219–1027

A kiadásért felelős:
az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola rektora
Megjelent az EKF Líceum Kiadó műszaki gondozásában
Kiadóvezető: Kis-Tóth Lajos
Műszaki szerkesztő: Nagy Sándorné
Megjelent: 2000
Példányszám: 100
Készült:

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CONTRIBUTORS

Enikő Bollobás, Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary

László Dányi, Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary

Jason M. Dew, Professor at the Department of English Studies, Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia, USA

Judit Ágnes Kádár, Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary

Éva Miklódy, Assistant Professor at the Department of North American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary

Szilvia Nagy, PhD Student at the Department of American Studies, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Hans-Wolfgang Schaller, Professor at the Department of American Studies, University of Erfurt, Germany

András Tarnóc, Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary

Tibor Tóth, Associate Professor at the Department of British Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary

Lehel Vadon, Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Department of American Studies at Eszterházy Károly College is pleased to present Volume VI of the Eger Journal of American Studies.

The *Eger Journal of American Studies* is the first scholarly journal published in Hungary devoted solely to the publication of articles investigating and exploring various aspects of American Culture. We intend to cover all major and minor areas of interest ranging from American literature, history, and society to language, popular culture, bibliography etc.

The journal welcomes original articles, essays, and book reviews in English by scholars in Hungary and abroad.

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ENIKŐ BOLLOBÁS

"MY SON IS A MAGYAR": IDEAS OF FIRSTNESS AND ORIGIN IN CHARLES OLSON'S POEMS

Charles Olson's "On first Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes" is a poem that deals with several large themes: doing, knowing, and staying in process. Through the figure of Juan de la Cosa, cartographer and early explorer of the West Indies, captain of the *Niña* in 1493 and Columbus' "Chief Chart Maker," the author problematizes the nature of perception and in particular seeing, as well as the possibility of firstness and origin.

This is how the poem begins:

> Behaim–and nothing
> insula Azores to
> Cipangu (Candyn
> somewhere also there were spices
>
> and yes, in the Atlantic,
> one floating island: de
> Sant
>   brand
>   an
>
> 1
> St Malo, however.
> Or Biscay. Or Bristol.
> Fishermen, had,
> for how long,
> talked:

Heavy sea,
snow, hail. At 8
AM a tide rip. Sounded.
Had 20 fath. decreased from that to
15, 10. Wore ship.

(They knew
Cap Raz

(As men, my town, my two towns
talk, talked of Gades, talk
of Cash's

drew, on a table, in spelt,
with a finger, in beer, a
portulans

But before La Cosa, nobody
could have
a mappemunde

The poem is from the first book of *Maximus*, written in early May 1953 at Black Mountain College. We have, among the concrete details of the various instances registered in the poem, the abundance of fish (cod), the sounding of St. George's Bank for fish, Columbus' insistence on the pear shape of the earth (that of a woman, with nipples), the stormy ocean, the worms literally eating up the ship, ships and fishermen going down the Atlantic, and finally the Gloucester ceremony of July or August when they remember, by throwing flowers into the outgoing tide, those fishermen lost at sea. George Butterick's *Guide to **The Maximus Poems*** is helpful, as ever, in identifying the facts here: la Cosa's *mappemunde*, map of the world, the first to include the New World; seaports from which Breton, Basque, English fishermen sailed to North America in the 15th and 16th centuries; Nathaniel Bowditch's journal; the promontory of Cap Raz in southeastern Newfoundland as referred to in Hakluyt's map of 1587; the abstraction involved in mapmaking concretized here in the form of the *portulans* or *periplus*, as well as spelt; the Phoenician Herakles as prototype of Odysseus; Newfoundland as the Land of the Cod-Fish.

1. Knowing

Knowing is at least threefold here, happening equally by measure, by myth, and by word. In each case knowing is rooted in act and experience—that "doing" which Olson considered a primary form of living. "You see," he wrote to Vincent Ferrini, "I take it there are only two forms of mind about how it is human beings live on earth. They either do, or they build nine chains to the moon" (*Maximus to Gloucester* 16). In other poems this doing will reappear as the "onslaught" ("The chain of memory is resurrection ...") that narrows the "distances" ("The Distances"), while also accounting for "the brilliance of the going on" ("An Ode on Nativity").

Knowing by measure. This is the form of knowledge rooted in act and experience and offered by the explorers and navigators that Olson so particularly evokes in the Juan de la Cosa poem. Deeply interested in all kinds of beginnings, he cites various sailors traversing oceans: in addition to la Cosa, we have the 4th century, B. C., Greek explorer Pytheas, the Portugese Cortereal brothers, Giovanni Verrazano, John Cabot, Christopher Columbus, John Lloyd, and all the fishermen. Indeed, for Olson fishermen were the true explorers of the Atlantic coast, having been there centuries before the explorers sent by European courts. The Breton fishermen sailing from St. Malo, the Basque fishermen departing from Biscay, the English fishermen sent by Bristol merchants, and all the others heading towards such well-known fisheries as Sable Island, Cash's Ledge, or George's are different in one very significant sense from the explorers on royal missions: they were after the fish and not power, after the fisheries and not the land. They did not set sail in order to colonize new continents and exploit new lands for profit, and their earning was commensurate with their fishing enterprise.

Olson's interest in beginnings is matched only by his interest in narratives of beginnings. This "double vision" projecting a "'return' to nature, the origin, and the thing," on the one hand, and "a departure in and for a new *discourse about* nature, origin, and thing" [*italics in the original*], on the other, is, Philip Kuberski claims, a persistent quality in American thought, ranging from the Puritans through Emerson and Whitman to Pound and Olson (175). Thus, the poem mentions several written documents in which travelers narrated their adeventures: the

journal of Nathaniel Bowditch, the globe of Behaim, the *mappemunde* of Juan de la Cosa, the map of Richard Hakluyt, Hieronymus Verrazano, Maggiolo; the letters and diaries of Columbus; as well as the spelt onto which fishermen drew their maps while drinking in the taverns. What is common in these records is their primary interest in the sea as opposed to land: their mission was to traverse the seas and give true record of how they did it. Their vision was directed toward the oceans, of which they were part. So Olson's insistence on this kind of seeing, knowing by measure, and the textualization of experience onto journals, maps, portulans, etc., might be read as one version of what Tadeusz Sławek describes as "Phoenician eye-view" (taking its cue from a two-line poem in *Maximus*, where Olson assigns this capacity to Gloucester painter Fitz Hugh Lane): seeing (vs. recognizing), belonging, while looking with passion, to the world seen. "The Phoenician eye," Sławek explains, "looks at the world and SEES it (for the first time) rather than merely recognizes it (works along a pattern of reconstructive activity which only re-collects things somehow well known even before the act of looking)" (72). "It is a most awkward eye whose power is almost surreal: it looks outside and maps the world [...] even before the very thought of the world being settled and explored occurs" (73). This view is not limited by the land, not even by the bottom of the ocean, for that is unfathomable. What we have here, then, is an early conceptualization of the abyss, or endlessness, for which Olson coined the word "landlessness" in his journals. Landlessness here refers to that condition of the sailor where no land is seen on the horizon and no bottom can be fathomed below. It suggests not only a longing to go to sea and encounter such conditions, but also a kind of limitlessness of form and idea concomitant to sea voyages. This is, in Sławek's words, the "unfathomable bottom towards which the thought must reach only to discover its always progressing erosion and collapse" (25).

Knowing by myth. Mythic narratives of Hercules and Odysseus offer early models of navigation. Odysseus, instructed by Calypso to keep the Big Dipper on his left hand, represents as legitimate and useful a source of knowledge as experience informing maps and portulans. In fact, the best maps and records seem to contain mythic details too. Martin Behaim's Nurenberg globe, for instance, was showing various legendary islands, such as St. Brendan's. St. Brendan

the Navigator identified various monsters and mermaids on what he called Judas-land, probably around the British Isles. Accounts, John Lloyd's among them, of the legendary island of Brasylle off the coast of Ireland were common in the 15th and 16th centuries. The popular ballad of the *Titanic* Olson refers to—"Ladies & / to the bottom of the, / husbands, & wives"—seems also to belong to mythic knowing.

Knowing by word. Attention to words is a legitimate source of knowledge not only for poets, but for sailors and fishermen too. For example, one of the first names given to the American Atlantic coast was the Basque word for cod, *bacalhaos*; *Tierra de bacalaos*, the land of codfish, was the Spanish term for Newfoundland used on early maps (such as Verrazano's); *Norte*, in Mexican Spanish, has the particular meaning of strong north wind; "Pytheus' sludge" refers to that mixture of sea, land, and air surrounding the British Isles, described by Pytheas, which cannot be crossed by sailors. Even misspellings are helpful: although the term *Terra nova sive Limo Lue* means, in the orthography of the times, "Newfoundland or the Land of Cod-fish," it seems derivable from Latin *limus*, mud, as well, which, given the mud banks around the area, is also an apt expression. Similar to this replacement of "Mud Bank" for "Cod-Fish" in *Limo Lue* is the substitution of the name *Bertomez* for *Bretones*: Olson is ready with the conclusion that the Atlantic coast was visited by some Spanish or Portugese explorer of that name, as opposed to what mappemundes indicate: that sailors from Brittany regularly reached its shores.

2. Origin **and** process; direct experience **and** experience narrated

The poem makes a complex claim about origins, problematizing instances of firstness by asserting and questioning its possibility within one gesture. In this sense it seems to fit into that "project of American poetry" which Joseph Riddel describes as "a myth of origins that puts the myth of origins in question" (358).

When firstness is a possibility. Olson is known for his scholarly interest in cultural morphology, which might help explain the origins of certain cultures within certain spaces. Hence his familiarity with the work of Leo Frobenius and Carl Sauer, who taught him that "only certain places had been conducive to the beginnings of culture" and

that certain coincidences of place, environment, and man were necessary for a culture to begin (see George Hutchinson 83ff).This means that in cultural morphology he might have found reassurance to the possibility of firstness and origin.

In this poem his interest in beginnings figures in the insistence on *seeing* vs. *recognizing*, on one time events vs. repetitive events. Indeed, Olson registers what la Cosa sees and not what he might recognize from existing narratives (of scenes of which he had not been part). Since he did not know he landed in the "New World," he did not recognize a cultural concept, but saw waters of cod and lands surrounded by deep mud banks to be sounded. Using his own eyes only (and not the abstraction of aerial maps), he remained part of the picture, whose primary function was to capture the viewer in a new circumstance. This implies that he still saw the scene, to apply a current New Americanist distinction, not as "other" but simply in terms of "difference," granting an identity of its own to the land and the people. While "otherness" is part of an imperial monologue, "difference," Myra Jehlen points out, is part of a two-sided exchange: it "denies the centrality of any point of view and the all-encompassingness of any horizon" and is thus "the anticolonial response to the imperial history of otherness" (42–43).

In addition, la Cosa drew his map, the first one to show the "New World," based on his own tactile experience (when he felt his way, as if with his fingers). These two firsts involved here refer to experience and text, both valorized for their particularity and contingency, their being unlike anything else preceding it. Properly understood, all experience is a first if it is lived in its contingency and relieved of having to fit into pre-existing patterns of abstraction, generalization, comparison, or metaphorization. What with hindsight we know as a first was only a once event at the time it happened. Epiphany comes about from the recognition of particularity and singularity, where the imprint of precedence does not determine the "meaning" of the event, where experience remains act without claims on knowledge. In other words, Olson tries the impossible: he allows la Cosa to see what one does not know. To present what is in front of the senses, but in such a way that what he knows should not interfere with what he sees. Olson tries to get out of the trap posed by cultural and social paradigms by picking a scene where somebody sees things for the first time, sees

them as they are, and not as elements of some cultural and historical knowledge.

When firstness is folded in process and endlessness, direct experience is collapsed into narrative and cultural paradigm: no originary event at the unfathomable bottom of process, no originary experience at the unfathomable bottom of discourse. La Cosa's landing cannot be considered as an absolute first: the explorers were ahead of the colonizers; the Portugese were ahead of Cabot; the fishermen were ahead of the colonizers; Odysseus was ahead of the fishermen; Hercules was ahead of Odysseus; Pytheas was ahead of St. Brendan (even in seeing mermaids, monsters, and other creatures). In each case, the firstness of the encounter is both asserted and repeatedly withdrawn by references of the previous firsts. A scene of origin as presence or preexistent referent being no longer possible, each "discovery" is preceded by earlier discoveries. Aware of the fact that the desire of returning to origins was itself informed by myth, Olson does not wish to restore some original condition in history; instead, he seems fascinated by simply imagining—as a mental exercise—such situations that are ripped of conceptualization, rationalization, or abstraction. The Juan de la Cosa poem is, more than anything else, a rehearsal of perceiving supposedly first events with a "Phoenician eye": as once contingencies that are still parts of processes. What is claimed to be more important than firstness and originality, then, is process and staying in process. For it is through process that the energy of particularity and contingency can be retained. This whole line of discoveries, explorations, fishing, and navigation is offering interconnected instances of knowing, doing, seeing—always as if for the first time. Olson ties into these narratives without making metaphors or symbols out of them; rather, he stays in process by continuing the stories, but without trying to open up metaphysical depth beneath. This is a contiguous relationship, where the poet is in line with la Cosa, Columbus, Bowditch, Hakluyt, or Homer. This is a feedback situation, an act of passing on and responding to, without loss of energy, the concrete narratives. The voyagers—from the 15th and 19th century alike—the fish, the worms are all real, not metaphorical, they do not refer to something beyond themselves, but are simply the objects that demanded the poem—just

like, in Ralph Maud's superb reading of "The Kingfishers," "the birds demanded the poem" (27).

Olson's alternative to America's beginning, then, is not another definitive "discovery" preceding the supposedly "original" act, but a whole series of discoveries whose existence simply suspends the very idea of origin. As such, it rehearses some new knowledge about origin being not only an empty concept, but one that is repeatedly being emptied out. Since every "discovery" was preceded by previous discoveries, origin is always already preceded by another origin: history is a Moebius strip, an empty structure always returning onto itself. "A man within himself upon an empty ground," as he says in the poem with this title ("The Moebius Strip").

Not only does Olson fold origin into process, but also collapses direct experience into the narrative and cultural paradigm of this experience. Indeed, as much as he valorizes direct experience, he recognizes, in each instance, the textual nature of this experience. His heroes are necessarily those who have been recorded in history: mapmakers, chart makers, and authors of journals and letters. Even the fishermen, who preceded the colonizers, have left *portulans* and *periploi* behind, and are remembered in rituals and city records. Ultimately all forms of knowing—by measure, myth, and word—are semiotic and/or textual. In addition, the poem gains its interest from the tension between a context-based reading and its decontextualized focus on the particularities of la Cosa's perceptions. We who live four centuries after la Cosa do know the cultural significance of his landing: his seeing the shore for the first time is not innocent because neither la Cosa, nor Olson, looks with the eyes only, but through cultural concepts that are just being constructed. La Cosa's eyes are, so to speak, making their cultural objects right on the spot. In portraying the experiencing of experience, neither the captain nor the poet can avoid using language and cognitive constructs that were evolving as la Cosa arrived on this scene of a supposedly first encounter.

3. Apocatastasis as process and textuality.

Olson's fascination with the possibility or impossibility of restoring some original condition figures in another poem too, one that has

particular relevance for Hungarian readers: "The chain of memory is resurrection." It is here that he celebrates *apocatastasis* not as a return to origins but as process and textuality, the interconnectedness of textuality, or the processional textuality of memory and imagination. This is "the chain of memory" that leads him back to his supposedly Hungarian background.

> All that has been
> suddenly is: time
> is the face
> of recognition, Rhoda Straw; or my son
> is a Magyar. The luminousness
> of my daughter
> to her mother
> by a stream:
> apocatastasis
> how it occurs, that in this instant I seek to speak
> as though the species were a weed-seed a grass a barley corn
> in the cup of my palm. And I was trying
> to hear what it said, I was putting my heart down
> to catch the pain
> Resurrection
> is. It is the avowal. It is the admission. The renewal
> is the restoration: the man in the dark with the animal
> fat lamp
> is my father. Or my grandfather. [...]

The poem attempts to tie into the process of remembering, to recreate the momentum of the soul's "onslaught," the human capacity for *apocatastasis*, the soul's attack against time and death. This staying in process is achieved by accepting the "landlessness" in life, the abyss created by endless generations, and makes for an emotional tension ("putting my heart down / to catch the pain") not easy to solve. Since *the* originary condition is impossible to reach, *an* originary condition can be approached by staying in process: in this case remembering and imagining. It seems that the poet's Hungarian roots, imagined or otherwise, are also part of this *apocatastasis*. Even though Olson could not even have known that in Hungarian the words

onslaught [*támadás*] and *resurrection* [*feltámadás*] have the same root, what he suggests is no less than the overcoming of death via staying in process. “The renewal / is the restoration.”

What exactly are these Hungarian roots? In a letter to Robert Creeley dated May 27, 1950 he refers to the family name of his grandmother, Lybeck (Lübeck), as being Hungarian (*Correspondence* 1: 51). This supposedly exotic identification appears also in the Berkeley reading: “That’s because I am a Hungarian” (*Mutologos* 1: 131). On the same page with this reference in volume one of the *Olson-Creeley Correspondence* he cites the Hungarian mathematician Farkas Bolyai and his famous metaphor of the violet-like coincidence of new thoughts:

> It is here again c. 1825 Bolyai Farkas, to Bolyai Janos:
> “Son, when men are needed they spring up, on all
> sides, like violets, come the season.” (51)

The original quote reads: “many things have an epoch, in which they are found at the same time in several places, just as the violets appear on every side in spring” (see the notes to *Olson-Creeley Correspondence* 1:164). He refers to this remark in other poems as well, among them “The Story of an Olson, and Bad Thing” and “Apollonius of Tyana.”

John Smith is another “Hungarian connection,” and Olson was aware of this (see his essay “Captain John Smith”). John Smith had been in the service of the Hungarian Zsigmond [Sigismund] Báthori (1572–1613), prince of Transylvania, and fought the Turks in the tragic battle of Mezőkeresztes in 1596, where he nearly died. Captured, he escaped—with the help of the Turkish princess, Charatza Tragabigzanda—from Constantinople in 1603, went on to Russia and returned to England in 1604. Here he joined the group of English colonists setting sail in December 1606, to arrive first at Chesapeake Bay (April 1607) and then to what was to become Jamestown Colony, May 14. The journals of John Smith give ample description of both his adventures in Transylvania and of the young Byzantine princess, Charatza Tragabigzanda, Smith’s benefactor for whom he named Cape Ann. This Tragabigzanda then appears in Olson as the “Turkish

princess," who gave her name to a pageant in which young Charles was to participate in Gloucester ("Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 11").

For Olson Captain John Smith meant several things: a traveler, mapmaker and journalist (journal-writer), he created modern versions of the *periplus* or *portulans* by valorizing the particular and showing scrupulous attention to detail; he was a man of action, who acted upon his attention, curiosity, and passion. What seems significant for Olson is that John Smith was a figure of cultural dislocation, in possession of the advantage, or capacity, of changing perspectives and thereby convey history as an instance of wonder, while also producing wonder. Olson took his "Hungarian roots" as emblematic of this dislocation and paradigm change, as well as some condition preceding logocentrism and the written word. As Robert Creeley notes in his preface to the Hungarian edition of Olson's poems:

> [...] it is the implicit echoes of "Hungarian" itself, as a language and movement of people, which must have pleased him. It reaches beyond the enclosure of the Indo-European to a world one has only as words spoken, which last would have been his delight. (13)

4. István Budai Parmenius' account.

If, following the lead of these "implicit echoes" of Hungarianness, Olson had dug a little further into the writings of European explorers, he might have found another person of this same period of Transatlantic Renaissance, one more Hungarian capable of cultural dislocation: István Budai Parmenius, or Stephanus Budaeus. Born in Buda in the second part of the 16th century, Parmenius was a student in various cities in Europe, Heidelberg mostly, but traveling as far as Elizabethan England. In Oxford he studied in Christ Church College, and was the roommate and friend of Richard Hakluyt. Through Hakluyt he met Humphrey Gilbert, who was just getting ready to make his second voyage to North America. Parmenius wrote a poem of praise, in Latin, to Gilbert, which was published in 1582. Gilbert then took the Hungarian poet along for his third voyage starting in 1583, in order to secure a poet to chronicle their adventures. The expedition contained four ships, out of which three landed, 50 days later, in Newfoundland's Saint John's Harbor. Parmenius sent a long letter back home from here, with one of the ships, describing to his

friend Hakluyt the land they had reached. As the two ships turned south, they got into a storm and were shipwrecked in August 1583, with Parmenius among those lost to the sea. Only one of the four ships, that of Captain Edward Hayes, returned home to England.

In his letter written on Newfoundland, Parmenius first describes Penguin Islands, where they saw no penguins and did not land. Then he goes on to writing about the sick on the ship, then about Newfoundland itself. He frankly admits being unable to discuss local customs, since he has only seen the wilderness. He is especially amazed at the abundance of fish, all sorts. Trees are so many that it is just about impossible to move around or see anything. Vegetation is exuberant, he says; there are all sorts of corn, rye, nuts, and berries (blackberries and strawberries), all tasteful and enjoyable. He has not met any local inhabitants, neither can he imagine what varieties of metal the mountains may hide. He notes the extremities of weather: in August it is so hot that the sun scorches their scraps of fish, but snow and ice are still common in May, he hears. The air is always clear above the ground, but always foggy above the sea. Parmenius closes his letter with another paragraph on the wonderful fishing opportunities along the 40 mile Bank where the bottom of the sea can be still sounded.

> Now I ought to tell you about the customs, territories and inhabitants: and yet what am I to say, my dear Hakluyt, when I see nothing but desolation? There are inexhaustible supplies of fish, so that those who travel here do good business. Scarcely has the hook touched the bottom before it is loaded with some magnificent catch. The whole terrain is hilly and forested: the trees are for the most part pine. Some of these are growing old and others are just coming to maturity, but the majority have fallen with age, thus obstructing a good view of the land and the passage of travelers, so that no advance can be made anywhere. (Quinn 171)

The primary significance of Stephen Parmenius' letter of 1583 lies in its existence: it is the first document written by a Hungarian from and about America. Otherwise it seems to represent all those forms—widely prevalent in the 15th–17th centuries—of knowing and doing from which Olson distances himself, his fishermen, and explorers. First, Parmenius looks in order to recognize. For example, he approaches the Penguin Island with the expectation of seeing penguins

there, which preconception prevents him from learning anything about the island: "It is an Ilande which your men call Penguin, because of the multitude of birdes of the same name. Yet wee neither sawe any birdes, nor drewe neere to the lande" (Quinn 174). Second, he watches the scene from a safe distance and does not allow himself to be part of it. For example, he does not land on Penguin Island and does not wish to venture into the woods (the "wildenesse"), and thereby does not meet the inhabitants of the land. "Whether there bee any people in this Countrey I not know, neither have I seene any to witnesse it" (175). Third, he sees in terms of general categories, not concrete details. When describing the flora and fauna of Newfoundland, he merely speaks about fish, trees, pines, and berries, but without going into specifics. Fourth, he perceives with an eye for use and profit, hoping the land "may easelie bee framed for the use of man" and "mettals lye under the hilles" (175). Finally, he recognizes that their journey must be "profitable to the intentions" of the Patron (176), and rejoices over how the "Admirall tooke possession of the Country, for himselfe and the kingdome of England: having made and published certain Lawes, concerning religion, and obedience to the Queene of England" (175). He sees himself as the advance guard of colonization and exploitation.

5. Olson/la Cosa vs. Parmenius

Read next to Stephen Parmenius' letter, the features of Charles Olson's "On first Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes" I discussed earlier seem all the more prevalent. Parmenius writes out of the colonizer's perspective, with a sense of European centrality; representing the financial and political interests behind the explorations; as such he writes conquest literature. What he sees is constantly fitted into the paradigms of what he knows; his seeing takes place in general categories rather than concrete details. At the same time he withdraws himself from the scene, making an "other" of the object of his vision.

Olson's la Cosa is an explorer trying to know by measure, myth, and word. He tries to see without recognizing, to understand scenes that might not fit his cultural paradigms. When Olson "first" looks out through Juan de la Cosa's eyes, he sees a whole series, a whole process, of first and once events—or more properly, their records—

and is thereby claiming and at the same time suspending the very idea of firstness and originality. Finally, looking at a scene of which he too is part, he captures “difference”: his discovery is geared at his own self (in a new environment) as much as the “New World” itself.

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JASON M. DEW

COLD WAR REFLECTIONS IN TRAVELS WITH CHARLEY: STEINBECK'S NEW AMERICANIST EVALUATION OF INTRA-IMPERIALIST AMERICA

When Steinbeck removes unabashedly the shield of artist in *Travels with Charley* (1962) and, instead, adopts the role of social investigator by conspicuously casting himself as the main character in a national work-in-progress, the champion of the down-and-out demonstrates his uninhibited passion for coming to terms with what was then America's predominant ideological infection. By this, I refer to the cultural ailment afflicting America at the time of the travelogue's composition otherwise known as Cold War intra-imperialism. This is my term to describe the ideological hegemonies America foisted upon itself as a means to establish a national identity theoretically couched in democratic ideals yet mirroring to significant degrees the very ideologies (Communist Russia's) with which it wished to be contrasted: consensus thinking and the consequent social and/or political intimidation of anybody who did not submit readily to what was politically sanctioned as "right." In a phrase, intra-imperialism was America's answer to the crisis in legitimation—a crisis that can be described as America's general lack of purpose, meaning, identity, and direction, in this context, immediately following the demise of a very tangible threat (Nazi Germany) unlike the unquestionably more contrived threat of the Russians following World War II. Indeed, America struggled to justify its own existence post-Hitler. The collective American identity during the Cold War was anything but articulate, leaving one half of the new world dichotomy

floundering for self-definition. Steinbeck's re-acquaintance with his country was quick to yield this fact.

Curiously for a man who thought little of literary critics, Steinbeck's journey takes on a critical dimension not unlike that upheld by the New Americanists, "a group of critics who have attempted to elucidate the conditioning of American criticism by the dictates of the Cold War political climate and to suggest potential rereadings of the American literary tradition that might help to surmount that conditioning" (Booker 15). Text and country, in this light, assume a similar quality as if Steinbeck as a critic were evaluating America as a text. In fact, reconciling the crisis in legitimation and the resulting negative freedom, which is a term used by the New Americanists to describe individualism void of civic or social responsibility that came as a result of America's frenetic quest to contrast itself against the backdrop of alleged Russian "groupness," proves to be a common aim for Steinbeck and the New Americanists. The location of the zenith of the crisis in legitimation during the Cold War by the New Americanists in the early 1960s and Steinbeck's own attempt to negotiate that same crisis during the same time emerges as an irony that only serves to resurrect a reputation that had itself supposedly reached its zenith with the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

To be sure, Donald E. Pease, a leading figure among the New Americanists, notes that the crisis in legitimation—the very same crisis that Steinbeck encounters repeatedly throughout his odyssey across the states—was more of an issue to "post-World War II American culture than to pre-Civil War America" (IX).[1] Others in the New Americanist camp, including Jonathan Arac, Amy Kaplan,

[1] See F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941). Matthiessen located the crisis in legitimation just before the Civil War when both the North and the South was informing their opposing vantage points with the Revolutionary Mythos—a distinctly American idea that can be traced to the Puritans who rejected the Anglican church (the tyrant) in order to pursue their own spiritual path (the individual initiative). Matthiessen, in essence, named the purveyors of the American Renaissance—Melville, Poe, Whitman, Thoreau, Emerson—for their attempt in writing to re-locate a visionary compact or general will that would remind all Americans of a common genealogy, thereby extinguishing the crisis in legitimation that had balkanized the United States.

Sacvan Bercovitch, and Walter Benn Michaels, concur that the dilemma of American identity remained unresolved throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century and subsequently reached an all-time intensity during a period in American history when America needed desperately to make itself distinct from Communist Russia. The problem that the New Americanists identify from this social phenomenon is that everything from the real to the unreal was perceived using a restrictive model of understanding that lauded the virtue of the individual against the evils of totalitarianism. There were strict rules to apply to any analysis, and if anything fell beyond the parameters of the "us"/"them" analytical paradigm, then the item in question was deemed lesser in overall value and summarily dismissed.

The cognitive template, collectively speaking, was cemented into the mind of the so-called "true" American by an army of McCarthyists who acted as self-proclaimed thought police for a nation, so it was thought, that was under a constant threat by the Reds. The New Americanists take issue with the fact that this manner of perception is exclusive and simplistic. Basically, the "us"/"them" mentality lends itself to gross generalities and, as such, is unable to provoke deeper insight. Where the New Americanists and Steinbeck intersect is precisely in their repudiation of what is expected as legitimate analysis and consequent celebration of what is garnered either empirically or outside the realm of critical consensus. Like the New Americanists who strive toward criticisms unaffected by the strictures of intra-imperialistic thought, Steinbeck combats the dangers of foisted truth. Steinbeck's *Travels* anticipates a movement critical of the pitfalls of binary logic foregrounded if not exacerbated by the distinctly Cold War crisis in legitimation, thereby making a man once relegated to the artistic attic by literary critics still very much a part of America's reformist vanguard.

Not surprisingly, Steinbeck's non-teleological or "is" thinking remains in *Travels* an integral facet to both his art and, perhaps more importantly, his message. Slicing through the conventions of what *should* be according to the intra-imperialistic hegemony and getting to what actually *is* enables Steinbeck to promote, as he deceptively does, the notion of "acceptance-understanding." This understandably idealistic mindset circumvents what Joseph Fontenrose calls "blame

thinking" (180), meaning, in the context of Cold War trends, that Steinbeck gathers and presents the details of his journey in a critical stance removed from intra-imperialistic expectation hoping that his audience can accept and understand truths unclouded by the predominant ideological hegemony. The intended nature of his message deserves mention because it is characteristically removed from teleologies—namely that teleology informed by intra-imperialism—that would restrict alternative analyses from the established norm. The similarity between Steinbeck and the New Americanists is evident. Although Steinbeck's deviance is one that had been practiced since his salad days with friend and mentor Ed Ricketts, "acceptance-understanding" via non-teleological thinking especially equips Steinbeck on his mission to get at the naked, unhindered core of the American identity.

Described as a "lost soul looking for a home among the shifting tide pools of American culture" (Champney, "Search" 372), Steinbeck sets out to accomplish, in general, a single task. Discovering that he "did not know my own country," the aging Argonaut outfitted a pick-up truck aptly named Rocinante after Don Quixote's horse with "a little house built like the cabin of a small boat" (*TWC* 5–6) and, with canine co-pilot Charley in company, traversed by-ways and highways in pursuit of a new familiarity with his country and its people. When Steinbeck is about to embark on his expedition, he notes a telling detail that speaks to the effects of an easy-going lifestyle on a people gone too complacent and too lax for their own good:

> I saw in their eyes something I was to see over and over in every part of the nation—a burning desire to go, to move, to get under way, anyplace, away from Here. They spoke quietly of how they wanted to go someday, to move about, free and unanchored, not toward something but away from something. I saw this look and heard this yearning everywhere in every state I visited. Nearly every American hungers to move. (*TWC* 10)

Steinbeck's observation should not be taken in passing. The deeper complexities of this desire to go beg an explanation of a culture that would foster such a response to begin with. This is to suggest that the "is" observation Steinbeck makes largely relates to the anxiety and general insecurity exacerbated by Cold War intra-imperialism and, as

such, sheds light on the real state of American society even before Steinbeck fires up Rocinante's engine.

What the idea of Steinbeck's trek whets for his curious onlookers is an appetite to leave, to pick up and go in search of better things and better lives.[2] One does not have to scratch the surface too deeply in order to ascertain the likely source of this restlessness. Americans by the early 1960s had long graduated from the obnoxiously apparent anti-Communist national pedagogy and had come of age into an environment where the lessons learned had assimilated into the culture and become the norm. Stephen J. Whitfield, in fact, notes that "[t]he culture of the Cold War [circa 1960] decomposed when the moral distinction between East and West lost a bit of its sharpness, when American self-righteousness could be more readily punctured, [and] when the activities of the two superpowers assumed a greater symmetry" (205). Although the ostensible reason for hyper-consumerism and, in general, the embrace of "negative" individualism had faded as the tapestry of international politics became increasingly complex, the new ethic remained firmly entrenched in the collective American psyche. As the compulsion to celebrate Americanness in the form of capitalism continued to incite human relationships based on money and fraught with competition, so did it continue to warp the American understanding of the self in that progress and advancement not to mention the material comfort that came with it were the only ways to achieve personal gratification. The crisis in legitimation did not wane, but, rather, intensified when America began to lose the only, albeit flimsy, device with which to establish legitimacy.

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[2] This theme, while especially relevant to the effects of Cold War intra-imperialism on Americans, does have a history with Steinbeck. One example is seen in the short story "The Leader of the People" published in *The Red Pony* (1937) as well as in a collection of works entitled *The Long Valley* (1938) where the Grandfather expresses to Jody, his grandson, the anguish felt at having no place to go and nothing for which to strive after the West was finally won. He laments: "There's no place to go. There's the ocean to stop you. There's a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them."

Americans were still restless and lacking well-defined purpose, and physical location proved only to be an easy target of blame.

When, to offer another example, Steinbeck pauses shortly into his trip to stock up on refreshments for all occasions and types of guests—"bourbon, scotch, gin, vermouth, vodka, a medium good brandy, aged applejack, and a case of beer" (*TWC* 25)—he again encounters in an owner of a small store that deeply-inspired hankering to leave:

> He helped me to carry the cartons out and I opened Rocinante's door.
>
> "You going in that?"
> "Sure."
> "Where?"
> "All over."
>
> And then I saw what I was to see so many times on the journey—a look of longing. "Lord! I wish I could go."
>
> "Don't you like it here?"
> "Sure. It's all right, but I wish I could go."
> "You don't even know where I'm going."
> "I don't care. I'd like to go anywhere." (TWC 25)

Keeping with his non-teleological approach, Steinbeck resists punctuating this episode with his own analysis. While, as Irvine Howe writes, novelists of this period "saw—*often better than they could say*—the hovering sickness of soul, the despairing contentment, the prosperous malaise" (200) as a result of what has long come to be known as the postmodern condition, this common assessment of writers including Steinbeck during the Cold War should not arrive with the implication that these writers were merely deep-thinking journalists who may just as well have "gone on the road" for the New York Times.[3] The difference, I argue, can be found in the author's intent; specifically, Steinbeck's intent in *Travels*, as it was his intent throughout his corpus of work, is to harmonize the binary opposition between the individual will and the group to which that individual belongs. It is, ultimately, the complementary relationship that

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[3] Thomas Docherty, ed. and intro., *Postmodernism: A Reader*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. See this collection of essays for a fuller characterization of the postmodern condition.

Steinbeck seeks: one that is void of anxiety and one that facilitates the fullest, most universal expression of each component. Inspiring volleys of "sentimentalism" from hordes of critics, this idea has arguably constituted the core of Steinbeck's work.

As such, the documentation of the ill-defined hopes of yet another restless American serves two purposes. First and foremost, the reader witnesses plainly, as does Steinbeck, the almost neurotic consequences of a binary teleology that simply did not provide answers or legitimacy and the peace of mind that comes with it. There is a direct relationship between the pervading restlessness in America and the analytical binary imposed on its denizens where the latter aggravates the former. Steinbeck even goes so far as to address this issue in a letter to his wife Elaine while he was on his admittedly "Quixotic" journey: "Wherever I stop people look hungrily at Rocinante. They want to move on. Is this a symptom? They lust to move on. West—north, south—anywhere. Maybe it's their comment on their uneasiness. People are real restless" (*ALIL* 679). For a man whose concern had always been for the "People," the pattern of ubiquitous restlessness that he encounters repeatedly could not go unnoticed. Indeed, the reader gets a strong sense that Steinbeck, very physician-like in his use of the word "symptom," was, to extend the analogy, deeply concerned for his "patients" and the perceived instability of place that they express.

By extension, the "acceptance-understanding" that is intended to come out of Steinbeck's non-teleological presentation of this episode contributes to the formation of—to borrow a term made in reference to the New Americanists by, at least, Frederick Crews—a critical "dissensus" (19). Simply, a "dissensus" can be defined as a position that goes against the consensus where institutionalized norms are challenged and repressive hegemonies are toppled. I argue that the context in which Steinbeck is writing and the context against which the New Americanists are railing is essentially the same. For both as "investigators and critics of ideology," meaning that both Steinbeck and the New Americanists reject popular ideology even if they "subscribe to a definite [need I say less popular] politics of their own" (Crews 19), the desired outcome is one where the imposed ideology is utterly repudiated so that other realities, whether they be in terms of people or literature, can flourish. Steinbeck's own politics do not

contribute to the seemingly endless and, more importantly, destructive banter that characterized the Cold War. Where the pervading restlessness that Steinbeck encounters can be explained in terms of the intra-imperialistic agenda in place during the Cold War, by no means does he offer a remedy to this malaise that operates within the restrictive confines of the analytical binary. Like the New Americanists, Steinbeck seeks alternative "readings" of his "text": America. Nowhere does he say that the desire to be anywhere but "Here" could be ameliorated by hating the communists more or celebrating the virtue of individualism and the negative freedom that it induces beyond what has already been done. Instead, Steinbeck intends through his unassuming approach to documenting the events of his trip that the reader "accept" the symptom as simply a matter of truth, then labor toward an "understanding" of that truth well outside of the collective binary mindset that inspired that symptom in the first place.

For Steinbeck, the "dissensus" had always been one that had no place for rules that were dictated by the capitalist ethic. I will not detract from the thrust of this essay by mapping Steinbeck's "fam'bly of man" principle that was most articulately expressed in *The Grapes of Wrath*, but I will say that this principle has historically been set against the backdrop of the potential evils of a money-obsessed society in order to show that there is a sanctuary when the very system created to serve society labors toward disorder, fragmentation, and distrust among individuals. Principle and "dissensus" being one, Steinbeck receives a number of opportunities to test his principle in a real world setting.

As Steinbeck "sat secure in the silence" (*TWC* 109) by a lake in northern Michigan, he is confronted by a young man who, it soon becomes apparent, is a steward to the land on which Steinbeck and Charley had stopped. Of particular interest is how Steinbeck handles a man whose hostile attitude is sanctioned by laws that spur social separation by signifying what is "mine" from what is "yours." The man is the first to speak:

> "Don't you know this land is posted? This is private property."
> Normally his tone would have sparked a tinder in me. I would have flared an ugliness of anger and he would then have been able to evict me with pleasure and good conscience. We might have edged into a

> quarrel with passion and violence. That would be only normal, except that the beauty and the quiet made me slow to respond with resentment, and in my hesitation I lost it. I said, "I knew it must be private. I was about to look for someone to ask permission or maybe pay to rest here."
> "The owner don't want campers. They leave papers around and build fires."
> "I don't blame him. I know the mess they make."
> "See that sign on that tree? No trespassing, hunting, fishing, camping."
> "Well," I said, "that sounds as if it means business. If it's your job to throw me off, you've got to throw me off. I'll go peacefully. But I've just made a pot of coffee. Do you think your boss would mind if I finished it? Would he mind if I offered you a cup?" (*TWC* 109–110)

Repressing the understandably strong urge to react in a similarly hostile fashion to the man's intentionally brusque orders, Steinbeck, instead, adopts a more passive stance. Steinbeck, to borrow a popular phrase, kills him with kindness by offering, in its most basic form, a sense of community absent arguably inane rules and regulations. In effect, Steinbeck forms a "dissensus" with the man, for they each choose to temporarily suspend the rules surrounding and informing the ownership of private property. They each have a cup of coffee spiked generously with Old Grandad whiskey, and even plan to (and actually do) break another posted rule in the morning by going fishing. Nothing was caught but good will.

I do not want to attribute psychic powers to a man who initially admitted ignorance of his country and its people; however, it is noteworthy that Steinbeck chooses a demeanor very much opposite the demeanor of the man brandishing the authority of an absentee owner. In point of truth, Steinbeck intuited how best to respond so that his alternative ethic could emerge. A new, de-politicized manner of self-legitimation displaced the manner of the status quo—one where placement in society was configured by how faithfully one followed and executed the rules of the intra-imperialist ethic—and a brief, two-man insurrection of sorts occurred. Having established this encounter as a formation of a "dissensus" outside of an exclusive binary that fosters nothing but oppositionalism as a way to self-legitimate, it follows that the larger issue responsible, at least initially, for

aggravating the “mine”/”yours” or “us”/”them” mindset would also come under fire by Steinbeck. The “America”/”Russia” binary forming the basis of Cold War ideology, as one would readily expect, is quick to fall under Steinbeck’s lens. Not surprisingly, the expressly *anti*-ideological location to which Steinbeck aspires remains the same.

As with the aversion toward “Here” and the conformist subscription to confrontationalism as a means to distinguish what is “mine” from what is “yours,” which is also to say “us” from “them,” so were the highly mythologized “Russians” a symptom of a much more profound identity crisis. While the Russians began to be viewed, figuratively speaking, in lower-case letters, the pejorative image of them by Americans still functioned as a way to displace domestic anxieties onto a foreign unknown. Russia’s stature as the epitome of evil, in fact, became an unassailable truth, heightening, as it were, the idea of American Exceptionalism to a nearly absurd degree. As a country that believed unequivocally that “God had designated [Americans] as a chosen people” (Potter 21), Russia validated the already inculcated idea that America was the new Jerusalem. This, at least in the abstract, afforded purpose to an essentially purposeless society.

The “Russians,” in their most basic sense, were simply one end of a two-part cycle that began with materialism and led to anxiety followed by vilifying the “Russians” by subscribing more to materialism and so on. The tic to go, albeit symptomatic of the cultural illness, was only part of the whole condition. At a time when the “nation’s symbolic apparatus was breaking apart” (Pease 12) as a continued result of never having really answered the question “What is it to be an American?” but instead only sidestepping the crisis in legitimation by absently subscribing to the Revolutionary Mythos, Russia as America’s natural enemy both made perfect sense and was itself an iteration of a paradigm that has its American roots in the Puritan rejection of the Anglican church and consequent movement to the so-called New World. The “dominant structuring principle” (Pease IX) of the American consciousness remained not only intact, but dangerously in place as an acceptable, no doubt laudable, ethic. Coincidentally happening upon a storekeeper in Minnesota, Steinbeck outwardly considers a mythos that restricts reality to a binary where there are those who are virtuous and those who are nefarious for no other

reason than for the paradigm's ability to organize and, hence, make sense out of a complex set of phenomena:

> "You think then we might be using the Russians as an outlet for something else, for other things."
> "I didn't think that at all, sir, but I bet I'm going to. [...] Yes, sir." he said with growing enthusiasm, "those Russians got quite a load to carry. Man has a fight with his wife, he belts the Russians."
> "Maybe everybody needs Russians. I'll bet even in Russia they need Russians. Maybe they call it Americans."
> He cut a sliver of cheese from a wheel and held it out to me on the knife blade. "You've give me something to think about in a sneaking kind of way." (*TWC* 143–144)

The juxtaposition between this unsubstantiated view of the Russians with that still vague "something else" presents a conveniently distilled illustration of what Steinbeck later calls his country's "sickness" (*TWC* 168). By suggesting the existence of a socially-pertinent relationship between the two, Steinbeck attempts to open the door to further insight in regards to the pall descended upon American society. To this extent, the Russians emerged as a scapegoat to an ideologically inculcated American public, and, therefore, became a vent through which to channel the frustrations cultivated within America's borders. They were simply the issue externalized; indeed, the intra-imperialistic idea of what it was to be a Russian helped Americans give a semblance of order and, perhaps more importantly, direction to their world. Given the fact that Steinbeck had "always had a keen awareness of the importance of the social cement of common purpose" (Champney, "Californian" 353), the character of his initial supposition is not surprising nor is the notion that what the Russians really were even this late into the Cold War were an overstated threat made so by a lost and dissatisfied people very much laden with the riddle of their own legitimation.

The problems that arise out of this type of binary thinking are evident, especially when the identified tyranny is poorly understood if understood at all. Russia and Russians essentially were likened to things that go bump in the night: a hyper-imagined threat that sufficed as a means to articulate what Americans were definitively not. It was a structural negative; the more Americans distinguished themselves from the "enemy," the more aware of themselves they were. This was

the solution to the crisis, although the very basis of the solution was a matter of conjecture at best. Like the New Americanists who take "their bearings from a rejection of the "'liberal consensus'" (Crews XVI), Steinbeck implicitly denounces participation in a group-led defamation, especially because that defamation was grossly uninformed. A theoretic lineage between the New Americanist camp and a disillusioned author can be established because what the New Americanists are really rejecting is a germination of the very predominant Cold War binary that Steinbeck denies. Steinbeck as an unofficial forefather to a movement bent on destroying the "projection of postwar America's hegemony and self-regard onto the literary historical screen" (Crews XVII) labors toward a similar end, though, as I stated earlier, "text" in Steinbeck's world translates into an entirely disaffected people.

Richard Astro in "Travels with Steinbeck: The Laws of Thought and the Laws of Things" reminds readers that Steinbeck's travel literature "tells us about the author's own search for meaning and it assists us in our search for order by illuminating the highly paradoxical nature of the American character" (35–36). In the case with *Travels*, Steinbeck's relentless urge to secure an understanding of his native land and its diverse population surely speaks well of a distinctly *American* author wanting to substantiate his innate patriotism with fresher material. An intimate knowledge of his country and his place within it, much to the respectability of Steinbeck as an American author, goes hand in hand with his own ontology. Finding that America's "progress may be a progression toward strangulation" and that "[w]e have overcome all enemies but ourselves" (*TWC* 196–197) only beckons immediate attention to the possible causes and in no way diminishes his obvious concern as if these comments were, in fact, declarations of surrender. Indeed, these observations do not warrant the conclusion that, as John Ditsky maintains, Steinbeck's travels ended in it being a "failed venture" (45).[4] Quite the contrary,

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[4] Ditsky cites, among other reasons, a general "ambivalence" (46) of Steinbeck's narrative voice as well as "parallel omissions of the places, people, and events from which the book expected to derive its weight and substance" (47) as the key factors for the book's failure. It is, in a phrase, a questioning of Steinbeck's ability to produce art at this point in his career.

Steinbeck can be seen as a domestic de Tocqueville roving the countryside and interviewing its inhabitants in order to present an accurate, yet not necessarily flattering picture of the "is" truth of America. The result of his efforts, interestingly, details not only the generic character of early 1960s America but also an America subservient to a very specific and evidently damaging set of ideals. I use the term "intra-imperialism" to describe America's enforcement of values upon itself as a means to proclaim its distinctness from Communist Russia in order to offer what I hope to be a convenient heading under which Steinbeck's descriptions tend to fall. The "paradoxical nature of the American character" of which Astro speaks, thus, is likely in reference to the ways in which America sought to resolve one politicized system of thought with another system of thought—the latter, perhaps, being a more natural, humanistic, and unimposing paradigm. This is, of course, to suggest that it is human nature to project internal maladies onto something else—"Here" or the Russians—if only to avoid addressing those maladies in a constructive manner. In light of Steinbeck's ability to capture what "is" in the form of the easily perceived friction qualifying the ideological lives of those he meets and, from that, ponder its relevance to their overall well-being, the question of Steinbeck's success becomes a moot point. Steinbeck's search for meaning, which is also an attempt, as Peter Lisca states, to reconstruct "his image of man" (7) in, for him, a new, almost foreign America is itself an appeal to his typical higher ideal, which can best be described as brotherly love: the fullest reconciliation between two parties. Although many critics call *Travels* yet another example of his sentimentalism, and others, such as Donald Weeks in "Steinbeck Against Steinbeck," identify Steinbeck's endeavor as simply one of "good intentions" (456), his plain observations, nonetheless, recognize a very significant factor in the disintegration of the soul of American society. Accepting and understanding what Steinbeck accepts and understands, however, is a matter of how much the reader is willing to participate in Steinbeck's deceptively matter-of-fact worldview.

Regardless of how the reader chooses to receive Steinbeck's altruistic message, the fact remains that Steinbeck labors toward formations of alternative communities well removed from that ideological community that fostered, in a general sense, spiritual

malaise. Like the New Americanists who were to come after him, Steinbeck rejects the “us”/”them” Cold War binary logic and chooses, instead, to explore other possibilities of comprehension, thereby making him a forerunner to a critical field whose very mission is to introduce new interpretations of literary works in addition to inviting formerly snubbed literary works into the canon. The first “work” that was subjected to re-evaluation for the purpose of questioning all conclusions based exclusively on binary logic, it could even be said, was America, and, by extension, the first New Americanist, John Steinbeck.

I feel the need to mention, however, that the intent behind equating Steinbeck to the New Americanists is not to displace the leading figures in that camp, but to suggest a genealogy that includes Steinbeck as a recent ancestor of sorts. The first volley fired at what I have been calling intra-imperialism was not fired by the New Americanists; rather, the dissent as a result of the restrictive binary—the very same that would eventually seep into literary study and become an analytical paradigm—began to percolate before the unofficial end of the Cold War itself. For Steinbeck whose critical popularity peaked with *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and only temporarily re-surfaced with *East of Eden* (1952) only to dwindle again until the author’s death in 1968, the implications that arrive with the juxtaposition of him to the New Americanists are potentially redemptive. Steinbeck, as evidenced in at least *Travels*, was not deserving of the critical dismissal that he got. On the contrary, Steinbeck proved that a man profoundly aware of his own setting sun, so to speak, could offer cultural and national insight as a way to re-direct a nation on a path to its own demise in hopes that America will choose to embrace significantly less destructive, less alienating ways to self-legitimate. He laid down this offer in *Travels*, if only implicitly, as the New Americanists lay down their offer to visit and re-visit literary works themselves validated by “Cold War” interpretations. The choice to accept the offer today, as it was then, however, remains a matter of weighing the costs between what is easier and what is necessary.

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Confined to a hospital bed a few short years after his travels due to an illness that would eventually consume him, Steinbeck confided to interviewer Budd Schulberg that "I've never seen a time when the country was so confused as to where it's headed" (Schulberg 214). These words came at a time when the intensity of Cold War intra-imperialism blossomed into something far greater and arguably much worse. The national existential crisis leading into a pathological addiction to "progress" (Astro 42) boiled over into, among other things, a wider-scaled Civil Rights movement, grass roots activism, and an ill-fated battle to contain Communism in Vietnam.[5] Given the nihilistic corners into which Cold War intra-imperialism painted the people of America, this is not at all surprising. An era of turbulence had come on the coattails of an ideologically-heightened fight against Communism. In hindsight, the cause and effect relationship is practically predictable. Steinbeck's telling comment, moreover, suffices as an expression of the era. Still without a compass yet in the throes of orienting itself amidst ideological fallout of its own conception, America reacted to the insipid, emotionally barren circumstances detailed in *Travels with Charley* in an obstreperous, oftentimes violent manner.[6] Were people to read this text for its

[5] Steinbeck's encounters with the notorious "Cheerleaders" in New Orleans who taunted black children about to matriculate into the previously all-white school district also speaks to the effects of Cold War intra-imperialism. While predicated upon a slew of obvious reasons, there is something to say about the increased tension between the races during the Cold War as a result of the belief that Communists and blacks, not to mention homosexuals and other groups considered to be morally defective, were natural compatriots. Isolating racial injustice as sustained by Cold War ideology in this study, however, detracts from the larger picture of the state of America as a whole; indeed, an analysis of Cold War ideology and how it pertains to the Civil Rights movement reaches beyond the scope that Steinbeck provides in *Travels with Charley*.

[6] See also Steinbeck's *America and Americans* (1966) for a more focused and opinionated statement on the condition of the nation. This text is excluded from my study because it steps outside of my target period of consideration, which is that time when Cold War intra-imperialism was at its peak. This is not to say that its effects did not resonate nor is it to suggest that the inclusion of *America and Americans* in this study would not help to elucidate exactly how Cold War intra-imperialism continued to leave its mark, but, practically speaking, it is to confine my argument to the period when those radical ideals were at a greater intensity.

prophetic aptitude, it is still highly unlikely that the decade first in line to vocalize America's distaste for restrictive values and remaining inability to locate a strong awareness of national self would be anything other than what it was. Perhaps this is the sad irony of good art to edify after the fact.

A more pronounced irony, however, comes in the recognition that Americans were curiously both oppressors and Diaspora in their own land. Undoubtedly, this points to the ongoing paradox of American identity manifest panoramically during Steinbeck's trip across the continental United States. That a close analysis of *Travels with Charley* can produce a singular message is evident. The mutual presence of themes such as, but not limited to, loneliness, anxiety, restlessness, and paranoia in a work by an author known widely for his philanthropy begs an appreciation of this text for how it contributes to an understanding of the human experiment. Similar to the experiences of many of Steinbeck's characters, however, the realization of loving communities remains a matter of choice. The rampant social eruptions re-defining the immediate post-Cold War country seem to indicate that the tendency may already be clear. Whether or not this possibility offers reassurance in regards to the potential of humankind is a consideration left for the individual. In Steinbeck's case, however, his undying efforts answer for him.

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JUDIT ÁGNES KÁDÁR

A POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE STUDY OF RECENT AMERICAN FICTION

Zoom 1.:Philosophy in the 'Age of Indetermanence'.

> We have gone too far in science, in technology, in philosophy and in political theory for many new syntheses remotely like the old. It is not absolute meaning we seek any more, but how to live at peace with ourselves and with the universe. (Davis 26)

When reading, analyzing and teaching contemporary literature and recent American fiction in particular, a specific approach to philosophy is indispensable to be developed. As philosophers like Michael Foucault and Arnold Toynbee claimed, we experience the end of Modern Western Man and are entering the Postmodern Age, the Age of Indeterminacy in Ihab Hassan's words, when man is "increasingly unable to anchor itself to any universal ground of justice, truth or reason (Hutcheon 8)." The dominant feeling and mood of man at the end of the 20th century is uncertainty for the reasons Fred Alan Wolf summarized as follows: "We pay a large price for a material world. The price involves our sanity. We cannot make total order of our observations. There always appears to be something missing. This disruption of God's order appears to us as the Principle of Uncertainty (61)."

Uncertainty dwells at the core of all philosophical investigations today, since the certainty of 'cogito ergo sum' had got lost and only the truth of 'cogito ergo' remained besides the ultimate certainty of the paradoxical knowledge of uncertainty, quoting Milan Kundera (2). Literature and philosophy can hardly provide comforting points of

support or clean-cut answers for the problems of daily existence. Both try to interrogate, to help through defining questions in our chaotic world that from time to time seems to lack any sufficient and reliable value system. The power and merit of both the writer and the philosopher can be the courage to question our preconceptions and convictions concerning the way we live and think, or the sense or senselessness of our life. The difference between the attitude of philosophers and writers is to be examined later on. However, in the following I am to epitomize those significant philosophical ideas that I consider essential in the study of recent literature.

Philosophers like Schopenhauer observed that in an aesthetic sense the world became a dream or rather a nightmare with a universe is falling apart. Heidegger applied the term 'Age of the World Picture' to describe the state when "everything is enframed, made into material either for manipulation or for aesthetic declaration (Rorty 69)." A form of this aesthetic declaration is Postmodernism, when Western man living in some kind of self-deception is reminded of his being 'forgetful of Being,' applying Heidegger's term, and he is called to reject the outside entropic forces that tend to kill individuality and personality. Having accepted the Many Worlds Theory, we should also assent to the existence of many truths—an idea completely inconceivable before modernism. America and American philosophers, especially the pragmatists are liberal when applying the 'live and let live' concept to truth as well. Following Richard Rorty, William James and Max Schelet's Absolute Pluralism, Mihály Vajda argues that our truth cannot damage others' freedom anymore. But how can truth be so tolerant? The pragmatist answer is that there are universal truths of existence, as Vajda claims. In my understanding these universal truths create their own paradigms that can become fields of interpretation in the case of each artifact. The complexity and relativity of postmodern novels reflect the anti-rationality of present reality. In their common effort to overcome the tradition of Western metaphysics and the One True Description idea, philosophers and writers try to seize existence not from a theoretical viewpoint but in narration instead. The latter has been pointed out by Vajda, examining the diverting points between Heidegger, Rorty and Kundera. Heidegger declared that Western culture had exhausted its possibilities, but he was the one who became a so-called 'aesthetic

priest' in his attempt to make abstractions from reality and try to understand it with their help. At this point Rorty's opinion diverts from that of his predecessors and he seems to support Kundera, who proclaimed that novelists who follow Dickens and Rabelaise are able to grasp the complexity and uniqueness of reality and "to revolt against the onthotheological treatise (Rorty 68)" much better. As opposed to Heidegger's cue word 'exhaustion', Kundera and Rorty have found open-endedness to be the distinctive postmodernist attitude towards the general state of closure in Western culture. Here one can observe an interesting change in the concept of the role and method of philosophy. Contrary to the 'artistic priests' sterile, declarative and generalizing—consequently in most cases erroneous—stance, a new kind of philosophical approach has emerged: the interrogative one (see also Federman 11) which is able to examine details and fragments of reality (see also Rorty 80–1) without the claim of omnipotent answers, but with more hope of truthfulness and practical applicability.

Before examining the difference in the attitude of philosophers' and novelists' approach to reality in detail, let me refer to another aspect that reveals the difference between the modern and postmodern mind. Among the critical studies dealing with this issue one of the most comprehensive one is Ihab Hassan's "Postface 1982: Towards the Concept of Postmodernism." The latter provides a sketch of schematic differences between what we call Modernism and Postmodernism, including philosophical perspectives among many, too. Postmodernism is characterized with attributes such as Chance (as opposed to Design); Anarchy (versus Hierarchy); Exhaustion/Silence (versus Mastery/Logos); Decreation/Deconstruction (versus Creation/ Totalization); Anti-thesis, Indeterminacy and Immanence, to mention a few (267–8). These notions signify aesthetic thinking in our age, at the same time they represent the final stage of the process where self-consciousness and certainty still existing in realistic metaphysical and modern thinking gets lost. Vajda points out the change in the focus and basic concerns, too: whereas the aesthetic thinking of the previous ages took metaphysics and the spheres of rationality (i.e. economics, politics) as their starting-point, postmodern focuses on the spheres of freedom such as private and public life and culture (194). Consequently postmodern thinkers and critics should renounce their

claim for a universal, rational concept about the world. The effort of the artist to find a sense in senselessness is well presented in Pierre Giorgio Di Cicco's prose-verse:

> Interconnectedness of all things does not make things less lonely for the post-reductionist mind. The mind tries to create its landscape even as it is travelling through it. The unknown is no longer in God's hands, but under the jurisdiction of mind. The mind cannot trust itself, because it has been taught to doubt. To doubt and trust at the same time is like trying to defeat Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. You cannot be at two places at once; only God can. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle is tenable if you are faced with the uncertainty of the meaning of existence, what you experience is infinite regress, perpetual anguish, and physical death. (113)

Zoom 2.: A Comparative Aspect of Postmodern Philosophy and Fiction—Two Overlapping Concepts of Life.

In his essay entitled "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" Rorty defined the core of postmodern novel and the whole genre of fiction as a "reaction to, and as an alternative to, the attempt to theorize about human affairs;" moreover, he indicated "the opposition between the aesthetic priest's taste for theory, simplicity, structure, abstraction and essence and the novelist's taste for narrative, detail, diversity and accident (Rorty 13)." He claims that both spheres of knowledge tend to oppose the preponderance of comformism in society—being the only chance for greatness but with different means. What he appreciates in fiction is the presentation of fragments of reality, details, and as such, it seems to have a better chance to grasp reality, a 'truer' one. Rorty joined Kundera claiming, that the root of the novel is not theoretics but the spirit of humor—following the anti-theoretic traditions. Vajda expresses his doubts concerning the absolute truth of such statements, questioning also the omniscience of such expressions as 'agelaste' Kundera had applied to philosophy and poetry as opposed to the sense of humor fiction has acquired. In my view there is an increasing sense of humor in contemporary philosophy since today's philosophers frequently call the attention to the fundamental paradoxes, hypocrisies and ironies in the practice and theory of our age. They tend to operate with the term 'interrogation' as a basic

mood for fiction as well saying, that the novelist wants the reader to understand the world through questions (Vajda 121).

I think the case is slightly different in postmodern literature. The only radically new idea there is that artifacts are not expected to reflect reality any longer, decreasing the relevance of the mimetic function, but to create their own worlds, paradigms, if you like, through decomposition and reorganization (i.e. emplotment). Such a pluralism and relativity cannot exist without the questioning of the existing traditions and concepts. The acceptance means tolerance and a liberal attitude in North-American literature and other spheres of life towards the diversity of viewpoints, opinions and the existence of many worlds. This theory applied to literature means that not only are there as many worlds as individuals, but also each piece of literature has its own world in which the characters, relationships, actions, the language of the texts, etc. gain a meaning, or rather: as many meanings coexist as the number of readers of a given text. Consequently, with the disappearance of the One True Definition in philosophy the possibility of a singular True Meaning and Interpretation has vanished, too. The same tendency exists in literature, actually it had already existed in modernism. That makes understanding modern and postmodern literature a bit difficult for those who acquired their literary education in a traditional way and have not got used to creative reading. Novelists are aware of the risk of unintelligibility. Diversification of the reading public is a challenge for them and they often find confusion or snobbish pretence of understanding, like The Silver Horn Society and Mr. Czolgacz in Elliott Baker's *Fine Madness* (1964).

> The program also told her that she was a guest of The Silver Horn Society. Studying the members' hairdos and dresses, Lydia placed the organization somewhere near Fifth Avenue and Ninetieth Street. She wondered if any of them could tell if she wasn't a Silver Horner, and decided they probably couldn't. She lived twenty blocks down from them and further east, but she had become an obvious type, too—wife of a professional man, children in private school, dabbler in the arts; nothing that would make her stand out in this crowd.... Mr. Czolgacz's harp provided a welcome change of pace. His choice of the Attaignant piece and Dussek's Sonata was, she knew, deliberate. The egotistical snob would play things with which his audience wasn't familiar. She could feel the women nearest her relax

> as he moved on to Bach and she too felt more comfortable with the familiar sonorous sounds. (191)

Shillitoe, an outstanding representative of the new type of (anti)hero, here a poet invited to read up his verses, responds to the mob of 'Momist Dragons' with mortal sting:

> That's probably the kind of lullaby you want me to sing. But can't do it. Neither sickly nor feminine. Never found out why, when a woman thinks about love she always starts about counting. Nothing against Lizzie, though she probably dimmed old Browning's lambent flame. Can't turn out a poem when you are horizontal. She tried to write poetry. Can't be written. Got to be formed, like a gallstone, only opposite direction. Still, what she did was better than any of you will do if you live to be three hundred and five. Just mention that so you'll know your place. (192)

Unintelligibility is also neglected by authors such as Pynchon, Barthelme, Brautigan and Barth, which seems to underline the fact that their novels exist and create their own paradigm, moreover they function as living organisms through the authorial process of creation as well as through the (re-)creation in the readers' minds. Linda Hutcheon reminds us of the relevance and equal importance of both processes in her book on the Canadian Postmodern (45).

A tangible example of the divergence in the artists' concept concerning the role, function and method of fiction is reflected in the famous Gass-Gardner debate. Besides many other differences, Gardner is advocating a so-called 'lovable fiction,' whereas Gass ignores the urge of writing something not lovable. He finds artistic satisfaction in the creative process and explains the mechanism through which postmodern fiction can work, as he claims:

> Very frequently the writer's aim is to take apart the world where you have very little control, and replace it with language over which you can have some control....You write the book to understand and get control of things that you haven't been able to control and understand in the world....Maybe it is an illusory understanding, but I think it helps you live. (LeClair 29)

I consider the above idea to be the shared main concern of both literature and philosophy: by trying to form one's own ideas s/he can get a little more control of present reality, too. As for the difference in

the approaches of literature and philosophy, Gardner argues: “The difference between what I am doing and what a philosopher is doing is that my activity leads to a feeling state, whereas the philosopher has only cold clarity (LeClair 14–5).” He concludes saying that “What argument is to philosophy, plot is to fiction (LeClair 16).” Of course artists respect art more as a form of presenting one’s own understanding of life, even some philosophers like Rorty hold this preference. What intellectuals of both fields reject is the traditional role of both domains: to present a complete explanation and picture of the world.

Zoom 3.: Fiction—Absurd Creation and the American Peculiarities of Postmodern Fiction.

> There are no words
> for that silence I crave like a brother sewed to the
> underside of my skin. Bathetic and superluminal
> is my true self. Citified, I arsenal my words
> for the unquestionable, for, really, my heart
> would have only one answer, no good for lifting
> chairs or writing cheques. I am a deconstructivist
> with the throat of a lark. Ridiculous as it looks
> I market the tragedy. I try to find angels
> in micro-trajectories, and the heart emblazoned
> on the Janus-faced mysteries.
> (Di Cicco: “Deep as the Exhaustion on God”)

Postmodernism is a global contemporary phenomenon. Vajda devoted a whole section to study the presence of postmodern philosophy in Eastern Europe in his recent book (183–96). As for American literature, numerous critical works analyzed postmodernism as a literary phenomenon and many have searched for connections with philosophy as well. Among them I especially appreciated R. B. Hauck’s essay entitled “The American Sisyphus” (3–14) and Abádi-Nagy’s introduction to the novel of the 1960s entitled *Válság és komikum: A hatvanas évek amerikai regánye,* since both treatise explore the core of the postmodern concept of existence and its presence in literary texts. To mention another useful source, Hutcheon’s inclusive book on the Canadian Postmodern identifies universalities besides the distinct Canadian attributes.

I hold the view that absurdity is a central category in recent philosophy as well as literature, especially drama and Black Humor Fiction. It appears in different interpretations, however, it always reflects the human need of some sort of help to cope with the chaos, uncertainty and absurdity today. The paradox, sometimes schizophrenic state of our consciousness derives from the choice we are impelled to face with: in Hauck's conclusion the escapes in the fields of philosophy, literature as well as in everyday practicalities are either suicide or unthinking resignation. He claims: "To be fully conscious is to have a sense of absurd. A sense of the absurd follows the recognition that the universe appears to be meaningless (3)." Most writers arrive at the same conclusion stating it directly in their novels or implying it indirectly. In Walker Percy's *The Last Gentleman* (1966) Sutter asks the same metaphysical question: "Which is the best course for a man: to live like a Swede, vote for the candidate of your choice, be a good fellow, healthy and generous, do a bit of science as if the world made sense, enjoy a beer and a good piece (not bad life!). Or: to live as a Christian among Christians in Alabama? Or to die like an honest man (236)?"

Suicide as a rational choice is also mentioned earlier in the text:

> You are wrong too about the sinfulness of suicide in this age, at least the nurtured possibility of suicide, for the certain availability of death is the very condition of recovering oneself. But death is as outlawed now as sin used to be. Only one's own suicide remains to one. My 'suicide' followed the breakdown of the sexual as a mode of reentry from the posture of transcendence. (230)

According to Hauck, besides these so-called rational choices, there is one more, namely the Sysiphus-like creation of one's own meaning as the only possibility to make something out of nothing. Though it is ludicrous and full of paradoxes, as one can see it in Black Humor Fiction and the Rebellious and Intermedia Absurd Dramas, it is the only life-affirming force against moral nihilism more and more people live in. Abádi-Nagy considers the veins of humor to be "strategies man devises to cope with that consciousness ("Black Humor versus Satire" 32)."

Reading the novels of Vonnegut, Barth, Pynchon, Heller and dramas like Jack Richardson's "Gallows Humour" (1962) or Edward

Albee's "The American Dream" (1961), one can observe the authors' immense effort to extricate the reader from the state of passive innocence that leads to the ignorance one has to be responsible for; and draw through the disturbing awareness up to the point where there is no certainty anymore just the philosophical state of estrangement, where everything is relative and one has to find and create meaning for his/herself alone. Even the expression 'Absurd Creation' is paradoxical, contains the element of humor, reality, i.e. in its very self, as Abádi-Nagy says, the novels are written exactly like reality exists: there is no causality, form is abstract, accidentality has a dominant role and appearance becomes the essence in most cases (*Válság és komikum* 397). In this situation humor can cover the serious existential themes without pretension.

This comic vein has found a breeding ground in the genre of fiction with slightly different functions of the author, reader, text and viewpoint character. The change in their relationship has deeper roots than a mere innovation in the narrative technique: the radical changes in the world in late twentieth century and further on the entropic factors culminating in the 1960s in American society has drown a change in the *Weltschauung* of both philosophers and artists. Pragmatism could serve as a standpoint, a help to understand and tolerate reality, but also to defend the conformist ideas driving to chaos and entropy, too. Pragmatism with its content ideas could help the artists understand the necessity of accepting the plurality and relativity of all things. The latter is the reason why I feel the impact of the Many Worlds Theory applied by William James a pragmatist philosopher (James 63–80), as strong in literature as I have described it earlier. Probably it also formed their concept of truth and existence as well as the creation of a new concept of the literary establishment. Nevertheless, without the influence of other philosophical ideas, such as French Existentialism, Heidegger or Wittgenstein, Postmodernism could not have such a strong theoretical foundation. I believe that this effect is double fold: on the one hand, writers directly transferred them into/through the artifacts. On the other hand, literary theory has got deeply involved in philosophical questions as well.

Oswald Spengler's idea of the Decline of the West due to exhausting its cultural possibilities is revoked in Heidegger's philosophy and it is also nicely translated into the language of

literature, especially novels by John Barth as an example. For another example, Wittgenstein's concept of language as a game had many overtones among critics and writers, too, each trying to define the function of language of a literary work. A lot of artists have experienced the alienation of literature from life, as for instance Richard Suckenick claims in his essay entitled "Digression": "The more intensely the novel was 'about' life the less it was part of it (Suckenick 6)." He also adds that the most virtual American tradition is the poetics of experience and the act of writing today is not just about life but a part of it. His ideas follow Olson's Open Composition Theory and seem to have a continuation in Federman's notion of surfiction.

Since uncertainty and relativity overwhelm all spheres of reality, the author is no longer a controlling agent; the literary heroes become viewpoint characters, as Davis claims (Davis 25). Just like in today's philosophy where we are not told, taught or instructed but forced to question everything, even the worth of such questions, contemporary fiction does not deduct either. One can feel the force of such violent and sometimes arrogant pressure to question our everyday values and responsibilities especially in the Absurd Drama and the Black Humor Diction of the 1960s' America. Regarding contemporary writers, Max Schulz holds the view that "Heirs of this centuries national tensions and philosophical uncertainties, their stories are parodies of man's mistaken faith historically and philosophically in cultural continuity and ideational permanence (14–5)." These parodies of man have two basic subjects: death, and the meaninglessness of the universe. Abádi-Nagy called attention to the fact that while the characters of Bellow and Updike's works were hypersensitive to death, they were able "to carry out daily moral responsibilities." On the other hand, those whose main concern became meaninglessness of life are unable to focus on daily morals, rather on morality ("Black Humor versus Satire" 32). His expression: 'philosophical irony' has two social, psychological and philosophical roots: helplessness of man and indifference of the universe ("Black Humor versus Satire" 28). This threefold conditioning is presented with roughly equal emphases in the novels. I am sure that each reader finds different dominance in postmodern novels. For the first reading I was able to point out these dominances clearer than now, since the interwoven references and allusions

stimulate more and more meaning each time when one reads the same novel or explores other postmodern writings.

What makes postmodern fiction unique in a philosophical respect? Before searching for answers we must observe the fact that this kind of literature in general is not written for and read by masses, in this sense it is often elitist: talking about their novels writers like Barth and Gass express that "it doesn't matter if no one does love them (LeClair 17)." Understanding the text requires a creative role of the reader as well as occasionally an academic education. As the reading public has changed and got limited to a smaller circle of individuals, parallel with the central characters (call them 'hero figures', 'anti-heroes' or 'viewpoint characters') became the human projections of the social, psychological and philosophical uncertainties already described before. Some of them passively suffer from the mental living conditions and bear it with Sisyphus-like persistence and wisdom, like *The Ginger Man* (1958) in Jean Paul Donleavy's story praying:

> And dear God
> Give me strength
> To put my shoulder
> To the wheel
> And push
> Like the rest. (104)

Consequently, their endeavor in its effect points at the opposite direction, i.e. anti-conformism. Others bear the circumstances with half-conscious resignation like those whom Peter DeVries described in his *The Blood of the Lamb* (1961) in the following way:

> We live this life by a kind of conspiracy of grace: the common assumption or pretense, that human existence is 'good' or 'matters' or has 'meaning'. a glaze of charm or humor by which we conceal from one another and perhaps even ourselves the suspicion that it does not, and our conviction in times of trouble that it is overpriced - something to be endured rather than enjoyed. (168)

There are characters who chose a rather aggressive attitude to provoke entropic tendencies, others' ignorance and pretension, like Guy Grant does in Terry Southern's *The Magic Christian* (1959) "making hot for them (*The Magic Christian* 129)" when in this U.S.A.

allegory he shocks others with writing true facts in his newspaper or at another time, on board of his luxurious ship he drags the passengers out of their 'artificial fog' with violent slogans and happenings.

In my view the fluctuation and splitting change in between these unconscious and conscious, passive and aggressive/revolting behaviors is the very topic of several novels: the process of rising to awareness of its impossibility; the decision one always have to make whether to slip back to ignorance and ready-cut comforts of life or to try to change them. This is not the messianism of the previous ages and especially European cultures. American postmodernists accept modern living conditions, as Vajda observes (199), and try to create something meaningful with relatively small compromise (194).

Comparing and contrasting American and European postmodern tendencies D. Davis enlists the distinctive features of American Black Humor Fiction, and probably the same can be said about Western postmodern philosophy as well: Liberalism has a central role along with "a wit more ribald than that found in Existentialism, less dour than that which infused Dada (16)." Well-being, disillusionment, rage and affection stand in the background, as he sees, and these features provoke violent anger again characteristic of this literature and literary philosophy, too. As for European modernists like Orwell, they have presented their 'generous anger' with the satirical aspect of reality. However, postmodern writers seem to experience anger from a less superior position. The subject of their fear is first difficult to define, like in Richardson's dramas, they realized that among the many bad choices 'healthy fear' is the best one when we take the responsibility and point of seeing clear. Federman applied the term 'healthy novel' to postmodern ones (6) with an essentially purifying overtone at their core. It is like a religious revelation in the sense I described previously when mentioning the process of rising into consciousness.

The common characteristic feature that most critics observed examining the effect of postmodern fiction is that though it applies modern/ist methods, the deconstructive tendencies are liberating, while energy derives from the stinging laughter and also tends towards the destruction of entropy and it raises the level of openness and tolerance in the reader. Abádi-Nagy emphasized the life-affirmativeness of its final effect and added that the novel is the "ironic affirmation of the very absurdity it seems to deny ("Black

Humor versus Satire...” 32)”. Suckenick underlined the rejection of the illusory time and space in postmodern fiction, which challenges the validity of literature in its own right (9). What is inventive in it is not the subject matter, but the interpretation of the narratives, i.e. the relationship of the author, the text, the reader and reality; basically the variety of realities, truths, that create different paradigms, contexts and connotative meanings. The context the writer imagines and creates is different from the one that appears to the reader. This limitless number of meanings is what makes postmodern writing interesting for many of us, i.e. the tension of no final solutions and conclusions but openness to a wide range of interpretations.

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ÉVA MIKLÓDY

"REDEFINING THE "OTHER": RACE, GENDER, CLASS, AND VIOLENCE IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S *BAILEY'S CAFÉ"*

What is most striking about *Bailey's Café (1992)*, Gloria Naylor's fourth and latest novel, is its narrative structure which recreates the form of the traditional blues in an inventive and masterful way. Her book is, however, not only a bravura of form, but a highly lyrical rendition of human suffering and desperation. It is an unquestionable fact, though, that Naylor's adaptation of the form and content of the blues enables her to simultaneously represent extraordinary human pain and misery in extreme proportions and, to alleviate the despair and grief inherent in this theme with the "melody" of her blues, that is to say, the lyricism of her expression. Put differently, her novel accomplishes what Ralph Ellison suggests about the blues, that is, that it "keep[s] the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience in one's aching consciousness, [it] finger[s] its jagged grain, and transcend[s] it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism" and it creates "autobiographical chronicle[s] of personal catastrophy expressed lyrically" as well (qtd. in Murray 130). Accordingly, Bailey's Café centers on loneliness, alienation, uprootedness, and lovelessness as experienced by the various characters of the book.

The novel's multivocal blues structure is comprised of a series of narratives told from the specific points of view of these characters, who frequent Bailey's café, which functions in a "clean, well-lighted place" fashion for society's "waste," the wretched of the earth, who "fall through the cracks of the upswings and downswings" (*Bailey's* 41). At this point, it seems important to note Naylor's obvious interest in places

that can serve as asylums for social outcasts, people marginalized in a variety of ways. In her first award-winning novel, for example, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1983), Brewster Place, a ghettoized neighborhood offers temporary shelter for a bunch of colored women whose lives have gone awry and there is no other place for them to go. Bailey's Café, located on an indiscriminate street of New York City, functions in a similar way since it is, as Naylor describes it, "the last place before the end of the world for some[...]" (68) and is "sit[ting] right on the margin between the edge of the world and infinite possibility[...]" (76). The same applies to Eve's boardinghouse, and Gabe, the Russian Jew's, pawnshop, which are similar "waystations" for recuperation in the vicinity of the Café.

Bailey's Café, though not in the position to grant perfect salvation to its refugees, offers the possibility of a remedy of some sort. As Bailey, the narrator of the book, points out in the novel, "We do nothing here but freeze time; we give no answers—and get no answers—for ourselves or the next man" (219). "If life is truly a song, then what we've got here is just snatches of a few melodies. All these folks are in transition; they come midway in their stories and go on" (219). This also explains that Bailey's is not an ordinary café in the traditional sense of the word. People go there not to eat or drink but, as Bailey explains, to "[hang] onto to the edge,"—the edge which is the Café itself—and, to "take a breather for a while" (28).

This novel, by assembling people who belong to various race, gender, class, as well as social and cultural background offers a chance to reconsider the notion of the "other." My aim, then, in this paper is to look at the dispossessed and marginalized frequenters of Bailey's Café, and to examine the conceptual basis that allows the use of the notion of the "other" to define them. I will, however, also put forth the idea that Naylor's book revises and extends her previous assumption of the "other" as represented in *The Women of Brewster Place* and that she thus reconceptualizes this notion in a significant way. Since a major component of these narratives is violence, I will also examine the types and functions of violence and point out how violence can define these characters as the "other."

In *The Women of Brewster Place*, Naylor brings together a small body of women who share a unique form of oppression because they are victims at once of sexism, racism, and, by extension, of classism. This is,

in fact, one of the basic tenets of black feminist criticism, which, in view of this complex system of the black woman's oppression, labels the black woman as the "other." Since the concept of the "other" can emphasize difference in a meaningful way only in relation to somebody else, black feminist critics hold the view that the "other" encompasses all that are black, female, and from a lower social class in opposition with their white, male, and middle-class counterparts. This also shows that black feminist critics have appropriated and accomodated the concept of the "other" to suit their expressed political aims.

My main contention is that in *Bailey's Café*, Naylor renounces this restrictive and exclusory view of the "other," and she rather integrates the variables of race, gender, and class, in order to achieve a more humanistic and universalistic illustration of the "other." For example, she reconsiders and alters the unequivocal role of blackness in the definition of the notion of the "other." Her obvious intention is to blur the color or racial as well as the ethnic lines when she merges the following ethnic configurations in Stanley, alias Miss Maple's, ancestry, who is one of the male patrons of Bailey's Café: "[...]I had aunts of all assortments: pure-blooded Yumas; full-blooded Negroes; full-blooded Mexicans; Yuma-Mexicans; Mexican-Irish; Negro-Mexicans; and even one pure-blooded African who still knew some phrases in Ashanti: all hearty and strong" (171). One of the best representation of Naylor's attempt to synthesize or integrate differences is Miss Maple's original name, Stanley Beckwourth Booker T, Washington Carver, which, according to some critics, is also an example of a move towards "cultural homogenization". Stanley's name refers to prominent African-Americans in United States history; James Beckwourth, a frontier explorer; George Washington Carver, a renown scientist and inventor; and Booker T. Washington, who himself was a spokesman for assimilitation (Wood 384).

The figure of Mary (Take Two)—originally called Mariam—gives evidence of the possibility of combining various religious and cultural practices and backgrounds. Mariam, a fourteen-year-old black Ethiopian Jew, is a highly ironic personification of the Virgin Mary of the Holy Scripture, who, defying historical time and cultural environment, becomes impregnated by immaculate conception in the green hills of Ethiopia and gives birth to her son, George, in New York City. Prior to her expulsion from her native village and, because of her suspicious

pregnancy, Mariam, according to the Beta Israel customs, undergoes female circumcision. Her son, George, born of the still virgin Mariam, serves as a Christ figure, a redeemer for the forlorn customers of Bailey's café: "[...]maybe it's meant for this baby to bring in a whole new area. Maybe when it gets here, it'll be like an explosion of new hope or something, and we'll just fade away" (160). One critical opinion holds that George also "embodies the connection between African past and American future because of conceptual geographic history" (Wood 390). It is, in fact, the entire scene of George's birth as well as the naming ceremony and the ritual of circumcision following it that testify to the possibility of a synthesis of racial, gender and cultural differences, with all of the book's outcasts present. There is Gabe, the Jew, an embodiment of the messenger angel, Gabriel, because it is he who directs Mariam and all of the social outcasts of the book to the Café; Bailey, the main narrator of the book, whose real name remains unknown and who assumes the name of the Café out of convenience—for not having to change the sign on the Café—a war veteran from Brooklyn; his wife, Nadine, a prototype of African beauty; Miss Maple with his highly mixed racial, ethnic and even sexual background. There is also Eve from the Lousiana delta, who dismisses her sexual identity altogether and claims to have created herself sexless out of the mud of the delta. By acting as midwife at George's birth, she actually lives up to what her name means. There is Mary(Take One) alias Peaches, a light-skinned beauty from Kansas City, as well as Jesse Bell from the docks of Manhattan Island and Esther, a coal-black woman. Despite their differences, they are capable of celebrating George's birth in unison by singing a popular Christmas carol which can be considered as the cultural code of their newly established community of outcasts. This underlines the idea that "there [can be] harmony between opposing rituals and traditions drawn from a multicultural background" (Montgomery 32).

Naylor also expands the category of gender as a significant component of otherness by changing the all-women-community of Brewster Place into one of both sexes. She even shows that there are instances in which it is not one's sexual identity that makes one eligible to be the "other." In one case, sex is shown as interchangeable and is completely eliminated, in another. Stanley or Miss Maple assumes a double sexual identity, when he willingly accepts his female nickname,

Miss Maple, given to him by Eve after she starts to employ him as her housekeeper and bouncer of her boardinghouse. Miss Maple, true to his name, also wears a dress and sandals when doubling as housekeeper.

Eve, whose origins are unknown, since it was her Godfather who found her "in a patch of ragweed, so new [she] was still tied to the birth sac" (83), generates a sexless identity when, escaping from her Godfather's tyranny, she emerges from the Lousiana mud: "I had no choice but walk into New Orleans neither male nor female—mud. But I had right then and there choose what I was going to be when I walked back home" (91).

For both Stanley and Eve their manipulation with their sexual identity is a self-liberating and self-defensive act. Stanley liberates himself from his painful memories of the torments of his job search. He is not only capable of coping with his situation in his assumed identity as a woman, but this also expresses that his mental and physical suffering is commensurate with the suffering of women who have the capacity to bear it better than men. Bailey observes right at the beginning of the book that "a woman can drag the whole thing out—over years—and pick, pick, pick to death" (5).

For Eve, relinquishing her sex, makes it possible for her to become everybody's mother, and thus to start her boardinghouse into which she takes women who are in need of both mental and physical recovery. She is a redemptive figure who is even able to assume supernatural power and use magic and conjure for healing.

By changing Stanley into a woman and Eve into a sexless person, Naylor has also been able to give evidence of the fact that the "other" is not necessarily a gender-specific category.

Naylor also allows her characters a relatively large degree of class mobility and, by doing so, she suggests that the notion of the "other" is not determined by belonging to a particular social class either. Jesse Bell from the Manhattan docks marries into a rich middle-class black family, which does not change the contemptuous attitude of Uncle Eli toward her and her family. Stanley's well-to-do, middle-class background calls for hate and humiliation from the poor and uneducated Gatlin boys.

These examples offered by Naylor's novel show that "the other" is a larger and more flexible category than has been interpreted and employed by black feminist critics and than is represented in *The*

Women of Brewster Place. Moreover, *Bailey's Café* also breakes new ground in the sense that it introduces yet another factor on the basis of which the concept of the "other" can further be expanded. Naylor, in this book, offers a new perspective from which to re/consider the notion of the "other," by acutely describing the shared experience of violence of all of the book's characters. What follows from this is the fact that it is all of society's victims, who, as the critic Mark Ledbetter argues, "have inherited the scars of marginality from the abuse imposed on their previous generations" and who, therefore, "willingly embrace violence done to their bodies and even inflict violence to their own bodies," that can be termed as the "other" (Ledbetter 39).

In accordance with what he also says, that is, that "violence characterizes otherness," (22) violence seems to be a paramount experience for all of the characters of Naylor's novel. Bailey has gone through the hell of Pearl Harbor; Gabe, the Jew, has had a "front-row seat" in the holocaust. Both male and female characters suffer sexual assault as well, of which rape is a major type. Women's bodies are, however, violated sexually in so many ways that rape as a sexually violent act has to be also reconsidered. Sadie's mother, a prostitute, for example, uses a coathanger to abort the unwanted consequences of her regularly "being raped." Sadie is the product of one case when the coathanger failed to operate properly. She hears her mother say "The One the Coathanger Missed" so often that she thinks for a while that is her real name. Sadie's mother, in fact, exemplifies those who both embrace and inflict violence to their bodies. Sadie, who suffers from her mother's lack of love for her, follows in her mother's footsteps: in order to regain her mother's love, she also prostitutes herself and uses peroxide on a pair of forcepts to kill her unwanted children. Esther is sold by her brother to a rich boss so that he can derive material gain. As a grave consequence for Esther, she has to satisfy the sexual fantasies of her brother's sado-mazochistic landlord for twelve years. Down in the cellar where she is taken each time, she painfully realizes that she will soon have to learn how to "play" with the sharp-edged "leather-and-metal things" that the boss calls "toys" and she will equally learn that "in the dark, words have a different meaning" (*Bailey's* 97).

Stanley, though not actually raped, experiences the threat of rape when in prison for refusing to fight in the war, which is almost as dreadful as rape itself. As he says, "[he] was never raped, because [he]

never resisted" unlike the Mexican kid, "who made the mistake of being too pretty and to unwilling" (193).

The ritual of circumcision, in itself an act of violence, becomes even more dreadful as soon as is done out of material interest. When Mariam, in Ethiopia, is prepared for her future marriage by being circumcised, the village midwives sew her up tighter than usual to raise her value as a wife. It is interesting to note though that when George' circumcision takes place we cannot think of it as an act of violence any more since the emphasis shifts onto the act as a ritual of male initiation done quickly and properly.

Mary, a beautiful nymphomaniac, performs a violent act on her own body because she cannot cope with the discrepancy between her external image as a sexual object to be savored by men and her internal image as an innocent child. When she realizes that her external image has overpowered her internal image, and that she actually enjoys being the whore that she has become, she cuts up her face in order to take control of that image and to reconcile her appearance with her damaged self-concept.

On the basis of the examples discussed above, I suggest that Naylor's characters, in *Bailey's Café*, define themselves as "other" through their common experience of violence, which is not limited to physical violence only, but implies mental and emotional violence as well. Ledbetter argues that "the most intimate act of naming, knowing and experiencing is through metaphors of the human body," and thus "body metaphor lays claim to the world and narrows the distance between who we are and the experiences we have, by describing the world with the most personal terms we have, ourselves" (Ledbetter 12). Violence is, therefore, such a metaphor, by which we can fathom the specific experience of the "other."

It can be, thus, concluded that Naylor revises and reconceptualizes the notion of the "other" by shifting the emphasis from gender, race, and class, onto the "violated body." Anyone who suffers violence becomes a victim, thus Naylor adds another oppositional relation to the already existing ones of male/female, black/white, lower-class/middle-class, that of victim/victimizer. Since all of us have experienced or will experience some form of violence during our lifetime and therefore, at such moments become the "other," I find such approach to the definiton of the "other" a more humanistic and universalistic one. In *Bailey's Café*

there is a scene which very well represents that each human being is a potential victim of violence beyond the boundaries of race, gender, and class. It is George's naming ceremony, when all of the Café's hopeless pilgrims join in a gospel song of hope:

> Anybody asks you who you are?
> Who you are?
> Who you are?
> Anybody asks you who you are?
> Tell him—you're the child of God. (225)

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SZILVIA NAGY

I CAN OPERATE IN THE DARK—BODIES ARE PHOSPHORESCENT…[1]
OCCULT MODERNISM AND MYTH-MAKING IN DJUNA BARNES'S *NIGHTWOOD*

Abstract

Djuna Barnes's ties with spiritualism and ancient traditions of transformation have suffered undeserved critical neglect and studying these influences would enlighten any discussion of *Nightwood*. In what follows I will lay out the foundations of such an undertaking. *Nightwood* has much more—or more precisely, something else—to offer than a stylized opinion about homosexuality and woman's place in patriarchal culture, as many critics have argued. I suggest that we need to see *Nightwood* as a critique of the alienating public culture and of modern society, reflexive of the definitive socio-cultural and spiritual activity of its time. I will be looking at Robin's and the other characters' existence in, and attempt to break away from, a cultural framework that decreasingly tolerates a non-binary mode of being. Thus, the end—in both senses of the word, 'goal' and 'fate'—of Robin's quest is a detachment from a society grounded in 'either/or' choices in favor of a long-lost 'neither/nor' possibility. Robin, the unsexed "beast turning human" (Barnes and Plumb 36), is descending in her mind into the only setting where such form of being was last possible: prehistory.

[1] Photo inscription by Barnes from the 1920s, taken from the Djuna Barnes collection in Maryland.

A little researched field within female modernism in general and Djuna Barnes scholarship in particular is the intense interest in ancient traditions and occult notions. Barnes had a long standing affair with things beyond ordinary understanding and sensation. She grew up in the same house where Zadel Barnes, her grandmother and a distinguished medium, conducted her channeling sessions. For Barnes, the affection for the exotic and the unconscious was early provoked by the outings to the circus with her grandmother when she was a child, and her fascination with the circus animals surfaces in her later journalism as well. Bonnie Kime Scott, discussing the beast motive in Barnes's works, examines some of the illustrations Barnes made for her works, noting that the images Barnes based her drawings for *Ryder* on is *L'imagerie populaire*, a 1926 collection of images dating back to the fifteenth century. Those images that Barnes loved the most, continues Scott, depict animals posing in human roles in reverse power relations. Her acquaintance with the humanized circus animals of the famous Hippodrome Circus "who mock the hierarchy of humankind over the natural world" (Winkiel 15) are reverberated in some of these drawings. She was moved by the gaze of the animals that she encountered in the circus, their promise of secret knowledge unveiled, and the idea of a distant bestial past that humans have the inner knowledge, albeit secret, to reconnect with. On other occasions, she drew mythic beasts, and in *Ladies Almanack* she depicted some of the human characters as animals. One picture, drawn to accompany *The Book of Repulsive Women*, published in 1915, shows a creature that is a cross between animal and human, and Scott calls attention to its striking resemblance with Robin of *Nightwood*. Her countless mythic references that appear from time to time in pictures as well as words thus make certain what Donna Gerstenberger calls "an emphasis on ontology [as] central to an understanding of Barnes's work" (33).

Barnes's body of work as journalist, writer and occasional illustrator shows that she not only lived in an era of increased attraction to ancient philosophies, but she herself actively sought the opportunity to study some of them. Let me take a short detour here to

review some of the relevant cultural and spiritual developments of the 1920s.

In the 1920s public culture started to develop an attraction to all things exotic, a current that was in part facilitated by the discovery of geographical sites that had long captured the imagination of modern culture. One was the 1911 discovery of the lost Inca city of Macchu-Pichu in the Peruvian Andes, and the other, more impressive one took place in 1922, as British Egyptologists Carnarvon and Carter unearthed the tomb of King Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings ("Mixing Art With Exotic Culture"). At the same time, the public sites of entertainment popularized shows that combined the old fascination with the 'freakish' with the new commodified spectacle. Productions featuring wild and exotic animals were still quite popular, and the foreignness of black skin combined with an eroticized body made a star of the Black singer and dancer Josephine Baker. The trend spread over to art, and James Clifford notes that this modernist aesthetic worked to "provoke manifestations of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious" (qtd in Kaivola 172).

The Russian mystic and dancemaster George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff was one of the few gurus to make an impact on female modernists, including Barnes. Gurdjieff is explicitly linked in several studies of the occult to some Left Bank women, including Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, Janet Flanner, Solita Solano, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, and Djuna Barnes—all attending the study group at least a few occasions but most of them devoted 'pupils' (Mapel-Bloomberg). Jacob Needleman's essay on his life and teachings reveals that he was born in Armenia in 1866 and spent his youth journeying to Central Asian and Middle Eastern monasteries and schools of awakening, "searching for knowledge about man that neither traditional religion nor modern science by itself could offer him" (Needleman). Gurdjieff settled in Paris in 1922, and his teachings inspired several of the modernist women to form a study group in order to get acquainted with his doctrines and hopefully implement in their own lives some of what they successfully sorted out.

Gurdjieff came in a time of crisis in modern culture. The crisis and disillusionment of modern existence that characterized the era of modernism were all the more unbearable as they were preceded by

much optimism. Mapel-Bloomberg identifies a "transformation from a more positive and utopian Spiritualism practiced in the latter part of the nineteenth century to a more nihilistic and distopian, or occult spiritualism in the years after the Great War." The modernist writers suffered the personal and economic tragedies of the times as harshly as anyone, and for them, "Modernism became Morbidity" (Mapel-Bloomberg). In 1919, Djuna Barnes was asked in an interview, "Why such morbidity?", and she answered:

> Morbid? You make me laugh. This life I write and draw and portray is life as it is, and therefore you call it morbid. Look at my life. Look at the life around me. Where is this beauty that I am supposed to miss? The nice episodes that others depict? Is not everything morbid? I mean the life of people stripped of their masks. Where are the relieving features?
> Often I sit down to work at my drawing board, at my typewriter. All of a sudden my joy is gone. I feel tired of it all because, I think, 'What's the use?' Today we are, tomorrow dead. We are born and don't know why. We live and suffer and strive, envious or envied. We love, we hate, we work, we admire, we despise... .Why? And we die, and no one will ever know that we have been born. (qtd in Mapel-Bloomberg)

In the aftermath of the horrors of World War I, the devaluation of human life and worth and the shifting emphasis from the 'individual' to the 'mass'—as appearing in the varied forms of war casualties, workers in factories, or commodities on assembly lines—called for a spirit of guidance in the lives of modernist women writers.

Gurdjieff offered a clear view of the causes of the fallen state of the individual, of which Needleman gives a useful summary. According to Gurdjieff, for life to be lived to its full potential, humans need the balanced and fully realized presence of three faculties: the intellectual or thinking, the emotional, and the instinctive or moving centers. Contrary to that, the scientific, technical and material progress that has been taking place in modern civilization has "[pushed] the individual further into only one of the centers—one third, as it were, of one's real self-nature" (Needleman). Technological inventions like the assembly line drove workers into the moving center, and participation in the war required the same faculty from the soldiers in the front. Similarly, modern society honored clothing that emphasized the individual's commitment to one end of the man/woman polarity, hence hiding

behind the costume one half of their true androgynous nature. Animals were showcased in a way that accentuated an artificial hierarchy between human and animal whereby the 'human animal' was not allowed to expose existing animalistic impulses within the existing cultural framework.

The modernists keenly felt the impact of these dramatic changes. Along with her contemporaries, Barnes felt that the modern enterprise of the beginning of the twentieth century has rendered individuals blind to values they formerly cherished. The broadening human horizon that the emerging possibilities promised was only pretense; the new circumstances thrust many into the pursuit of material wealth, or in the case of World War I, mass killing. Although the conventional notions of development created the illusion of autonomous consciousness, in fact there was no "authentic 'I am' ... only an egoism which masquerades as the authentic self" (Needleman). Thus, as Needleman continues, "modern man's world perceptions and his own mode of living are not the conscious expressions of his being taken as a complete whole. ... on the contrary, they are only the unconscious manifestation of one or another part of him." In this sense, says Gurdjieff, human beings are automatons, giving only mechanical reactions to stimuli coming from the inside and the outside, and are incapable of consciously utilizing and authentically expressing in one gesture their thought, feeling, and will. They do not have control over their situation and thus can only passively suffer the things that are happening to them. The material growth brought with it moral degeneration that went unnoticed for many because of the spell of civilizational progress on the individual.

Modernist women did not depend on Gurdjieff for an enumeration of the calamities of the human situation as much as they depended on him for a path that they could follow to regain a lost sense of self. I am turning to Needleman for a paraphrase of the Gurdjieffian idea: "Deeply buried though it is, the awakened conscience ... is the only force in modern man's nearly completely degenerate psyche that can actually bring parts of his nature together." The *how* of this initiative consisted of "physical work, intensive emotional interactions, and the study of a vast range of ideas about humanity and the universal world," and also movements taken from sacred dances, all toward the ideal of obtaining a sense of cosmic wholeness (Needleman).

Gurdjieff's school of thought was often referred to as "the primordial tradition," and his program indeed involved a kind of prehistoric state to be recovered. Sandra M. Gilbert identifies a similar search for the "androgynous wholeness and holiness of prehistory" (217) as the prime objective of many modernist women writers. I think it neither necessary nor feasible to prove whether all female modernists were influenced by Gurdjieff, but the common line of thought is obvious. He alluded to the regaining of a sense of cosmic wholeness in a time when the human psyche was cluttered with deceptive notions about self-realization, and Mircea Eliade describes this same sentiment, only in connection with the ceremonial transvestism of many non-Western peoples. She writes that these societies practiced rituals whose purpose was "a coming out of one's self, a transcending of one's own historically controlled situation ... in order to restore, if only for a brief moment, the initial completeness, the intact source of holiness and power ... the undifferentiated unity that preceded Creation" (qtd in Gilbert 217). George Baker and Walter Driscoll also mention the Gurdjieffian idea of certain reintegrative moments "in which thought, feeling and sensation of one's physical presence were in an unmistakable relationship," moments which Gurdjieff calls special "I am" moments of "remembering oneself."

The Shaman's Lore

Barnes's profound esoteric interest probably extended beyond the teachings of Gurdjieff though. There are other traditions relevant for the ensuing discussion of *Nightwood* that share many of the characteristics of the Gurdjieffian ideas, mainly because Gurdjieff knew them from his early studies. Allen Holmquist and Ralph Metzner both group together several frameworks of thought, including shamanism, meditation, alchemy and ancient mythology, under the name 'traditions of transformation,' because they all address the notion of reconciliation of polarities. Holmquist identifies three major oppositional pairs that, according to shamanism, need to be integrated so that the individual may experience a wholeness of the psyche that was lost with the emergence of Western society. These pairs are male/female, human/animal, and good/evil, and the way to work with them is a three-stage process: one perceives the presence of dualities,

understands the need to reconcile them, and ultimately finds that they are in reality non-existent (Holmquist).

The concept of androgyny holds that "all human beings are, in essence, comprised of both masculine and feminine characteristics, although one is generally more developed and expressed in the world." Ancient traditions emphasize the need to bring the two kinds of energies together within the individual; shamans may try to achieve the integration by ritual transvestitism and long periods of living as the other sex does (Holmquist).

The boundary between humans and animals is also conceptualized as the distinction between intellect and instinct. Holmquist remarks that "[t]he Western world, through its focus on the preeminence and development of the rational mind, ... has lost an important connection with animals, our own animal body, and our basic animal-like and animistic instincts." It is notable that Gurdjieff blamed Western society in a similar manner for disintegrating the individual to the point where they lost touch with their authentic selves. Shamans admit to that shattering of the whole as well when they say that in ancient times animals and humans could understand each other's language and existed in close relation and harmony.

Concerning the opposition of good and evil, Metzner notes that in alchemical literature "the dark, destructive aspects of the psyche are symbolized by the nigredo (blackness), that has to be transmuted and uplifted through the alchemical fires of purification."

Indeed, both Gurdjieff and the 'traditions of transformation' emphasize a reconciliation and equal redistribution of the shattered parts of human nature, with the grand design of experiencing, if only for a moment, a kind of primordial wholeness, in Mircea Eliade's words, "the undifferentiated Unity that preceded Creation" (qtd in Gilbert 217). At the same time, both of them imply that the externalized part of the self assumes the place of the whole, in Gurdjieff terminology, it "masquerades as the authentic self" (Needleman). Modern society was permeated by an all-encompassing masquerade that involved a 'part stands for the whole' scenario; meanwhile, the individual was locked into societally called for and defined positions that helped keep up binary order.

Barnes's Night Sky

In *Nightwood*, Barnes presents the reader with an intricate cosmology that is largely derived from the several spiritual teachings and ancient mythologies that she was familiar with. This cosmology is made up in such a way that she establishes associations and makes cross-references between concepts from a variety of sources, to the effect that in the end each one seems inherently related to another, sometimes helping, other times hindering understanding. In Louise DeSalvo's wording, Barnes has a style "which simultaneously masks and reveals" (qtd in Michel 54), well illustrated in the following passage, spoken by Matthew O'Connor, which sets *Nightwood*'s own special mythology going:

> Have you ... ever thought of the peculiar polarity of times and times; and of sleep? Sleep, the slain white bull? Well, I, Doctor Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor, will tell you how the day and the night are related by their division. The very constitution of twilight is a fabulous reconstruction of fear, fear bottom-out and wrong side up. Every day is thought upon and calculated, but the night is not premeditated. The Bible lies the one way, but the night gown the other. The Night, 'Beware of that dark door!' " (Barnes and Plumb 70)[2].

This passage is the first one in a succession of musings by the doctor about the nature of the night, in which Matthew invokes an Indo-Iranian creation myth involving a white bull. The myth, which is the central episode of the cult of Mithraism, involves the sun god Mithra, or Mithras, who was born under a sacred tree and beside a sacred stream, holding a torch and a knife. The sun god Sol sent a raven to Mithras with the order to slay the mysterious white bull. When Mithras killed the bull with his knife, the bull became the Moon and Mithras' cloak turned into the sky. As the myth goes, thus came the alteration of day and night, animals and plants started to form and time was created ("The Legend of Mithras"). Barnes simultaneously hints at the initial nonexistence of day and night, and the moment of their split into binary opposition: the instant the world was created, it

[2] All subsequent quotations from *Nightwood* are cited parenthetically with page numbers only.

was structured by polarity. With another stroke of the pen, she associates the 'night' with 'the unconscious'; sleep opens up the "dark door" of desires lacking the sanction of the Bible. The mention of the night gown is pronounced here as just moments before this dialogue Nora found Matthew in a woman's night gown. But the gesture of 'twilight' makes it clear that 'convergence' will assume a more emphasized status than the 'polarity' of day and night. In the intricate cosmology of *Nightwood*, the binary of 'day' and 'night' will stand for further dualities, and their division will come to denote their brief blending into One, in a moment of paradoxical nonexistence.

I take this assertion as my starting point, adding that numerous others might equally be valid, especially in the case of Barnes whose evasiveness was probably the only thing she had a commitment to. In only a few sentences, Barnes sets the stage for an endlessly explicable flow of ideas regarding the nature of binaries as inevitably present in modern society, and as the title of the novel shows, the 'night' takes a major role in this enterprise. In fact, it has its own life as an extra character, acting as a gate to many of the issues and patterns of thought that Barnes plays around with in the course of *Nightwood*.

The first four chapters introduce the main characters—Felix, Matthew, Robin, Nora and Jenny—and at the same provide capsule glimpses into their respective characters and priorities. The setting is the increasingly commodified space of public culture and the "splendid and reeking falsification" (11) of the circus, "taking its flight from the immense disqualification of the public" (11). The characters are in a search for definitions for themselves and a sense of belonging. Felix inherited from his father Guido Volkbein an obsessive "pretense to a Barony" (5), with all due fabricated evidence, including "a coat of arms that he had no right to and a list of progenitors ... who had never existed" (5), and "life-sized portraits of Guido's claim to father and mother" (7) which were in actual fact mere "reproductions of two intrepid and ancient actors" (7). Doctor O'Connor, "pathetic and alone" (30), is looking for his man and pursuing his futile wish to "boil some good man's potatoes and toss up a child for him every nine months by the calendar" (78). Nora has "that mirrorless look of polished metals which report not so much the object as the movement of the object" (48); she is "endlessly embroiled in a preoccupation without a problem" (48), a

preoccupation that soon finds an object in Robin's unattainable love. Robin is awakened from a sleep "incautious and entire" (36) and suffers from being hunted at once by "love and anonymity" (53). And Jenny, in being "a bold and authentic robber" (59) of other people's objects, stories and memories, "defiled the very meaning of personality in her passion to be a person" (60). Their respective claims to personality masquerade as their true nature and longing, but in lieu of the truth of the self they live on substitutes, without knowing. Gurdjieff described this state as the general self-deception of the individual who is in "endless pursuit of social recognition, sensory pleasures, or the vague and unrealizable goal of 'happiness'" (Needleman), notions that cultural conditioning implanted in their minds. This masquerade of illusory senses is, according to Gurdjieff, poor substitute for the autonomous and consciously lived life (Needleman), a sentiment that is also expressed by Matthew O'Connor, who has a 'gift' of verbalizing others' miseries. Although everyone strives to live it to the fullest, "[l]ife is not to be told, call it as loud as you like, it will not tell itself" (109), he proclaims, because that would require an awakened consciousness; in fact, people are asleep:

> Donne says: 'We are all conceived in close prison, in our mothers' wombs we are close prisoners all. When we are born, we are but born to the liberty of the house—all our life is but a going out to the place of execution and death. Now was there ever any man seen to sleep in the Cart, between Newgate and Tyburn? Between the prison and the place of execution, does any man sleep?' Yet he says, 'Men sleep all the way'" (82).

The curse of the "slain white bull" is sleep itself: ever since the beginning of time, since the alteration of day and night, people have lost their unity, therefore cast to an eternal sleep of self-awareness. O'Connor, self-proclaimed "god of darkness" (106), tells that life—"this extremity, this badly executed leap in the dark" (28)—,as members of society live it, is spent in eternal darkness, "sleep[ing] in a long reproachful dust against ourselves" (72). His view of the human condition as 'sleep' is shared by Gurdjieff (Needleman), a man not unlike Matthew: both share a vast knowledge of ancient wisdoms and traditions. They find it equally impossible to get to the "authentic 'I

am' (Needleman) or the "alchemy" (72) by virtue of explaining it with words:

> "To think of the acorn it is necessary to become the tree. And the tree of night is the hardest tree to mount, the dourest tree to scale, the most difficult of branch, the most febrile to the touch, and sweats a resin and drips a pitch against the palm that computation has not gambled. Gurus ... expect you to contemplate the acorn ten years at a stretch, and if, in that time, you are no wiser about the nut, you are not very bright, and that may be the only certainty with which you will come away ..." (72).

Matthew contends that the nature of night and sleep has to be an object of continuous examination and contemplation, because they are what stand between individuals and their true self-realization and spiritual awakening, processes that are hindered by the cloud of deceptions through which modern culture operates.

In Barnes's literary cosmology, then, the night often alludes to 'suppression' as well. With the creation of the binary of day and night, the unified One was split into two converging halves. Ever since, at 'night' there can be no 'day,' and vice versa. In this sense, then, the 'night' suppresses its other half, and all binaries inherently contain this same either/or scenario. The doctor tells of the French that they "alone leave testimony of the two in the dawn; we tear up the one for the sake of the other, not so the French," because "they think of the two as one continually" (71). Conceptualizing the two as One whole thus interrupts the working of the binary oppositional scheme and facilitates the attainment of forgotten harmony.

In modern Western thought grounded in binary oppositions, the 'night' has associations not only with 'sleep,' 'darkness' and 'suppressed', but many other notions as well. Traditions of transformation work with three pairs of polarities whose balancing are mutually important in many ancient systems of spiritualism: masculine and feminine, good and evil, and human and animal consciousness. In modern society, there are usually different values attached to each side of these dualities, and a huge emphasis is placed on their clear and unambiguous separation within the pairs. The shift in public culture toward fixed meaning caused a split in the way humans' animal descent was treated, and fashion also began to show commitment to distinctly sex-specific clothing. As far as the third pair

of opposites is concerned, both religion and common ethics have always been unequivocal in their opinion about good and evil. With the increase in technological inventions and new scientific discoveries, public rhetoric characteristically sided with intellect as opposed to instinct; and in fashion social opinion honored a dress code that reflected traditional heterosexual roles. Consequently, the latent members of these three pairs—animal instincts, evil tendencies and sex contra-specific behavior—have always been associated with 'suppression.' *Nightwood* addresses all three of them in the way ancient traditions do: it grants a distinguished status to the simultaneous presence of both sides of the polarity, thereby eventually extinguishing the oppositional energy of one another.

Like a spiritual leader to Nora, Matthew makes the first association of 'night' with animal consciousness. He proclaims that in order to consolidate the impulses of night and day, at first one must "[make] a roadway for" (72) the latent side—the suppressed night (un)consciousness—and allow its energies to repossess one half of the personality. Continuing with his praise of the French, he offers his insights by way of saying:

> "The French have made a detour of filthiness—Oh, the good dirt! Whereas you are of a clean race, of a too eagerly washing people, and this leaves no road for you. The brawl of the Beast leaves a path for the Beast. You wash your brawl with every thought, with every gesture, with every conceivable emollient and *savon*, and expect to find your way again. A Frenchman makes a navigable hour with a tuft of hair, a wrenched *bretelle*, a rumpled bed. The tear of wine is still in his cup to catch back the quantity of its bereavement; his *cantiques* straddle two backs, night and day."
>
> [...]
>
> "Be as the Frenchman, ... he can trace himself back by his sediment, vegetable and animal, and so find himself in the odour of wine in its two travels, in and out, packed down beneath an air that has not changed its position during that strategy" (73).

The French alone, says Matthew, embrace their Beast, unlike the Americans, who "[separate] the two for fear of indignities" (73). Modern society, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, took pride in its intellectual development as a 'race' and increasingly denied connection with anything primitive and

instinctive, a process that was probably facilitated by the spreading of machinery and the automation of work tasks as well. Whereas the French find themselves even "in the odour of wine," just as "[a]nimals find their way about largely by the keenness of their nose" (101), most other cultures "have lost [theirs] in order not to be one of them" (101). Robin, however, has no problem reconnecting with her Beast; she has that "odour of memory" (100) which modern peoples are missing. In her eyes she has something like "the long unqualified range in the iris of wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye" (36). Robin is different from the French in that the latter build a path backward to their Beast, while Robin is already there, "[carrying] the quality of the 'way back' as animals do" (39):

> The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a 'picture' forever arranged, is for the contemplative mind the chiefest danger. Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory; as insupportable a joy as would be the vision of an eland coming down an aisle of trees, chapleted with orange blossoms and bridal veil, a hoof raised in the economy of fear, stepping in the trepidation of flesh that will become myth; as the unicorn is neither man nor beast deprived, but human hunger pressing its breast to its prey" (36).

Figure 1.

Robin's "beast turning human" evokes in the spectator images, feelings, senses, but never thoughts, as if something in connection with this creature were somehow inherently incompatible with the intellect. She does not even speak much, except to animals (137), which makes her akin to those people living long ago who, according to shamans, knew the language of the animals. The image of the unicorn, the white horse with a long horn, is reminiscent of a drawing by Barnes from her 1915 *The Book of Repulsive Women*, reprinted in Bonnie Kime Scott's essay:

Scott imagines Robin's figure into this drawing, giving the following description:

> ... a female nude, kneeling on one leg with the back leg extended on a fragmentary brick wall, clutching two four-petalled flowers on straggling stems. The woman/creature's back leg dwindles without achieving a foot, an erect tail rises in a dotted line above her buttocks, and two feathers or ears top her head. Her facial features are masked or made up so that a larger than human grimace and a small horn appear... . [it] is ritualistically oriented toward the side of the picture where the dark background is cut away below by white vertical marks resembling sprouts, and above by a crescent shape (Scott 44–5).

This transforming figure is by all means "outside the 'human type'—a wild thing caught in a woman's skin" (121), and mythic in its outer features, having both animal's and human's body parts. I agree with Scott that the horns have special importance: *Nightwood*'s Robin is portrayed as having "temples like those of young beasts cutting horns" (113). It is also intriguing that as the doctor goes on elaborating the prominence of horns, he calls attention to old duchesses and asks, "Have you ever seen them go into a large assembly of any sort ... without feathers, flowers, sprigs of oat, or some other gadget nodding above their temples!" (113). The accessories that these women wear above their temples at once seem like horns: a remainder and reminder of the bestial past they are otherwise so much removed from. The careful placement in the cultural setting is important as well, as when Robin is first met with; she "seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room" (34), surrounded by exotic plants and cut flowers, a mix of wild and domesticated. The whole episode is indeed much like it was staged:

“the set, the property of an unseen *dompteur*, half lord, half promoter, over which one expects to hear the strains of an orchestra of wood-winds render a serenade which will popularize the wilderness” (34). Susana Martins suggests that “Robin is seen not so much as the primitive, but as the culturally defined, carefully placed in a theatrical mise-en-scene,” and from the way Robin is presented to the spectator, I am further reminded of Barnes’s 1915 “The Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus” interview, even the title of which betrays Barnes’s predisposition toward seeing the animals of the circus not as wild and unyielding but only culture’s idea of the primitive, tailored for the masses. The presentation of nature as Barnes reads it into the new circus space is mere costume; one cannot escape the similarities between Barnes’s “ritual of familiarity and respect” (Scott 43) with which she greets the animals at the basement of the Hippodrome on the one hand, and the *Nightwood* scene of Robin’s visit to the circus. In this scene, the animals that are circling inside the ring “all but climbed over at that point” (49) where Robin is sitting. When the lions are brought in, one of them seems to communicate with Robin:

> ... as one powerful lioness came to the turn of the bars, exactly opposite the girl, she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface (49).

This episode is like a mirror scene of Barnes’s bewildered salute to the caged animals; both involve humanized circus animals, kept behind bars for the protective separation of humans from animals. Although still a majestic animal in appearance, the lioness has been domesticated so that she establishes eye contact with Robin: “the long unqualified range in the iris of wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye” (36) is already gone. It is also significant that at the time of this scene, Robin is married to Felix, having bore him a child not long ago; in a sense, the lioness sees her own situation echoed in Robin who is just as domesticated as she is: one is society’s version of the primitive, the other is culture’s idea of woman. Robin returns the gaze of the lioness and is disturbed by the apparency of kinship and the sudden rush of prehistoric memory; she at once finds herself in the position of spectator and spectacle.

The myth of the “slain white bull” (70) also asserts that the death of the bull and the creation of the world brought along the struggle of Good and Evil on earth (The Legend of Mithras). In light of this, then, day and night inevitably entail the conflict of good and evil, a conflict that can be resolved by embracing both and neither. Matthew says that ‘[a] man is whole only when he takes into account his shadow as well as himself” (101), simultaneously referring to the bestial and the sinful side of the psyche. Matthew maintains that the struggle of good and evil begins in a person’s life soon after they are born, but that “every child is born prehistorically” (115), equally “damned and innocent from the start, and wretchedly—as he must—on those two themes—whistles his tune” (102). Habit conditions people to suppress their evil side, but “[t]here is not one of us who, given an eternal incognito, a thumbprint nowhere set against our souls, would not commit rape, murder and all abominations” (75). One becomes One only if they counterbalance the two opposites, which, in turn, will eventually neutralize each other:

> Don’t I know that the only way to know evil is through truth? The evil and the good know themselves only by giving up their secret face to face. The true good who meets the true evil (Holy Mother of Mercy, are there any such!) learns for the first time how to accept neither; the face of the one tells the face of the other the half of the story that both forgot (116).

This passage is analogous with the one about “neither man nor beast deprived” (36), and as animals are usually thought innocent by virtue of having no volition, it follows that Robin—a “beast turning human” (36)—is halfway between good and evil, “meet of child and desperado” (34). It is captivating that ever since her first scene where she was being awakened in the hotel room by the doctor, Robin had become part of culture in more ways than one: though reluctantly, she began to participate in public culture and take up habits and positions available within the framework of society. She got married, bore a child, visited the circus, and got involved in a relationship with Nora. She even “took the Catholic vow” (42), a move that was probably part of her “turning human” (36); but this move toward ‘legitimate goodness’ held no reward for her:

> She prayed, and her prayer was monstrous, because in it there was no margin left for damnation or forgiveness, for praise or for blame — those who cannot conceive a bargain cannot be saved or damned. She could not offer herself up, she only told of herself, in a preoccupation that was its own predicament (43).

Religion, operating with binaries as well through the continuous attribution of the categories of innocence and sin, cannot conceive of good and evil as nonexistent/One, just like Robin cannot be one thing, only neither.

The third polarity that *Nightwood* is preoccupied with is that of masculine/feminine, and the characters who seek consolidation of this opposite within themselves mainly employ clothing as the agent of repossessing the far end of the binary. Matthew himself is like a modern sorcerer, a shaman, wearing his night gown like a wizard's cloak; he is engaged in the kind of ritual transvestism through which shamans recaptured the female energies for a wholeness of experience. In the doctor's room one may find "perfume bottles, ... pomades, creams, rouges, powder boxes and puffs... . laces, ribands, stockings, ladies' underclothing and an abdominal brace" (68), "yet this room was also muscular, a cross between a *chambre à coucher* and a boxer's training camp" (69). When Nora appears in his apartment in the middle of the night, she finds him "in a woman's flannel night gown ... [his] head ... framed in the golden semi-circle of a wig with long pendent curls that touched his shoulders, ... heavily rouged and his lashes painted" (69). He aims at equilibrium between male and female when he refers to God in the feminine, saying that "[p]ersonally I call her 'she' because of the way she made me; it somehow balances the mistake." Once he calls himself the "bearded lady" (84), an allusion to the famed performer/'freak' of the old participatory circus. Robin, too, dresses in clothes culturally assigned for the 'opposite sex.' She is "a tall girl with the body of a boy ... [with] broad shoulders ... [and] her feet large" (43), wearing men's clothes (122, 139), and her walk also exposes her as 'unwomanly' by virtue of her movements which are "slightly headlong and sideways; slow, clumsy and yet graceful, the ample gait of the night watch" (39). It is her clothes that define her as an invert; the significance of clothing is primary. Although Nora is also a lesbian, she is not a cross-dresser as society sees it. Her costume does not give away her

lesbianism, moreover, it conforms to the conventions of gender-specific clothing. Robin's marrying a man and bearing a child is of minor importance when all the while she dresses in men's clothes. In contrast, Nora does not marry, does not have a child, and has relationships exclusively with women; still, she dresses in women's clothing. She can actively violate a number of social conventions by virtue of her sexual behavior and it will still not be enough for the purpose of 'qualifying' as an invert of culture's definition. Even the disruption of gender roles goes unnoticed if it is not accompanied by an outwardly visible inversion; it is Robin and Matthew who are visibly subversive, and this turning around of the rules that culture sets up for them is their way of "restoring the primordial chaos of transvestism or genderlessness" (Gilbert 218). In the reconciliation ritual the individual reaches a state of consciousness that is true to the prehistoric wholeness of (un)sexed self:

> The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace—neither one and half the other ... in the girl it is the prince, and in the boy it is the girl that makes a prince a prince—and not a man. (114)

By embracing and consequently eliminating the inner conflict of male and female, one "journeys beyond"—and before—"gender" (Gilbert 196). While costume is the perpetrator of binary positioning in modern homogenized culture, in the course of their ritual transformation Robin and Matthew appropriate it for their own means to eliminate that same artificial positioning and thus create an alternative reality of inclusivity.

Robin seems to exist at the 'twilight' of the night, that is, she incorporates within herself all three pairs of dualities that I examined. She emanates an "'odour of memory,' like a person who has come from some place that we have forgotten and would give our life to recall" (100); at the same time, there is an antagonistic quality to her existence which keeps her discontent. As Nora puts it, "she was asleep and I struck her awake... . she who had managed in that sleep to keep whole... . and there before my eyes I saw her corrupt all at once and withering, because I had struck her sleep away" (121). When Nora took possession of her in love, when she was awakened from her sleep

in the hotel room, when she was taken by Felix, when she gave birth to Guido, her "first position in attention" (113) was invaded by a force she had no concept of, as she had no concept of anything beside herself. Culture's successive arms plotted to dress her in the "garments of the known" (114) and started to forget her sleep, asking Nora to remember her, "[p]robably because she has difficulty in remembering herself" (102). As I already noted, in Gurdjieffian theory the phrase 'remembering oneself' denotes that state in which the individual reconnects with their primordial consciousness, and I take the word 'remember' to have a double meaning here: someone who forgets cannot re-member themselves, because their authentic selves are in pieces. Robin, too, is 'dis-membered' in this sense, for "[s]he would kill the world to get at herself if the world were in the way, and it *is* in the way" (128).

Gurdjieff's idea is that in modern societies people lost connection with all three of their faculties that they need in order to keep up an integrated, authentically conscious self-awareness: the intellectual, emotional and instinctive faculties are not equally developed within one person. Robin, Matthew and Nora all suffer from the peculiar modernist malady of fragmentary selves. Matthew's speeches occupy almost half of the novel, and true to the watchman that he is, he speaks, and keeps record of everything: "The reason I'm so remarkable is that I remember everyone even when they are not about" (135). In his "priceless galaxy of misinformation called the mind" (124), he has all the secret and obscure deeds of nature figured out, but only to be able to say, "[t]o think is to be sick" (131). He speaks with longing about being an animal, "born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and at the end of the day, shutting out memory with the dropping of the lid" (113). But his tragedy is that he 'knows' but cannot 'do'. Of Nora he says, she is "beating her head against her heart, sprung over, her mind closing her life up like a heel on a fan, rotten to the bone for love of Robin. My God, how that woman can hold on to an idea!" (133). Her preoccupation is not with the matters of the mind but rather those of the heart:

> Love becomes the deposit of the heart, analogous in all degrees to the 'findings' in a tomb. As in one will be charted the taken place of the body, the raiment, the utensils necessary to its other life, so in the heart of the lover will be traced, as an indelible shadow, that

> which he loves. In Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood. Thus the body of Robin could never be unloved, corrupt or put away (51).

Nora's world revolves around her emotions for Robin; Robin's world revolves around herself. Matthew confesses that he does not like her; Robin is unlike him, but he has to "admit that much: sort of fluid blue under her skin, as if the hide of time had been stripped from her, and with it, all transactions with knowledge" (113). Her animal consciousness is much emphasized, and in accordance with this fact, Robin seldom utters anything in the course of *Nightwood*, and nothing in the last chapter, on which Carolyn Allen comments that Robin moves "back into the preverbal world" (qtd in Mylin). Indeed, Robin's presence is much more pronounced in the passages about the beast than anywhere else, and, accordingly, Matthew and Nora dominate their respective territories of intellect and emotion; all three characters easily offer themselves up for such interpretation. Their nostalgia for a mythic and highly hypothetical moment before Creation, before the alteration of day and night, indeed suggests that their fears were similar to Gurdjieff's, and naturally Barnes's: that modern life at the *dawn* of the twentieth century only furthered the *dusk* of true self-awareness.

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HANS-WOLFGANG SCHALLER

THE SURVIVAL OF THE NOVEL: E. L. DOCTOROW'S ESCAPE OUT OF THE POSTMODERN DEADEND

I

20th century literary theory has been marked by a continuously increasing radical rejection of the notion that literature is able to portrait or to represent reality. This is a decisive deviation from the more than 2000 years old tradition of western thought to believe in *mimesis* as a key term to explain the special contribution of art to the understanding of life and to point at the uniqueness of human existence. Aristotle, for example, in his Poetics claimed that *mimesis,* the faculty to imitate reality is the distinguishing human quality which enables us, other than all other life forms, to learn about the world around and beyond *us. Mimesis,* then, is the distinctive human ability to widen our horizon and to transcend the limits of a mere existence which would be simply aiming at maintaining biological functions intact. The fundamental initial notion of mimesis is that there is something outside ourselves, some covert Order of things which includes our very existence and the knowledge of which would be fundamental to understand who we are.[1] The basic assumption of course is that man is able to correlate self and not self and that the artistic representation of the non-self in itself is valid and that the sign used for depicting the non-self really is a reliable referent of the

[1] cp. Joseph C. Schöpp, Ausbruch aus der Mimesis. Der amerikanische Roman im Zeichen der Postmoderne, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1990, 19–45.

strange reality. A novel, then, would be an imaginative dialectic form mediating between self and world and creatively relying an the solidity and meaning of the linguistic sign referring to some external reality. In saying that art is `creatively relying' on the dependability of the sign, however, also is to point at a problem which from the very beginning was inherent in the concept of mimesis.

Gerald F. Else, 1957, in his monumental commentary an Aristotle's *Poetics,* repeatedly stresses the double nature of mimesis, that is as imitation and as constructive technique. *Mimesis* thus also is "the making or construction of the poem",[2] thus a novel finally would be the draught of a world by itself, inherently, however, referring to and depicting the real world at large. Therefore, *mimesis* is not to be understood as a simple imitation and precise rendering of reality it is also a creative act of giving form and meaning to occurrences man experiences. Thus the literary artist is giving form and meaning to events he believes to be of significance. At the center of Aristotle's discussion of *mimesis* therefore, and it is important in our current theoretical debate about postmodern implications of linguistic and epistemological theory an literature's validity to remember that, stands the notion that mimetic representation means constructing a meaningful and believable plot, which is representing human action. Other than the never ending flux of life human action necessarily consists of a beginning a middle and an ending.[3] On the abstract level Aristotle therefore argues that the plot line of a good story has to follow the requirements of the intended effect, it is important to find an effective beginning, a meaningful (morally of ethical) climactic middle, and a satisfying ending. This of course raises the question of moral standards as any human action involves or touches the lives of others. That is why formally a plot has to have a size proportional to the ethical problem or problems presented, and in logical terms it has to give a reasonable impression of plausibility as to the sequence of events.

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[2] Gerald F. Else, Aristotle's Poetics: *The Argument,* Leiden: Brill, 1957, 9.

[3] cp. Richard Kannicht, "Handlung als Grundbegriff der Aristotelischen Theorie des Dramas", Poetica, 8, (1976), 326-336, 331.

II

The problems an author has to face in order to construe a good plot are considerable. Questions arise such as: what events depict a valid ethical problem of the time? where do the ethical norms for the proposed solution come from? does the culturally transmitted idea of coherence and meaning of life stand up to one's own changing experience? how do individual decisions touch the lives of others? On all these counts 24th century linguistic and philosophical theory has become increasingly wary, mistrusting inclusive world views such as religious concepts or ideological convictions of any sort. More radical, even, was the increasing doubt in man's epistemological faculty of really being able to understand anything which was not of his own making.

Two distinctive phases of development can be discerned: Modernism and postmodernism. Modernism, at the beginning of the century, was concerned with epistemological problems as economic, political, and social changes disrupted traditional explanatory models of the world and authors such as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein, to name but a few Anglo-American representatives of the movement, stressed the necessarily individual perception of anybody and begun discussing questions of literary techniques such as perspective, point of view, and stream of consciousness, as a reaction to epistemological problems arising out of pragmatism and psychoanalysis. James' "house of fiction"[4], Eliot's "objective correlative"[5], Faulkner's "art is to arrest motion"[6], or Hemingway's "the real thing"[7] prove that the belief in language's referential potential still is intact. Most intriguing is James' image of the "house of fiction", which in its totality refers to the theoretically

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[4] Richard P. Blackmur, ed., *The Art of the Novel, Critical Prefaces by Henry James,* New York, Scribner's, 1934, 46.

[5] cp. T. S .Eliot, *The Sacred Woods,* New York, 1920.

[6] cp. Jean Stein, „William Faulkner", in: Malcolm Cowley, ed., Writers at Work: The Paris Interviews, New York, 1958, 67–82.

[7] Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*, New York: Scribner's, 1932, 2.

still relevant possibility of representing life as a whole but which nevertheless is unattainable in practice as each author stands at his individual window and looks down an the procession of life revealing itself to him in the perspective offered by the particular window. But what he sees still transcends his subjectivity and the subject - object relation still is valid. Literary art, therefore, is believed to produce epistemological insights and to enhance understanding.

This is exactly where postmodernists disagree. Depending on Ferdinand de Saussure, who early in the century (1916) in his *Cours de linguistique générale* developed a theory of language in which he states the discontinuity of language and reality[8]. Language, he claims, is mere form and not substance, it is a system of signs representing not a name and the named thing or object but signifies only an idea and an accompanying sound[9]. Under the influence of the French philosophers of language such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan postmodernism in the 1960's and 1970's assumes that reality in itself has no meaningful ontological status but acquires meaning only in so far as human experience assigns specific conceptual ideas of meaning to it. Therefore there is no reality our system of linguistic signs portrays there is only a fake-reality our seemingly referential system of linguistic signs arbitrarily construes[10]. Raymond Federman even announces that "life is fiction" and consequently proclaims:

> In the fiction of the future all distinctions between the real and the imaginary, between the conscious and the subconscious, between the past and the present, between truth and untruth will be abolished. All forms of duplicity will disappear. And above all, all forms of duality will be negated—especially duality: that double-headed monster, which for centuries now, has subjected us to a system of values, an

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[8] cp. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft,* ed., Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2nd ed., 1967.

[9] cp. Joseph C. Schöpp, op.cit., 38–39

[10] cp. Ulrich Horstmann, "Parakritik und Dekonstruktion. Der amerikanische Post-Strukturalismus", in: *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* Bd.8 (1983), Heft 2, 145–158.

> ethical and aesthetical system based an the principles of good and bad, true and false, beautiful and ugly[11].

Writing fiction becomes something radically different from what we knew it to be. Freed of the mimetic obligation to represent reality and to adhere to the rules of plausibility writing becomes a creative process spinning out contents of imagination without the obligation to adhere to such things as facts, which, according to theory do not exist anyway in any kind of meaningful contexts. This is where the provocative notion comes from that the novel is dead. The end of fiction is marked by terms such as "surfiction", metafiction", "non-fiction fiction". Ever since Ronald Sukenick provocatively announced in a title of one of his books "The Death of the Novel and Other Stories" (1969) this catch-phrase has been repeated by authors and scholars alike. William H. Gass noted in 1972 "..the novelist, if he is any good, will keep us imprisoned in his language - there is literally nothing beyond"[12].

Literature thus itself becomes a piece of reality to be experienced by the reader and estimated for the immediate pleasure it gives but it cannot have any inherent meaning, ethical or otherwise.

The dividing line between fictional texts and non-fictional accounts begins to blur and even literary criticism emerges as imaginary writing an the pretext of a literary text, but in itself it is ontologically of the same kind as literature itself. Maybe that is one reason for the enormous output of literary criticism in the last decades. If you are no longer obliged to reasonably discuss matters and to show aesthetic or ethical values inherent in literature than the production of rambling and theoretically vaguely interesting texts becomes a lot easier.

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[11] Raymond Federman, „Surfiction—Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction", in: Federmau, Raymond, ed., Surfiction: *Now ...and Tomorrow,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975, 23–31, 8.

[12] William H. Gass*, Fiction and the Figures of Life,* New York, 1972, 8.

III

In 1977 Edgar Laurence Doctorow published an essay with the title "False Documents"[13]. In this article he tried to approach the problem of a literary text from a more practical perspective, laying aside linguistic and philosophical considerations, and looking at the functions texts of any kind have in modern society. As an author of fictional texts trying to relate human experience he notes that modern industrial society relies heavily an texts which linguistically communicate discoveries of science and run "on empirical thinking and precise calculations." Language is seen as a property of facts themselves - their persuasive property. We are taught that facts are to be distinguished from feeling and that feeling is what we are permitted for our rest and relaxation when the facts get us down. This is the bias of scientific method and empiricism by which the world reveals itself and gives itself over to our control insofar as we recognize the primacy of fact-reality[14].

Literature, he observes, in comparison for example to the middle ages, has dramatically lost its impact and political importance being confined to the realm of leisure and relaxation. In former times literature had something to communicate, to pass on values and to give advise. "if the story was good the counsel was valuable and therefore the story was true" (219). Doctorow obviously does not care for the philosophical and linguistic theories which caused Federman and others to enthusiastically reject notions of value, of true and false, of right and wrong; he is solely interested in the function any given text has within the communicative context of society[15]. Thus true and untrue loose their ethical meaning and are reduced to `it works which equals true, and it does not work which equals untrue'. It is surprising how Doctorow thus can evade any ideological or religious fixation

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[13] Edgar Laurence Doctorow, „Falle *Documents",American Review 27* (November 1977), 215–32.

[14] op. cit., 216.

[15] for the following discussion 1 am indebted to the excellent dissertation of Robert von Morgen, Die Romane EL. Doctorows im Kontext des *postmodernism,* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993.

and still salvage meaning on a very pragmatic level. This is rather close to the position the philosopher Richard Rorty takes in discussing objective truth. "Objective truth", he says, "is no more and no less than the best idea we currently have to explain what is going on.[16]"

That, of course, means that reality is nothing more than a concept society at any given moment agrees upon. Thus the notion of what reality really is constantly is changing. Therefore Doctorow refers to scientific language which communicates results of research as being of "the power of the regime" while literary and imaginative language to him appears as being "the power of freedom". Ever since the age of enlightenment, Doctorow observes, rationalism and empiricism dominate western civilization and rate scientific language as more important than imaginative literature. Thus it is no wonder that authors beginning with Cervantes and Defoe found it necessary to disguise the fictitious character of their tales by claiming they were simply editing manuscripts they had found or been given by a friend who in these accounts relates his adventures in the real world. They were producing " False Documents", the author hid behind a narrator in order to pass an the collective wisdom of mankind in a language that seemed to be committed to facts. This defensive attitude, imitating the scientific language in order to express imaginative and fictitious contexts is nothing but the beginning of the realistic mode of narration but its credibility is ensured only by the manner of presentation. 'Literary facts', in contrast to non-fictitious communication become believable because of the manner in which they are presented, making the text dominantly a self-referential entity and to a lesser degree an expression of the epistemological convictions of the age. And it is here where both, literary and non-literary texts, meet an a common ground because the agreed on convictions of an age determine what facts we perceive and incorporate into the mesh of our cultural identity. Doctorow gives a memorable example

> ...the regime of facts is not God but man-:made, and, as such infinitely violable. For instance, it used to be proposed as a biological fact that women were emotionally less stable and intellectually less capable than men. What we proclaim as the

[16] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980, 385.

> discovered factual world can be challenged as the questionable world we ourselves have painted - the museum of our values, dogmas, assumptions, that prescribes for us not only what we may like and dislike, believe and disbelieve, but also what we may be permitted to see and not to see. (217)

Established facts, then, are nothing but scientific and philosophical assumptions guiding and at the same time limiting our perception of the world. Doctorow concludes therefore: “Facts are the images of history, just as images are the data of fiction”. (229) Of course the old Aristotelian distinction between historiography, relating events that happened, and literature, telling about events that could happen, here looms in the background. Literary and nonliterary texts operate similarly in that they have to rely an the persuasive character of the linguistic form they are construed in. The reality beyond in both cases has no meaning, it simply exists. Meaning is generated solely by the structure of the text itself. Referring to weather reports an television, Doctorow shows how `facts’ are presented to acquire the intended meaning:

> Weather reports are constructed...with exact attention to conflict (high pressure areas clashing with lows), suspense (the climax of tomorrow’s weather prediction coming after the commercial), and other basic elements of narrative . [...] I am thus led to the proposition that there is no more fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative. (230/231)

Even if all texts are nothing but narrative generating meaning out of their structure alone, there still is a valid difference in their political functions. Nonfiction, in Western culture, pretends to explain reality according to natural laws, scientific experiments persuasively prove the validity of `facts’, thus giving assurance to the assumption that there is a meaningful universe out there. “The power of the regime”, as Doctorow calls fact-oriented text structures, may use its persuasive potential to secure political influence, to blunt people’s intellectual and emotional faculties, and eventually even to establish totalitarian regimes. Literature, “the power of freedom” an the other hand, can use its subversive capabilities to point out such dangers and to prevent society from falling prey to dexterous linguistic manipulators.

This, of course, is possible only if one overcomes the postmodern ethical and moral relativity and introduces, as Doctorow tries to do, an intersubjective ethical consensus which is based not an outside reality but an a cultural agreement as to moral norms. Aristotle's term of *mimesis* now takes an a new or rather renewed significance. Aristotle never understood *mimesis* as an imitation of reality as such but as an imitation of meaningful human action which takes place within a meaningless world. And in that sense literature again becomes possible and important as it can show good examples of how ethical and moral convictions may serve to secure and extend meaningful and fulfilling human lives. And that means that the Aristotelian *mimesis* is far from obsolete. Imitating human action in a strange world in a structured, persuasive, and logically convincing way may yet be more necessary than ever before. Thank God that every generation so far has come to this conclusion, because human creativity is the only guarantee that we will continue to lead meaningful lives.

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ANDRÁS TARNÓC

‘‘WE DESERVE A BUTTERFLY’’: THE REVERSAL OF THE POST-COLONIAL SELF IN DAVID HENRY HWANG’S *M. BUTTERFLY*

I

The purpose of this paper is to explore the shift of the paradigm of the post-colonial Self in David Henry Hwang’s 1988 drama *M. Butterfly*. While Hwang’s play offering a postmodern rendition of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* (1904) has been analyzed from numerous vantage points, I am primarily fascinated by the reversal of the original characters, that is, how a classic encounter between East and West is twisted around both sexually and culturally. My exploration of the identity shift commemorated in the drama rests on two pillars, the notion of the Self, as defined by Sartre, and Sura P. Rath’s concept of the home. The application of the abovementioned theoretical apparatus will be complemented by the examination of the drama’s semiotic context, along with an inquiry into the othering process demonstrated in the play.

II

In Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1943), a tripartite concept of the Self is envisioned. “Being for Itself” expresses the knowing consciousness, or the sum-total of I, the Historicized Self, “Being for Others” is the Mirrored Self showing how one’s existence is reflected

by the surrounding human microcosm and “Being in the World” denotes the Splintered Self, or the Self’s consciousness of the world amounting to a plethora of incomplete Selves (Tordai 244–250). While these components are present in the psyche of all human beings, the colonial and post-colonial mindset established a different prioritizing system. The colonial primarily seen as a stereotype appears as a victim, a person deprived of agency. Since s/he is described by the colonizer, (s)he is unable to alter his/her situation substantially. In the case of the Asian identity “Being for Others” and “Being in the World” dominates. The description of Asian characters in Western literature is impacted by objectification or stereotyping, suffice to refer to the “John Chinaman,” or “Gunga Din” concepts encompassing servility and ignorance, and to the images of “Suzy Wong” conveying the sexually submissive, yet innocent consort, along with “Ahmah,” projecting the Asian equivalent of the Mammy (Major 4–8). As Sartre indicates, “Being in the World” includes the infinite possibilities of Selves, frustrated by this very incompletion. The colonial Self is restricted from self-realization and actualization. The post-colonial Self, on the other hand, is not a stereotype, it emphasizes the “Being for Itself” stage at the expense of the other two.

While at first glance Sartre’s approach, especially in light of the efforts of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Leela Ghandi appears obsolete, I believe his commitment to the fight against objectification, a crucial component of the colonial relationship, and his impassionate stance against colonization, namely the French occupation of Algiers, make his theoretical model an apt research tool. Furthermore, as Irmscher recognizes, the protagonist of Hwang’s play carries the name of a famous French publishing house (625), as Gallimard Publishing, among others is the disseminator of Sartre’s most important works.

Rath’s three-part concept of the home is also instructive. “Home” can appear spatially described by Dorinne Kondo as ‘‘a safe place, where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders, it stands for community” (qtd. in Rath 10), or as a collection of memories, an imaginary community. In the temporal dimension home can function as the assortment of public myths and private memories, a collection of histories. Home can be seen as a virtual third space suggesting a belonging to two or more cultural domains, or viewed by Homi

Bhabha, a " hybrid location of perpetual tension, antagonism, and pregnant chaos" (qtd. in Rath 10). The post-colonial mindset is placed in a third space, encompassing both the colonial and post-colonial heritage. Jessica Hagedorn describes it as such: ''When I think of home now I mean three places. San Francisco Bay area really colored my work. New York is where I live. But Manila will always have a hold on me. I really don't think of myself as a citizen of one country but as a citizen of the world" (100).

In *M. Butterfly* both the notion of the Self and the concept of home gain a new interpretation. The drama testifies to the intercultural efforts of the playwright as Hwang totally abandons the American scene and locates his heroes in France and China. Inspired by a story overheard at a party concerning a relationship between a French diplomat and a male Chinese spy masquerading as a woman, Hwang presents an updated version of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly.* The story can indeed be observed from two angles and it appears to offer two protagonists, Rene Gallimard, the French diplomat, and Song Liling, the Chinese spy. Also it operates on two levels, the actual plot and the imprisoned Gallimard awaiting his trial on the charge of treason recalling his ill-starred relationship with Song-Liling. Gallimard is modeled on a real French diplomat, Bernard Bouriscot who being stationed in China in the 1950's, fell in love with a Chinese spy assuming the identity of a female opera singer. While describing this relationship the playwright provides a parallel with Puccini's opera, and/or the Butterfly myth. Gallimard searching for the stereotypical Asian woman offering her unconditional love to a Westerner is an ardent believer in the myth of Madame Butterfly:

> There is a vision of the Orient that I have. Of slender women is chong sams and kimonos who die for the love of unworthy foreign devils. Who are born and raised to be the perfect women. Who take whatever punishment we give them, and bounce back, strengthened by love, unconditionally. It is a vision that has become my life. (2868)

The drama raises several troubling questions. One concerns Gallimard's motivation upon entering this relationship. Given the situation of a French or European man stationed in the Far East, two domains of collective unconscious clash. Gallimard, infected with

Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and a desire to dominate is on the search for the stereotypical Suzy Wong. For him this relationship offers a chance of redemption, a new start. Frustrated by the assertive and threatening presence of western women, including his wife Helga, and his lover Renee, he searches for the realization of his unconscious goals.

> But as she glides past him, beautiful, laughing softly behind her fan, don't we who are men sigh with hope? We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly. (2828)

During the drama Gallimard is put on trial for several reasons. One is his obvious treason, as he is accused of passing military and diplomatic secrets to the Chinese, the second charge against him is leveled by the outside world for his ignorance, and the last point of his indictment singles him out for his domineering relationship with women. The drama also examines the issue of victimization occurring both on the physical and metaphysical level. Actual victimization denotes the mutual deception described in the play. Gallimard deceives Song, as his infatuation is not an honest one, but the product of a prejudice-formed mindset. Furthermore, he uses his relationship to his own advantage as his ‘‘native mistress’’ opens the way to a higher assignment. On the other hand, Song's deception of Gallimard is a total one, as not only is he not an opera singer, but a man impersonating a woman. Furthermore, the fraud goes so far, that Gallimard is made to believe to have sired a child. Metaphysical victimization occurs when stereotypes mutually held and nurtured by the characters clash. Gallimard conditioned by his European background arrives in the Far East with prefabricated images, and Song is not immune to seeing Westerners in disfigured concepts either as he refers to European females as ‘‘pasty big-thighed white women,” (2835) or envisions France, or Paris, as a home of ‘‘cappuccinos, men in tuxedos and bad expatriate jazz”(2834).

Objectification, viewed by Sartre as the basic source of all human conflicts (Tordai 22), is a crucial component of the drama as well. Demonstrated by his pleasure in achieving dominance over women via pornography, and through his belief in the Butterfly myth, Gallimard objectifies European and Asian women. He identifies

European women with pin-up girls and Asian ones with lotus blossoms. Furthermore, not only the Chinese, but the French as well are viewed in the form of stereotypes, suffice to refer to the jeering public comments about Gallimard's affair ''Well, I thought the French were ladies' men'' (2825). Helga, Gallimard's wife also thinks of other non-Europeans, Australians, in stereotypical terms: ''My father was an ambassador to Australia. I grew up among criminals and kangaroos'' (2830). Also, Renee "a schoolgirl who would question the role of the penis in modern society" (2852) objectifies Gallimard as she openly deconstructs the primary signifier of manhood: "…it just hangs there. This little…flap of flesh. And there's so much fuss that we make about it" (2851). Gallimard objectifies his own people as well: ''Well, I hate the French. Who just smell—period!'' (2860) or offers a generalized description of Parisians as arrogant. Finally Song at Gallimard's trial presents a potent summary of mutual stereotyping and objectification:

> The West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor…but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom—the feminine mystique (2864).

It is in this background of mutual deception, victimization, and stereotyping that the notion of the post-colonial self evolves. The application of Sartre's theory to Gallimard yields the following results. Gallimard's Historicized Self amounts to a frustrated, middle-aged, European career diplomat historically, culturally, and psychologically conditioned to view the relationship of Europeans to non-Westerners in the framework of domination and submission. Gallimard's "Being for Others" can be broken into several ''Others,'' including his family, his employer, French society and the principal Other, Song. Gallimard's wife, Helga is aware of her husband's extramarital affairs, but is willing to overlook them in return for enjoying the obvious benefits life can offer to a diplomat's spouse. Toulon, Gallimard's superior, at first rewards him for being an industrious employee then presides at his trial, French society sees him as a pathetic dupe, and Song considers him no more than an assignment. Gallimard's "Being in the World", or the Splintered or unrealized Self, is generated as a consequence of being stifled by aggressive, almost masculine women, by the constraints of being a

European exposed to the mysteries of the Far East, and by his inability to understand the other sex.

Home as the imaginary community partly exists in Gallimard's relationship with his wife Helga, and in his friendship with Marc. Home on the temporal sphere encompassing public myths and private memories is represented by Gallimard's attachment to the Butterfly myth along with his encounters with the pinup girl and his former lover, Renee. Gallimard occupies a third space, a virtual home, partly by acting as Pinkerton in the Madame Butterfly story, and by the very fact that he enters the myth. This third space is located in between the domains of the European male and the Asian female. Due to Song's cruel deception of Rene, however, this home indeed turns out to be a virtual one.

The object of Gallimard's desire, Song Liling's character can also be analyzed according to Sartre's theory. His "Being for Itself," or the sum total of Song's I includes an individual deprived of his will, a person forced to play a farcical role, an Easterner burdened by stereotypical thinking, and a frustrated human being attempting to cope with his sexual orientation. Song's "Being for Others" also serves several audiences including Chinese society, the West, and his principal Other, Gallimard himself. Chinese society treats him with disdain and marginalizes him, the West considers him as the stereotypical effeminate Asian male, and Gallimard views him as the embodiment of the quintessential Asian female.

Marginalized and stigmatized, Song is homeless and deprived of an imaginary community. As far as home on the temporal sphere is concerned, while Gallimard and Song both share the Butterfly myth, they approach it from differing vantage points. While Gallimard praises the sacrifice of Cho Cho San, Song sees it as a symbol of the subjection of Asian women and considers it ridiculous. It is noteworthy, however, that Song eventually moves to France, thus invades the spatial home of Gallimard. By moving to the West, Song feels the alienation and separation from his home and indeed is forced into a third space seeing his own people in stereotypes emphasizing their stinginess.

The relationship between Gallimard and Song can be compared to 19th century blackface minstrelsy in America, a logonomic system, or a coded discourse of dominance ''describing social semiotic behaviors

at the point of production and reception which also reflect the contradictions and conflicts in the (given) social formation" (Hodge and Kress qtd. in Varró 57). In any logonomic system the producer of the discourse enjoys dominance over the receiver, and the discourse itself is conditioned socially, culturally, and psychologically.

If we take Varró's conviction that logonomic systems function as semiotic constructs in which the message and discourse are conditioned, initiated, received and understood according to current power relations (57), the following conclusions can be made.The producer of the message is Song who masquerades himself as a woman. While this impersonation yields a societal microcosm, it would be too hasty to conclude that this simply means the assumption of a dominant position over a female by a male. The first microcosm is created between colonizer and colonial with Gallimard as a Westerner representing the former, Song as an Easterner standing for the latter. In addition to the years of colonization stereotyping is the other conditioning factor. Song passionately declares at the trial of Gallimard during which the French diplomat's lack of recognition of Song's true sexual identity is questioned, that "being an Oriental, one could never be completely a man" (2864). Song initiates the communication as a colonial subject and s/he remains in that role throughout. On the receiving end Gallimard as the representative of the colonizer accepts Song's message, that is acting as an opera singer reciting Madame Butterfly, in a condescending manner, and understands it as the reaffirmation of his European and colonial superiority.

The second, yet more troubling communicational context is the sexual one, that is Song, in fact a Chinese male masquerades himself as a Chinese woman. Consequently, the deception is based on gender, not on race and the position of the producer and receiver changes since it is Gallimard, who initiates the communication. It is noteworthy, that Song and Gallimard meet at the German ambassador's residence. It can be concluded that Song could not have directly planned to meet him there, that is, it was a chance encounter partially supported by a Chinese theatrical custom of men acting in the role of women. It is possible that Song was sent with a mission of spying, or gathering intelligence data from foreign diplomats, but the source of the coveted information could have been any diplomat, and

in fact Gallimard was the one who fell for the bait. Song could not have known about Gallimard's obsession with the Butterfly myth, as (s)he shows an honest surprise and disapproval of Gallimard's enthusiasm over the story. Therefore Gallimard as the initiator is conditioned by ethnocentrism and sexism. His impassioned statement: "I believed this girl. I believed her suffering. I wanted to take her in my arms—so delicate, even I could protect her, take her home, pamper her until she smiled" (2831) reinforces the notion of romantic paternalism. Gallimard, preoccupied with the Butterfly myth, primarily sees Song as a character from that myth, not as an opera singer.

On the receiving end Song goes along with the deception after all it is 1960, the Far East is in political turmoil, and his mission is to gain intelligence data concerning the plans of Americans in Vietnam. In this case therefore Gallimard is the producer of the discourse and Song is the receiver assigning the former a dominant position. It is Gallimard who initiates the conversation and the relationship, and the cruel irony of the situation is that he believes that he is in control, acting as the stereotypical or quintessential Western male protecting the innocent Eastern woman. His message is one of protection, and superiority, coupled with the West seeking redemption from the East: "I knew this little flower was waiting for me to call…I felt for the first time that rush of power—the absolute power of a man" (2840). Song willingly accepts this role acting as the innocent, fragile Cho Cho San "giving his shame" to Gallimard.

Gallimard at the end of the play sums up the principal semiotic context of the drama: "I'm a man who loved a woman created by a man" (2867). This statement excludes the ethnic or racial aspect and places the situation clearly on sexual grounds. This is a crucial phase because once again the position of the producer and receiver of the discourse changes. The man who creates the woman is the producer and initiator of the discourse. The fact of creation and the donning of the disguise emphasize male superiority over females paralleling the racial framework of black face minstrelsy. As Varró argues, in blackface minstrelsy the logonomic system also expresses an alternative condition, the reinforcement of existing stereotypes (68). Taken from the second half of the premise—a woman created by a man—a stereotypical, submissive, fragile, sexually accommodating

figure is brought forth and one of the reasons that Gallimard so readily accepts the projected image is that it conforms to his expectations. Also, Song's impersonation of a female suggests the subservient position of women within Asian society.

The drama also focuses on the Othering process. The strategy chosen by an Other in this case a Chinese male, is to assume the guise of another Other to dislocate the Self. The drama at the same time shows that the Self's dominant position is not unquestioned as both Helga demanding a medical checkup to establish Gallimard's ability to sire children, thereby challenging his manhood, and Renee questioning the primary signifier of masculinity threaten his status. In light of the above Gallimard's willing and clear identification with the Other appears natural. Thus Gallimard is able to project his own insecurities on this character, thereby suggesting that the fragile, inhibited person presented by Song is a parallel of not Cho Cho San, but Gallimard himself. Gallimard also attempts to escape from his Historicized Self comprised of such images as "the person least likely to be invited to a party"(2824), and being a man troubled by an inferiority complex brought on by his affair with the assertive and aggressive Renee: "but is it possible for a woman to be *too* uninhibited, *too* willing, so as to seem almost too …masculine?" (2850) Also, the Self is psychologically reinforced as the Western Man approaches the "lotus flower" of the East. Gallimard's "Being for Others," primarily a wayward European lost in Asia, receives a much needed boost as he initiates the relationship with Song anticipating this very type of behavior.

The reversal of the post-colonial Self is completed at the climactic conclusion as Gallimard, faced with the legal consequences of the deception of his life, decides to assume the identity of Cho Cho San. While in Song's case a victimized, muted Other assumed the guise of a different subjugated Other, Gallimard, a representative of the dominant Self impersonates a marginalized Other. Having been confronted with the fact that Song is "So little like his Butterfly" (2864), Gallimard is forced to choose between fantasy and reality, and he settles for the former. The paradigm is turned around as the sexist and ethnocentric European ideology aimed at the East is now pointed at the West, and the victimizer becomes the victim with no other choice but death with honor. The stereotypes applied by the West to

Eastern women: submission, lack of imagination, and inhibition are defiantly rejected by Gallimard as Song calls him to task: "I am pure imagination. And in imagination I will remain" (2868).

III

At the beginning of the drama Gallimard appeared as a Western diplomat, a stereotypical representative of European culture possessing all the prejudicial images and ethnocentric concepts imbued by his education and upbringing. He was obsessed with the Far East, a land he only knew through stereotypes as he did not maintain any direct contact with the Chinese or other Asian people. While he categorizes all non-European cultures as the exotic Other and he enters the drama as the dominant one, he ends up in the position of the muted. In fact his personalities: Gallimard, Gallimard—Pinkerton, and Gallimard– Cho Cho San are parts of a continuum representing this process. Gallimard functions at the spatial dimension of the home marginalizing all non-European cultures, Gallimard—Pinkerton enters the temporal dimension partaking in the public myth of Madame Butterfly enabling him to act out his private fantasy as the American officer. Gallimard as Cho Cho San enters the virtual dimension or third space, the zone in which the post-colonial Self is prevalent. For Gallimard "Being in Itself" means the acceptance of the European male experience, "Being for Others" is strictly limited to Westerners, and "Being in the World" connotes domination. Galllimard as Pinkerton continues in the same mold in the "Being in Itself" stage, and in his "Being for Others" the racial and sexual Other appears. The fulfillment of his desires is hindered by contemporary restrictions placed on the relationship between colonial and colonizer. It is ironic that Gallimard as Cho Cho San finds his true home in the virtual third space as his Historicized Self is characterized by victimization, his "Being for Others" includes the racial and sexual Other of the opposing end of the spectrum, and "Being in the World" in her case translates to the acceptance of the deception and the achievement of internal peace he always strove for. The final cruel irony is that he pays an enormous price for the realization of his

dreams sacrificing himself in the eternal struggle against stereotyping and confirming the ultimate message of the play namely, the Other lives in all of us.

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TIBOR TÓTH

THE GOLDEN CRADLE: PHILIP ROTH'S REVISION OF THE GOLDEN BOUGH TRADITION

Philip Roth's search for adequate artistic modes of expression and technical solutions often imposes the parallel discussion of stereotypes, of the foundations of contemporary theoretical, scientific or technical developments and his fictional character's search for freedom.

This authorial attitude makes possible the centrality of the conflict between authority and freedom both at the level of the plot and at a fictionally theoretical level. In one of the American writer's best known early novels, in *Portnoy's Complaint* the fictional characters' search for freedom directs attention to the relationship between individual freedom and Freudian fiction, but also demonstrates the inadequacy of art, or the aesthetic in solving life's problems even when the existential is declared fictional. Most of the characters of his early fiction are victims of their indiscriminate admiration of art, but for Nathan Zuckerman, an artist figure who has an extremely long career in Philip Roth's books 'high art' serves as a cradle.

This is so because the contemporary American novelist is convinced that art like magic in general is of great help for those who understand it but is a great danger for those who misinterpret it. Yet, in Philip Roth's interpretation art is mainly important because it can provide the human intellect and the ingenious individual with meaningful and valuable experiences. On the other hand art can imprison the undeserving. Nathan Zuckerman transforms the golden bars, which exasperate David Kepesh and Peter Tarnopol into elements of a golden cradle. In this paper I intend to discuss the

sources of Nathan Zuckerman's irreverence, his manipulation of structure, form and moral principles on the basis of three excellent and extremely controversial novels. The golden cradle of Nathan Zuckerman 'ars poetica' is relatively directly formulated in *The Professor of Desire* (1977), *The Breast* (1972) and *My Life as a Man* (1970). In these novels Philip Roth refuses to share his power and freedom with his characters yet these characters' respective debates concerning authority over their statuses as art-minded people, or as free individuals lead to a more or less comprehensive interpretation of David Kepesh's and Peter Tarnopol's statuses as creators, manipulators and also as prisoners of texts and ultimately of Philip Roth's fiction.

The above three novels can be interpreted as Nathan Zuckerman's golden cradle in many respects. Nathan Zuckerman appears for the first time in *My Life as a Man* and becomes one of the best-known Rothian characters. He is an artist who admires and recycles the modernists' power unlike David Kepesh or Peter Tarnopol.

It is important to state that in these books the protagonists' attempt to rule the existential through the aesthetic changes their 'existence' and this can be interpreted as the power of the aesthetic to rewrite the existential, in fictional terms of course.

This is so because Philip Roth's characters are convinced that art has the power to grant them the possibility of achieving some degree of freedom, but in the context of these novels this possibility remains an illusion for most of the protagonists, although it is available to the author and to some extent to Nathan Zuckerman. David Kepesh and Peter Tarnopol have a relatively limited view of freedom and they have to pay dearly for their ignorance regarding the delicate relationship between life and art.

I start from the thesis that the novelist stresses the centrality of freedom in these books, and interestingly enough Philip Roth obsessively reformulates, asserts and questions even his fictional interpretations of this theme. The result is a weird definition of freedom, which is similar to John Fowles's formula for a freedom that allows for other freedoms to exist.[1]

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[1] Fowles, John. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. London: Jonathan Cape. 1969

In Philip Roth's books the above diversity is visible at the level of the plot as well and attracts our attention to a paradoxical introspection.[2] Actually self-reflexivity becomes an important element, a possibility to fictionally interpret the condition of both life and the art of fiction in Philip Roth's *The Breast*, *The Professor of Desire* and *My Life as a Man*.

His characters are in an extremely difficult situation because they exist in a fictionally postmodern world where the rules of the world 'which is outdoing even the contemporary artist's imagination'(Roth, *Reading* 42) make sense only for the protagonist who senses the presence of the 'novelist god.' The best-known Rothian character who matches the above definition is Nathan Zuckerman, the notorious manipulator, pornographer, rebel and literary father. In the present paper I attempt to discuss some aspects of the 'context,' which leads to Zuckerman's 'conception' in *The Professor of Desire* and *The Breast* and his birth in *My Life as a Man* the 'cradle' proper of this notorious artist character.

The Professor of Desire

Philip Roth's characters try to achieve freedom aided by artistic imagination and creativity many Rothian characters manipulate texts in the hope that this strategy could grant them authority over both the surrounding reality and intellectual-aesthetic values. Philip Roth's characters do not always get support from their creator in their attempt to interpret the world around them, yet they do their best to master the conflicts of everyday life fully aware of the power of the textual environment. However, the text over which they are attempting to assume authority in its turn achieves a kind of freedom resulting from the characters' inability to fully master it in either the terms of 'high art' or those of reality. Their attempts and consequent failures reveal dimensions we could term meta-artistic and meta-existential respectively. I avoid the term metaphysical intentionally.

As the Rothian character 'emplots' his understanding of art into his individual reinterpretations of the fictionally real conflicts he

[2] For a comprehensive treatment of self-conscious fiction see Patricia Waugh's 1984. *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction.* London and New York: Routledge.

encounters, he is compulsorily rendered to be unsuccessful in his search for a comprehensively defined identity, or sense of freedom. Philip Roth starts employing meta-fictional techniques because he intends to interpret not only the dimensions ‘beyond’ reality, or ‘beyond’ ‘art-experiences’ but also the ones, which occasionally shape, control and distort the creative process.

The definitions of freedom the Rothian protagonists reach in *The Breast*, *My Life as a Man* and *The Professor of Desire* are only partially valid. These definitions ignore exactly the aspect, which the protagonist is desperately in need of, or at least acknowledges as a definite priority. This priority is authority over his well-defined self, resulting from adequate understanding and interpretation of the effects of objective and subjective chronology, personal and authorial drives, aesthetic commitment and ultimately, his right to free choice.

David Kepesh and Peter Tarnopol try to explain their existence on the basis of art-experiences, which they constantly misinterpret and rarely, if ever are able to master. Nathan Zuckerman is a relevant exception in this respect but as we are going to see his status restricts his possibilities.

David Kepesh’s and Peter Tarnopol’s faith in the power of words results in them verbalising all the secrets of their private lives in the hope that this can help them overcome their traumas, much in the fashion of earlier Rothian characters. Tricky Dixon, the anti-hero of *Our Gang* is an extremely negative character and Philip Roth’s intentions are clearly of a different nature in that novel. Alexander Portnoy ‘complains’ and fails to handle his own problems. Still he seems to come out ‘victoriously’ through his textual manipulations and through his attempts to claim authority over Spielvogel’s diagnosis.

David Kepesh, the professor of desire lectures on literature and attempts to interpret his disoriented sexual greed through literary experiences rather than examine reality or understand the nature and power of art. *The Professor of Desire* exemplifies Philip Roth’s taste for manipulation. I ‘restore’ the logical and chronological sequence of the novels that present the fate of the professor of comparative literature, firstly discussing some aspects of the protagonist’s search for freedom in *The Professor of Desire*.

Some critics consider that this novel is a kind of answer, a thumbed nose shown to the critics who misinterpreted *The Breast*. Actually *The Professor of Desire* offers the case history of the hero of an earlier Philip Roth novel, *The Breast.* There he was transformed into a huge mammary gland because of his inability to bridge the gap between wild imagination, savage lust, and the intentions of textual authority over his fate. Sanford Pinsker amplifies this notion by pointing out that David Kepesh is the victim of archetypal human conflicts. "Young David is caught between temptation and restraint, between the impulses of exhibitionism and the aftermaths of shame" (Sanford 124–125).

David Kepesh claims that at twenty he must stop impersonating others and become himself, or at least begin to impersonate the self he ought to be, but this he cannot do. The reason for his inability is closely connected to his approach to great artists. He impersonates artists and fictional characters and mystifies his mistaken Hungarian Royale interpretation of male superiority instead of reflecting on them as possible 'art' or life experiences and as a result the dangers of over-identification increase with every new attempt to assert his right to free choice.

Yet Philip Roth is unusually clear about the fictionally biographical sources of David Kepesh's alienation in the Hungarian Royale syndrome. While still a child David is attracted by perplexing models of 'superior' male identity, which he does not discuss with his father and would not even think of consulting his mother about. The people associated with the Hungarian Royale admire Herbie's perfect body. Herbie is considered to be a great entertainer considerably admired by women and the male members occasionally secretly savour his obscenities in the hotel.

David for some time behaves like a new Candide who admires the ideal male image Herbie seems to stand for. As time passes David understands that his duty is to 'get somewhere' and strengthens his intellect instead of his muscles but the influence of the 'idol's' obscenities obstructs all his attempts to become a conscientious intellectual and even to chart the road to freedom.

His extensive reading, the intellectual urge to adjust reality to alternatives for interpretation offered by high art only emphasise his addiction to this kind of desire. The dependence he develops through

incessant cross interpretation contradicts the very goal he set forth; it undermines the possibility of a valid definition of the free individual on the basis of available interpretations of life situations contained within great works of art. Another of his obsessions results in a strange taste for role-playing His fictional biography reveals that at college he is awarded leading roles in university productions of plays by Giraudoux, Sophocles, and Congreve. In the same period of his life David Kepesh improvises a long 'dialogue' of his parents which he refers to as tragical-comical-historical-pastoral.

While he is deliberately sacrificing virtually everything on the altar of desire, he is an intellectual who instead of acquiring the wisdom provided by artistic heritage reinterprets everything even the great modernists' works (Chekov, Flaubert, Kafka) and as it is but natural with a Rothian protagonist, his own chaotic life. He considers American girls to emanate a sense of "all-pervasive atmosphere of academic property" (*P. D.* 22). He finds the expression and the justification of his overheated sexual desires in Shakespeare and finally his desire to be the girl's arms that touch her breasts translates as Romeo's words uttered under Juliet's balcony.

David Kepesh in his search for a free self wants to define freedom in an existentialist sense on the basis of already reinterpreted art-experiences. He does not understand a word of the Arthurian legends and Icelandic sagas in London and considers that the fact that he is supposed to read them is all punishment for his being smart. What he discovers while at King's College is that he is ready to die as Maupassant did, or that it does not make sense to have a whore who does not look like a whore and he develops an obsessive taste for enormous breasts.

> I realize with an odd, repulsive sort of shrill that this woman whose breasts collide above my head like caldrons-whom I chose from among her competitors on the basis of these behemoth breasts and a no less capacious behind-was probably born prior to the outbreak of World War I. Imagine that, before the publication of *Ulysses*, before … (*P. D.* 28).

The professor starts from a Kafkaesque understanding of the self to adopt an elegantly post-modernist interpretation of the Chekovian 'romantic disillusionment' acknowledging its authority for Kepesh's

predicament while he is still living ‘as a man.’ *The Breast* has already discussed the paradoxes of desire and the constant, but ineffective struggle between David Kepesh’s education and animal instincts, which were meant to suppress his need for more physical satisfaction on the basis of re-valued spiritual or aesthetic satisfaction. Although sex, or rather love-making, is an essential metaphor of creativity in his works Philip Roth can not accept the idea that reading great works of art can result in good sex.

In fact David Kepesh is seeing a psychiatrist because of his impotence, the death of his sexual desire. The other power at work is predictably literature, providing desire for creative participation. The third factor at work is the ‘real,’ over the interpretation of which David Kepesh fails to gain authority, first because personal identification is rendered impossible through the instability of his self.

He truly hopes to find a sound definition of freedom, but his obsessive insistence to explain his actual needs and deeds by way of high art prevents him from comprehensive interpretation of any possible analogies. *Macbeth*, *Crime and Punishment*, “The Duel” can not help him overcome the negative effects of his “fascination with moral delinquency” (*P.D.* 74).

David Kepesh does not understand that the modernists did not write moral treatises and thus he cannot construct a new identity for himself on the basis of his readings. Philip Roth demonstrates that art is amoral and it can endanger the ignorant. David Kepesh is incompetent and as a result he is refused this comprehensive interpretation and thus he loses track of his quite equivocally formulated intellectual and physical ambitions.

The libidinous slob’s sense of reality changes its spectres and as temptation dominates him he ignores moral grandeur, aesthetic and sensual satisfaction.[3] Submissive response to temptation becomes with him the source and target of ‘abnormal, amoral’ lust.

He fails to understand that prostituting literature in the name of purely sexual desire and exhibitionism can only result in a deep sense of guilt and shame, which further undermines his chances to achieve

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[3] The terming of desire as `erotic’ and `thanatic’ is again used after Docherty, Thomas. *Reading (Absent) Character. Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction*. Oxford: Claredon. 1983. 224–25.

freedom. David Kepesh obscures his own thirst for freedom as he is torn between reckless sexual ambitions and pretended conscientious intellectual dedication. The avalanche of passion, and cynicism cannot only not satisfy the professor's desire but also renders him incapable of valid revisions resulting in possibilities for a new start. His consequent impotence renders literary creativity questionable as well. David Kepesh is not able to function as an artist, or rather as an interpreter of other artists' works.

The result is anxiety and impotence. He understands that there is more life in art than his actual life and his vitality vanishes. Philip Roth is explicit about this authorial conviction. David Kepesh is freed of his former wife whom he interpreted as the cause of his intellectual blockages only to discover that nothing has changed. He has to realise that 'cutting the roots,' severed the illusion of possible links between him and the great artists of the past and it resulted in his loss of identity. In the end he is a man with no identity, or genuine intellectual dedication and as a result he cannot interpret the meanings of human existence formulated by art.

He does not actually try to dominate those around him. David Kepesh vindicates isolation, retirement in a kind of Ivory Tower, in the name of responsible order, but left alone he is at least as deficient as when confronted with the burdens of an unhappy marriage.

His 'orderly' isolation is dominated by chaos, a chaos that cannot be interpreted through literary experience, as he remains burdened with the problems of his fictionally unresolved 'existential' dilemmas. The crisis is further deepened by the fact that his dying mother pays a last visit to her son and at this point even the disintegration of the model family seems inevitable. The call of the past confuses David even more if possible and the well-meaning mother's death seems a judgement on David's inability to sustain "steady, dedicated living" (*P. D.* 125). Dr. Klinger tries in vain, as is but natural with a Rothian analyst, to close the gap between libido and conscience.

Claire Ovington, the erotic, innocent, virtuous and orderly woman seems to offer Kepesh the possibility of a new start. David Kepesh returns to his abandoned book on Chekov motivated by identification with the stories that tenderly express the 'humiliations and failures' of 'socialised beings,' which "seek a way out of the shell of restrictions and convention" (*P. D.* 201).

The therapy continues as David Kepesh and Claire travel to Prague where Kafka becomes the spiritual authority and he discusses Kafka's relevance to the citizens of Prague with a Czech professor. After visiting Kafka's grave, he starts writing his next lecture and again the situation is awkward as Kafka's "Report to an Academy" provides the form, while two prostitutes act as muses.

The lecture is planned to help his students understand how Madame Bovary and other great novels 'concerned with erotic desire' have a 'referential' relationship to the students' own lives and to the life of their teacher and David Kepesh claims that he wishes to give to his students an honest interpretation of his life.

There is no external ointment for the professor's internal conflict. David Kepesh remains suspended between reckless sexual ambitions and fake conscientious intellectual dedication, and later he will become the slave of his sensuality, and lose not only his 'battle,' but also his body in Roth's earlier novel *The Breast*.

The Breas

The protagonist of *The Breast*, is the same David Alan Kepesh, the Stony Brook professor of comparative literature who has apparent public success, lives with a nice young schoolteacher, in short his life seems to be stable. Certainly the scheme is just too nice. No doubt, David Kepesh is governed by a disposition to maintain his male identity and status as a professor but indications of slippage in his male identity suggest the storm that is approaching.

Actually, too much identification with the adored woman brings about a desire that is directed against his masculinity. David Kepesh feels in Claire's breast an imposing organ continually exposing sexuality. David Kepesh has a similar relationship with high art, as he employs the power of art to explain everyday situations repeatedly by way of identifying art with reality.

Total identification with the beautiful woman's breast leads to catastrophe. David's admiration for women's breasts is formulated in *The Professor of Desire* in three interesting contexts: family, art and history. The mother's breasts are interpreted as the basis of his father's decision to marry his mother and are associated with an orderly, safe existence. In the scene I quoted earlier breasts come to be associated

with individual desire and the possibility of invoking Shakespeare and the London scene bring history, Joyce and the perplexed David to the same level.

In *The Breast* David admires Claire's breast and adores it but has no intention to become a breast. Yet, in the manipulated logic of the book misinterpretation of his desire leads to misplacement and finally he becomes a breast.

The uneasy quality of the situation is asserted: identification to the degree of metamorphosis into a female breast implies renunciation of, or even denial of, heterosexual desires, and the adoption of the woman partner's role in a homosexual relationship, which David Kepesh certainly does not favour. The result of this abnormal logic is that the breast is examining itself and a unique, extremely complex narrative emerges.

It is difficult to define or stabilise this essential element of the fictional material. Even the gender of a mammary gland governed by the male sexual drive is difficult if not impossible to establish. David struggles with similar difficulties, he insists on his male status even when he attains a degree of absolute physical identification with what he earlier interpreted as the symbol of spiritual fertility. This confers to him the sexual potential he so much admired and envied but an intellectual transformation is not possible.

Through this incredible transformation he becomes a female breast without losing his masculine desires. The question is whether this 'rebirth' can be interpreted as freedom. Naturally, or unnaturally the problems are further complicated by the embarrassing duality of the situation.

The character's metamorphosis creates a sensual female breast governed by his masculine desires, because it is David Kepesh, who is a male, after all. The professor-turned-breast has an extraordinary intellectual task, but this does not refer to his academic research, but to his exasperated attempts to explain his own identity. The nature of the metamorphosis of the professor of comparative literature is impossible to describe. Along with David Kepesh we experience the sense of deconstruction of the intellect, but cannot define it except as a status, which displays a typical post-modern lack of stability.

His fears and wishes take him down the road of regression till he is subject to transcendence. Alienation from male impotence leads to

total identification with female erotic power, destroying virtually all elements of his male identity, except for the desire for sexual intercourse with the female, whose imposing, permanently inflated organ he becomes by abandoning his ruined male sexuality.

> Kepesh's fetishizing of Claire's breast has turned her into a fantasy-mother and him into a nursing infant; he seems to regress further and merges himself with the breast as if there were no boundary between the self and the nurturing world. The breast is the womb and they are both Kepesh. (Crews 66–67)

David Kepesh, the professor of comparative literature blames art for what has happened to him.

> ... might be my way of being Kafka, being Gogol, being a Swift. They could *envision* these marvellous transformations – they were artists. They had the language and those obsessive fictional brains. I didn't. So I had to live the thing. (*B.*72)

Thus, he exposes yet another deficiency contributing to his perplexing misery, namely his lack of authority over the fictional reworking of the real. The result is not freedom but imprisonment, as he becomes the captive of his own contaminated imagination. He has no faith in fiction, insisting on the importance of reality (although his awareness of it is questionable). At one point David Kepesh states 'reality has more style.'

> No, the victim does not subscribe to the wish-fulfilment theory, and I advise you not to, neat and fashionable and delightfully punitive as it may be. Reality is grander than that. Reality has more style. There. For those of you who cannot live without one, a moral to this tale. 'Reality has style,' concludes the embittered professor who became a female breast. Go, you sleek, self satisfied Houhynhnms, and moralize on that! (*B.*34)

When any chance of normality disappears, David Kepesh insists that he is not abnormal and given the absurdity of the environment he is right: in the abnormal world where a person can wake up as a female breast nothing makes sense, no value judgements can be reliable. David Kepesh insists on his right to have sex, and he wants it with a highly professional prostitute.

> Why shouldn't I have it [sex] if I want it! It's insane otherwise! I should be allowed to have it all day long! This is no longer ordinary life and I am not going to pretend that it is! *You* want me to be *ordinary*-you expect me to be *ordinary* in this condition! I'm supposed to be a sensible man- when I am like this! But that's crazy on your part, Doctor! ... Why shouldn't I have anything and everything I can think of *every single minute of the day* if that can transport me from this miserable hell! ... Instead I lie here being sensible! That's the madness, Doctor, *being sensible*! (*B*. 36–37)

David Kepesh, the breast cannot see, and doesn't even really want to relinquish his identity as a breast. He interprets his life as a dream or a Dali painting and tells the doctor that he cannot foresee a miracle and suspects that the breast wants to continue to exist. David Kepesh's search for freedom, although much in the mode of a post-modern comic allegory, displays some alienation motifs very similar to those expressed by Niel Klugman's identical attitude, when he uses Gaugin's painting and *Gulliver's Travels*, to explain his problematic status.

Certainly Kepesh's understanding of arts should have been deeper and thus we have to look for the sources of his startling disintegration. Poor Kepesh is suspended between reality and imagination, left alone with the chance to 'sleep the sleep of the sated' as he sways in his hammock, and endures the absurd within the constraints of the analyst's couch.

The trap according to Philip Roth offers no other possibility but an ironic toleration of that situation as literary influence becomes an explicit part of David Kepesh's enslavement and he declares that he got it from fiction. Teaching Gogol's "The Nose" and Kafka's "Metamorphosis" forced him to out-Kafka Kafka.

But Dr Klinger is there to tell him that hormones are hormones and art is art, to make him accept himself as *real*. David Kepesh's task is to accept the situation. Philip Roth's comment on this incredible situation is laconic.

> For him there is no way out of the monstrous situation, not even through literary interpretation. There is only the unrelenting education if his own misfortune. What he learns by the end is that, whatever else it is, it is the real thing: he *is* a breast, and must act accordingly. (Roth, *Reading*. 63)

This is a most cruel authorial statement and it is clear that Philip Roth deprives his character of the possibility to employ the fictional conclusions of the novelist's experiments with life, art and creativity. The professor of comparative literature is doomed to fail because he refuses the traditional moral and ethical solutions to his dilemmas although he is not in possession of valid alternatives. He invokes art to help him sort out his existential problems but because he cannot master either dimension all he can do is revolt against the above state of affairs claiming that reality has more style. His final argument makes the whole story credible. He castigates a world that is crazy enough to allow things like the one that happened to him occur.

My Life as a Man

The professor of comparative literature ended up as a breast as a result of his mistaken interpretation of the relationship between art and life. The situation does not get any better in *My Life as a Man,* where Philip Roth's experiments with the narrative point of view limit his protagonist's possibilities. The first part of the novel belongs to Peter Tarnopol, but in the second half of the novel, entitled 'My True Story,' Peter Tarnopol is telling Peter Tarnopol's story in the third person.

This means that he cannot identify with the interpretations of his fictional experiences. Consequently his search for freedom is in all instances mirrored through polemics or someone else's fictional understanding and is actually a travesty of Camusian interpretation of freedom. Authority over definition of freedom is thus transferred to Spielvogel, Maureen, Susan rather than to Tarnopol.

The different perspectives, through their alterations create scenarios that expand and fragment the definition of freedom to such a degree that the perplexed protagonist can't abandon or reverse them any more, however hard he tries. Tarnopol's understanding of freedom remains contaminated, emptied of factual authority and any sense of the search, in short it is doomed to disintegration.

A fine example of the eloquent polemic on the aesthetic implications of the search for freedom, and its existential interpretations arises out of Tarnopol's rage at Spielvogel's fictionalised version of his self-image.

Spielvogel, in his article “Creativity: The Narcissism of the Artist” besides altering Tarnopol’s case history identifies the search for freedom of the artist with narcissism. The protagonist revolts against this definition, but later cannot entirely cope with it.

> And if I may, sir – his self is to many a novelist what his own physiognomy is to a painter of portraits: the closest subject at hand demanding scrutiny, a problem of his art to solve – given the enormous obstacles of truthfulness, *the* artistic problem. He is not simply looking into the mirror because he is transfixed by what he sees. Rather, the artist’s success depends as much as anything else on his powers of detachment, on *de*-narcissizing himself. That’s where the excitement comes in. That hard *conscious* work that makes it *art*! Freud, Dr. Spielvogel, studied his own dreams not because he was a ‘narcissist,’ but because he was a student of dreams. And whose were at once the least and the most accessible of dreams if not his own. (M. L. A. M. 240)

What Tarnopol articulates as the ‘problem’ of art in this passage is, precisely, the problem of the ‘subject’ scrutinising himself in the hand-held mirror of writing – holding the mirror, he would argue, at a distance, thus guaranteeing freedom, the detachment and authenticity of self-scrutiny.

But the question of how the ‘closest’ subject at hand refers to himself inevitably touches upon the cause and effect as well as the role of fiction, aspects that are interrelated and determine the protagonist’s perception of his duties and possibilities.

The forces at work, be they psychic or related to artistic creativity result in a strange detachment which involves Tarnopol’s meditation on ‘autobiography.’ This meditation connects the process of the fictional artist’s search for artistic and existential freedom with the relation of subjectivity to textuality.

Most sophisticated among all dilemmas is perhaps the extent to which Tarnopol’s detachment determines his authority as an artist over art and reality, over the subjective and the objective factors at work. His fear is that the fictional artist as a subject becomes a prisoner of his own reflection, confined in a state of inability to feed on the outside world.

This fear brings about yet another danger, namely that entering fiction, trying to master art for the sake of artistic privacy and

displaying the secrets of the conflict between life and art can not create the desired series of ‘detached,’ free variations of the quest. The dilemmas he himself creates overwhelm Tarnopol since he is not in possession of a valid interpretation of freedom.

While Tarnopol locates his difficulties in defining his identity as a free, creative individual in the context of the intricacies of literature, Spielvogel doesn’t accept the identification of the respective problems in the fictional artist’s problems. He declares that the sources of Tarnopol’s confusion are his women and the psychoanalyst explains the situation on the basis of the Oedipal complex. “As he saw it […] – I had cultivated a strong sense of superiority, with all the implications of ‘guilt’ and ‘ambivalence’ over being ‘special’” (*M. L. A. M.* 217).

The example is typical of the replacement of Tarnopol’s definition of the search for freedom by pleading theoretical interpretations that render his interpretation fluid. Thus Spielvogel undermines Tarnopol’s thesis that he could attain a certain degree of freedom through the proper observation of his problems with art and women.

However enraged he is, Tarnopol accepts Spielvogel’s Freud-based authority when trying to define the sources of his problems with women and thus he loses authority over nearly all aspects of desire and cannot define his search for freedom in either sexual or artistic terms.

His loss of authority stems from too much dependency on the past (literary, psychological influences: Tolstoy, Flaubert, Freud; childhood), in most of the cases based on misinterpretations and undermining the stability of his understanding of free will and consequent free action.

High Art and childhood are interpreted as the ideal, as the embodiment of perfection, to which any attempt to achieve freedom should make reference. Thus Tarnopol ignores his own status and is constantly attempting to assume authority over the other, the woman, in the name of perfect intellectual and sexual harmony, the ideal spiritual and physical environment for creativity.

Because he always projects his desire for freedom on the above dimensions, he has to experience the inadequacy of his attempts, as they don’t match his projections of the ideal and do not formulate ‘useful’ conclusions that he could profit from. He cannot articulate freedom because of his strong commitment to the search for the ideal,

since every failure fosters the disintegration of the misinterpreted definition of his status.

Thus, authority over the other comes to be assumed more in the name of pity and disgust, and leads to exasperated sexual lust instead of balanced intellectual and sensual congress. Aesthetic ideals are shaken to pieces by a total lack of beauty, and are banished abruptly by brutality brought on by both false choice and a self-deprecating sense of superiority.

The women he chooses do not conform to his fictional model of the female 'overgratifying' the male: Maureen and Susan surrender and expose a total lack of defensive capabilities and vulnerability that these aspects kill sex and implicitly destroy their relationship with Tarnopol.

Yet Maureen in accepting Tarnopol's authority over her sexuality vindicates authority over Tarnopol developing a counter-desire for punishment, assuming the stature of a threatening mother. She invents a status that could fit Spielvogel's interpretation of Tarnopol's needs, but is against Peter Tarnopol's understanding of erotic desire. Tarnopol incorporates this element in his search for freedom rendering him unable to ignore Maureen's threats.

It is but natural that he cannot understand his own needs either, since he hesitates between total narcissistic exhibitionism and his need for authority over the secrets of his existence. When he complains to Susan about Spielvogel's article, he responds most vociferously to what he considers a violation of truth and authority.

> Just read on. Read the whole hollow pretentious meaningless thing, right on down to the footnotes from Goethe and Baudleaire [...] Oh, Jesus, what this man thinks of as *evidence*! "As Sophocles has written," – and that constitutes *evidence*! (*M.L.A.M* 246–247)

So Tarnopol refuses Spielvogel's fiction-based authority over interpretation of his status, but at the same time he expresses dismay at Maureen's inability to convert the diarist's private musings into public fictions, although she announces her intention to do so.

Although he has been 'absorbed' by literature, and mourns being deprived by the freedom granted by creativity, he returns to the same altar, and is ready to sacrifice reality hoping that a fictional revision of the truth can reverse his alienation. The individual, Tarnopol thinks at

this stage of his search, could gain freedom through a detachment that can be achieved through other characters' fictional revisions bearing reference to other fictional definitions.

But his speculations are essentially false, since this only means that he would like to gain authority over art created by others simply in exchange for being the subject of the other artists' fictional enterprise. The above logic was true in the case of Sarah Woodruff and is available to Zuckerman, at least to a certain extent, in Philip Roth's later novels.

His understanding of the search for freedom constructs a fictional network which instead of depending on its creator, reduces its author to the statute of a subject that can logically be a determining factor only by accepting full authority of fictional creativity over adequately articulated artistic intentions. In his case this move means total surrender.

Thus Tarnopol rarely speaks of himself the exception being if he is being seen or interpreted by some other. The result is predictable, Tarnopol can't even formulate a sound definition of his identity. 'My True Story' is a revision of the 'useful stories' over which Zuckerman has authority. Spielvogel's "Creativity," and Maureen's diary also deprive Tarnopol of authority over fictional revision of the 'real' although they are supposed to provide a better understanding of the conflicting fictions creating Tarnopol's character.

Peter Tarnopol hopes that his accurate, definable identity can be created by means of writing detailed perspectives of his identity. He faces similar dilemmas when trying to define the sources of freedom through the creative act as son of 'A Jewish Father,' but no proper evidence can be reached regarding the origins of the artist's status.

His sense of freedom is further disintegrated by his attempt to search for a literary father and offers another unquestionable proof of the fact that creative art is yet another aspect he cannot cope with. Since he has no real authority over art, his unfinished manuscript disintegrates that sense of manhood which he formerly believed would generate the desired plenitude, which he thinks, is freedom.

> By now the various abandoned drafts had gotten so shuffled together and interwoven, the pages so defaced with X's and arrows of a hundred different intensities of pen and pencil […] what impressed one upon attempting to, penetrate that prose was not the imaginary

> world it depicted, but the condition of the person who'd been doing the imagining; the manuscript was the message, and the message was Turmoil. (*M.L.A.M.* 238)

So Tarnopol invokes art as a possible source of freedom, yet in reality his search for freedom is nothing but fictiveness, a multiplication of possible 'realities,' which prevent any valuable contact with the factual world. Tarnopol's fictional revisions and corrections are mercilessly displaying his incapacity to achieve authority over both felt life and fiction.

He ends up being dominated by his stubborn insistence on participation in the creative process over which he has no authority. His attempts to revise his own life fail; he is neither a successful 'man' nor a successful 'writer.' Peter Tarnopol has to acknowledge his manuscript as a 'corpse,' which he cannot bring himself to remove from "the autopsy room to the grave" (*M.L.A.M.* 238). The death of a fictional alternative authorised by Tarnopol himself closes the circle featuring a perplexed artist-hero searching in vain for identity or freedom.

II. 7. The Narrative "I" as an Object (a Breast)

Since demonstrating all the narrative innovations employed in the three novels by Philip Roth would require more space than I can afford I am going to restrain my conclusions in this respect to his handling of style and discourse in *The Professor of Desire*, his manipulation of the narrative 'I' in *The Breast* and his experiment with the narrative structure in *My Life as a Man*.

David Kepesh's declared temptation is for high art, but he is dedicated to sexual greed. He is characterised by the above hypocrisy and the style and the language of the novel actually hesitates between the discourses and registers characteristic of pornography, or pulp magazines and high art. The contrast thus created at the level of the style is characteristic of all three Philip Roth novels discussed in the present chapter. Similarly, Peter Tarnopol and Nathan Zuckerman quote at length Henry James and Conrad against an essentially pornographic background.

The outcome of the plot in Philip Roth's novels suggests that the humiliations and failures of traditional literary discourse lead to the

character's imprisonment in his mistaken interpretation of the role and possibilities of 'high art.' This alternation of established and negative aesthetics supports the perplexing quality of David Kepesh's obsession with 'high art' and subverts the possibility to discuss the misery of the professor of comparative literature in the context of traditional dignity and pathos characteristic of great literature of the past.

Philip Roth's characters are trapped by the magic power of 'high art' because they remove the distance between the aesthetic and the existential. Wayne C. Booth warns us that removing the distance between the aesthetic and the existential results in the death of art (Booth. *The Rhetoric*. 117–132). Yet, Philip Roth intentionally declares art superior to the existential dimension in these novels and the story of David Kepesh's transformation into a female breast documents the power of art to change the fictionally existential dimension. Philip Roth's characters are obsessed with Kafka and in his "Looking at Kafka" he offers us a fictional variant of Kafka's fate in America.

David Kepesh is dominated by the magic of fiction and his admiration for the works of Chekov, Flaubert, Kafka and Claire's breast leads to his metamorphosis into a female breast instead of becoming a potent and highly creative male. *The Breast* also announces that Gregor Samsa's transformation into a huge insect is subject to revision when David Kepesh announces that he has "out-Kafkaed Kafka" (*B.* 82). Debra Shostak praises the above characteristics of the novel. "One of the strengths of *The Breast* is the way in which Roth makes an absolutely implausible premise believable—precisely the lesson that he learned best from Kafka" (Shostak 318).

The transformation is an incredible nightmare, which is not a dream in spite of the hero's attempt to interpret it as a dream, although in real terms it cannot be explained. The problem, as discussed by Debra Shostak, is illustrated through dislocation caused by the catastrophic difference between 'objective' and 'subjective' perceptions of David Kepesh's existence.

I think it important to state at this point that the fictional quality of both the objective and the subjective dimensions is also of great relevance in these books. *The Professor of Desire* attempts to

demonstrate that the dislocation of the character is due to the influence of fiction. Philip Roth does not describe the process, the physical transformation of David Kepesh into a female breast nor does he care to create the theoretical dimension that could make it credible. The absence of such sections increases the shocking quality of the transformation as both the protagonist and the reader are confronted with David's metamorphosis as an accomplished narrative fact.

This means that the metamorphosis proper has no relevance. On the reader's part identification with David Kepesh is impossible because he is an object, a part of the body. Yet, we have to accept him as an objectively existing real character and in truth, it is not the breast we are startled by. We have to cope with the subjective element imprisoned into this physical shape 'who' suffers of claustrophobia because he is a potent, desirous 'conscience' who has a male identity. Debra Shostak searches for possible definitions of David Kepesh's consciousness and reaches the conclusion that David Kepesh's consciousness is not a result of his transformation but its condition.

As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter David Kepesh's dialogues testify to the gradual transformation of his consciousness and his final acceptance of being enclosed in a woman's breast on the basis of his insistence to remove the distance between the aesthetic and the existential dimensions. Even though he is a huge mammary gland, a dirigible, he remains the professor of comparative literature and his obsessive reinvention of the real on the basis of art-experiences compels him to accept his strange 'objective' embodiment.

At the end of the novel he seems to accept his condition, but is not ready to give up his male identity or his knowledge of literature. Roth does not resolve the problem of his character's identity. The talking breast who is a male professor of comparative literature thus grows into a metaphor of the postmodern indefinite self. Debra Shostak argues much in the same way in her essay.

> Perplexed though, he declares that he is a breast, but if he is really a breast he is not what he is. The logic falls close to Philip Roth's interpretation of the situation when he told an interviewer "I am not what I am – I am, if anything, what I am not!" (Shostak 319)

The breast-professor then is not simply a pun, but a fictional interpretation of the difficulties in discussing the theme of freedom as

a simultaneously existential and spiritual dimension. Philip Roth's acid pun detaches the official, material point of view from the private, spiritual one and in this novel the mental experience coexists with the physical one and reflects on its condition.

Debra Shostak discusses the importance of the above narrative solutions with reference to the diversity of the narrative 'I.'

> The 'I,' the sign of subjectivity becomes an object, the thing defined by its materiality or finality. In consequence materiality and finality become indicators of their own lack to the consistence of identity. It is the "I" that helps the 'facts' become interpretable not only as objects but as subjects as well. The question is whether the breast-professor can also be a professor-breast and no definite answer can be formulated.
>
> Understood in physical terms the question would be one more in the list of disgusting puns attached to this novel. Yet, if the breast is interpreted as the physical world as a consequence of the spiritual world's influence, the opposite is not an impossible premise either. (Shostak 325)

Appropriation of spiritual creativity and sexuality makes it possible to interpret sexual desire in terms of creative desire. Professor David Allan Kepesh's giving up his 'I' at the end of the novel displays mobility of the 'I' as the solution reached is at best temporal, if it can be called a solution, normally a breast cannot have male sexual desires. Kafka's, Gogol's or Roth's interpretation of metamorphosis maintains its freedom exactly in the spirit I have just identified. In spite of the obvious differences I can say that Sarah's condition is as irrelevant as is Kepesh's, because she can create as many masks of herself as she wishes on the basis of her associations with art, myth and creativity which are infinite categories

Philip Roth is convinced that fiction is by nature an expression of freedom of the intellect and as such allows for reinterpretation rather than imitation. This principle becomes central in Philip Roth's later fiction and the design of *The Breast* is applicable to Philip Roth's constant reinterpretation of his own fiction and his 'fictional recall'.

Thus I consider it important to remember that the characters of *The Professor of Desire*, *The Breast* and *My Life as a Man* remind the reader of their and the respective book's fictional or imaginary status

and indebtedness to art-experiences provided by great works of the past.

Another shared aspect of these novels is that conventionally the art experiences invoked should elucidate the nature of the conflict or the author's intentions but here the result is often that they rather mystify or reinvent their sources.

The above status of their approach as 'cross' between a number of possible modes of expression is a relevant characteristic feature of the art of both novelists. The points of reference their characters employ are reality and intellectual-aesthetic values and by a certain shift of emphasis they project themselves into a world where reality is at a second remove. This results in the fact that even the world visibly exterior to their fiction can be conceived of as textual and the same is true in the case of the art-experiences that served as a source for the respective novels. *The Breast* can assume the status of a novel freed of the limitations that might arise from the 'high art' Philip Roth employs because the author has managed to cut the roots.

Similarly in these novels the question of how to master the conflicts of everyday life is a function of a mobile 'reality' impossible to stabilise in exclusively traditional terms. This strategy resulted in catastrophe for Paul and Libby Hertz and Gabe Wallach, David Kepesh and Peter Tarnopol but proved quite productive for Alex Portnoy and Tricky Dixon and Nathan Zuckerman.

My Life as a Man*: The Novel as the Representation of Turmoil and Chaos*

The organising principles, which determine the structure of the plot of these works, are embedded in the plots of these novels and we can occasionally say that the structure, the design and the process by way of which they are written assume the same importance, or role of a fictional character. The violence against the Kafkan mode in literature and its terrible results are discussed by David Kepesh and his analyst. *My Life as a Man* seems to be the most rewarding example in this respect as the narrative structure of the novel becomes a central element of the plot, as the 'story' does not make sense if the reader ignores the highly manipulative structure and design of the book. The

novel consists of a number of letters, replies to these letters and 'art-memories.'

In *My Life as a Man* Philip Roth creates not one, but two characters who are artists and the effects of this 'affluence' are far from traditional. As I have already demonstrated the 'stories' of the novel discuss some relevant dilemmas regarding authority and freedom and undermine the traditional concept of the narrative 'I' much in the fashion I identified in *The Professor of Desire* and *The Breast*.

The narrative structure of *My Life as a Man* illustrates the nature of the process of fragmentation, which supports the mosaic-like, often chaotic material. *My Life as a Man* starts with a note to the reader announcing that the two stories in part one "Useful Fictions," and part two, the autobiographical narrative "My True Story," are drawn from the writings of Peter Tarnopol.

The motto announces a discarded muse's reproach to the author: "I could be his Muse, if only he'd let me." This means that at least two narrators compete for authority over the fictional material we are reading. Part one *Useful Fictions* starts with a story entitled "Salad Days" which introduces Nathan Zuckerman a fictional novelist. Nathan Zuckerman writes a thirty-page paper entitled "Subdued Hysteria: A Study of the Undercurrent of Agony in Some Novels of Virginia Woolf." In this paper he contrasts the obscenities of the fictional reality he lives in with his taste for Virginia Woolf, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James, and his own interpretation of love based on *To the Lighthouse*, *Madame Bovary* and *The Amabassadors*, respectively.

The third person narrator accurately draws the biography of the young would-be artist. The material is interrupted by dialogues at intervals to produce a traditionally constructed fictional texture. "Salad Days" ends on a quite threatening tone but announces that the misfortunes of Nathan Zuckerman will be presented in another story.

The second story included in *Useful Fictions* is "Courting Disaster (or, "Serious in the Fifties") which describes Zuckerman's journey to literary landmarks in Europe. This journey brings up 'Freudian orientation,' the transformation of Gregor Samsa, into a cockroach, 'epiphany,' in the context of his relationship to 'the design of a life or a book.'

The second story also tells us of Nathan Zuckerman's unhappy relationship with Lydia Ketterer and his 'flirtation with the insane.' In this story Zuckerman admits that he came to approach his and Lydia's life as some sort of fiction, but he refuses to interpret his life in a story, which is more 'facile' than *The Wings of Dove*.

Gustave Flaubert's letter to Colet, Henry James's *Preface* to *The Portrait of a Lady,* Joseph Conrad's introduction to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* are quoted at length by Zuckerman to explain his and his students' standing in the world, but these materials actually undermine the possibility of sound interpretation of the narrative situation.

The second part of *My Life as a Man* entitled "My True Story" starts with a letter signed by Peter Tarnopol. Peter Tarnopol who is supposed to be the narrator shares with the reader the details of his miserable marriage in the third person singular. The 'narrative distance' thus implemented is partly explained by what we read in the last paragraph of the letter.

> Presently Mr. Tarnopol is preparing to forsake the art of fiction for a while and embark upon an autobiographical narrative, an endeavor which he approaches warily, uncertain as to both its advisability and usefulness. (*M.L.A.M.* 100–101)

The 'autobiographical' quality of the text from now on imposes first person singular, but his book is interrupted by a number of letters. His sister invites him to stay with her and her family and Peter Tarnopol's answer follows. Peter Tarnopol insists on the idea that his existential problems can be interpreted through literature. "If in a work of realistic fiction the hero is saved by something as fortuitious as the sudden death of his worst enemy, what intelligent reader would suspend his disbelief?" (*M.L.A.M.* 112)

Then he sends a copy of his book "Courting Disaster" intended to serve as a kind of apology for Nathan Zuckerman's attitudes in "Salad Days." Peter Taropol considers that the non-fiction narrative he is working on might be considered just 'the "I" owning up to its role as ringleader of the plot.' The narrative structure is further fragmented and complicated as Joan sends her brother a letter in which she encloses two letters, written by her friends Lane and Franny, respectively, which discuss Peter's fiction introduced by the line "Fiction does different things to different people, much like

matrimony." These letters are commentaries on the Zuckerman sections. Peter receives another letter, this time from his brother who is warning him against the Dark Ladies.

The fictional fact that Peter Tarnopol received the Prix de Rome of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Guggenheim grant undermines the validity of the fictional statement, as the same thing happened to Zuckerman in the earlier stories. Different domestic scandals are served up in the chapter entitled Susan and "Marriage Á la Mode." Embittered, Peter Tarnopol realises that his obsession with high moral principles and literature determined him to accept his humiliating situation. "Literature got me into this and literature is gonna have to get me out" (*M.L.A.M.* 194).

The section entitled "Dr. Spielvogel" is introduced by an excerpt taken from Sigmund Freud's "Analysis Terminable and Interminable." The result of this continuous displacement of the narrative 'I' and the fragmentation of the narrative structure is chaos.

Thus the diversification of the narrative structure casts the character into a situation, which cannot be interpreted even by an artist figure. In fact when speaking about *My Life as a Man* Philip Roth refers to the scene in *The Trial*, where K. , in the cathedral, hopes that the priest will come down from his pulpit and point him to "a mode of living completely outside the jurisdiction of the Court" (Roth, *Reading*.108). As Roth sees it, the man in the pulpit is oneself, and the court 'is of one's own devising' a catch 22 all right. And the narrative structure of the novel bars his protagonist inside this court.

Philip Roth presents a similar conflict and accompanying rationale in *The Breast*, *The Professor of Desire* and *My Life as a Man*, and emphasis falls on his heroes' enslavement by the magic power of art the necessity of freedom. This freedom is weighed against the restrictive power of traditional stereotypes active in art and life. The Rothian characters' search for freedom ends in disasters, as art is a magic world, which denies any support let alone direct participation for the fictional character. Nathan Zuckerman, who appears in *My Life as a Man* for the first time will get authorial support, and one can suspect some sort of 'co-operation' between author and fictional artist character in the Zuckerman novels.

In the Zuckerman novels Philip Roth provides the artist character with pseudo-divine freedom, and this trickster uses and abuses his

fictional free will to manipulate the other fictional characters and even argues with his author about the way in which they should shape the novels. One thing does not change though and that is, the artist character's relationship with his possible muses, that is, the uneasy relationship of the male protagonist with his women partners is as annoying as it was in *The Professor of Desire*, *The Breast*, or *My Life as a Man*. Zuckerman becomes a kind of 'secret sharer' of Philip Roth.

The Zuckerman novels mark the 'changing of the guards,' a shift of emphasis from the social dimension to the aesthetic or the artistic in Philip Roth's works. This means that Philip Roth's experiments with different definitions of morality and freedom, contemporary and earlier fictional designs and artistic modes of presentation continue in the Zuckerman novels. The golden bars that imprisoned David Kepesh and Peter Tarnopol serve as the golden cradle for the fictional novelist as intertexts, the pleasure taken by the narrator and the character in shaping the 'interplay' of the narrative and of the larger structure are relevant aspects of Philip Roth's Zuckerman novels which occasionally 'reforget' the fictional environment into which the artist character was born.

In the Zuckerman novels art ceases to be merely a golden cradle, it becomes a kind of 'protagonist' in these novels and the character's search for freedom occasions various fictional re-interpretations of the artist's status, his 'freedoms' and responsibilities as well as the possibilities of twentieth century art rewriting history, tradition, its relationship to the mass media and the great dilemma that occurs when one attempts to be both serious and popular. This means that in the fictional hierarchy produced through Zuckerman's search for freedom art occupies a superior position and thus it is a tempting source of freedom an eternally reformulated golden cradle.

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LEHEL VADON

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW: A HUNGARIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

The intention of the editor of Eger Journal of American Studies is to launch for a bibliographical series of major American authors in Hungary.

The present bibliography is satisfying to make available for the first time a reasonably complete record of publications—both primary and secondary sources—of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The books in Primary Sources are listed in order of date of first publication in English, followed by the Hungarian translation in chronological arrangement. Selections from the works of Longfellow in Hungarian translations are arranged in order of punblication date in Hungary.

The entries of the Secondary Sources are presented under the names of the authors, listed in alphabetical order. The entries by unknown authors are arranged in chronological order.

Material for this bibliography has been collected from periodicals and newspapers, listed in the book: Vadon Lehel: *Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája a magyar időszaki kiadványokban 1990-ig.* [=A Bibliography of American Literature and Literary Scholarship in Hungarian Periodicals to 1990.]

A key to the Hungarian abbreviations and word: évf. = volume, sz. = number, kötet = volume.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(1807–1882)

1. HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW IN HUNGARIAN
(Primary Sources)

a. Longfellow’s Works in Hungarian Translation and Edition
b. Longfellow’s Poems in Hungarian Books
c. Longfellow’s Poems in Hungarian Periodicals
d. Selections from The Song of Hiawatha
e. The Golden Legend in Hungarian Periodical
f. Selections from The Golden Legend
g. Judas Maccabaeus
h. Hyperion
i. The Masque of Pandora
j. Longfellow’s Short Story in Hungarian Periodical
k. Maxim
l. An Adaptation of The Song of Hiawatha

2. HUNGARIAN PUBLICATIONS ABOUT HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(Secondary Sources)

a. Bibliographies
b. Studies, Essays, and Articles
c. Book Reviews
d. The Song of Hiawatha on the Stage in Hungary
e. Reviews of The Song of Hiawatha on the Stage
f. Radio Play Review
g. Hungarian Musical Setting of Longfellow’s Poem
h. Poems Written to Longfellow

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2/c

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2/f

Radio Play Review

79. GÖRGEY GÁBOR: Rádió—Televízió. (Háromnegyedórás rádióműsor a Hiawatából.) [=Radio—Television. (A radio play of The Song of Hiawatha.)] *Magyar Nemzet*, 1959. XV. évf. 258. sz. p. 4.

2/g

Hungarian Musical Setting of Longfellow's Poem

80. LISZT FERENC: Die Glocken des Strassburger Münsters. Kantáta. Komponálta 1874-ben. Bemutatta a szerző Budapesten 1875. március 10-én. [=The cantata was composed in 1874, and played by Liszt in Budapest in 1875.]

2/h

Poems Written to Longfellow

81. LOWELL, JAMES RUSSEL: Fabula kritikusoknak. Poe és Longfellow. [=A Fable for Critics. Poe and Longfellow.] Translated by Endre Gyárfás. In: Miklós Vajda (ed., selected, notes, and preface): *Észak-amerikai költők antológiája.* [=An Anthology of North American Poets.] Budapest: Kozmosz Könyvek, 1966. pp. 103–104.
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LÁSZLÓ DÁNYI

THE FIRST HIT FOR "MULTICULTURAL HEMINGWAY HUNGARY"

Lehel Vadon ed. *Multicultural Challenge in American Culture — Hemingway Centennial.*
Eger: Eszterházy Károly Tanárképző Főiskola, 1999. 339 pp.

How can such seemingly unrelated notions as multicultural and Hemingway and Hungary be connected? Well, if you daringly decide to punch those words on your keyboard and seek hits on a search engine, and then you sit back and relax thinking that such terms should never match, you will be astonished to see the results. More than 700 hits will pop up, and the first reference out of those will be to the volume in the title.

The Hungarian Association for American Studies held its biannual conference in Eger in 1998, and the proceedings of the event were published in a substantial volume in 1999. The conference and the volume tried to achieve a threefold task.

Firstly, at the end of the 20th century which is frequently referred to as the "American century" scholars of American studies felt obliged to explore those issues that had shaped the non-American awareness concerning American social consciousness. (Out of the 17 essays only one was written by an American, Donald E. Morse, the rest were from the pen of Hungarian Americanists.) The volume addresses significant concepts and theorists bearing on current understandings of ethnicity and gender as culturally constructed "others" and the mechanisms by which these understandings are maintained, eg. by binary oppositions that derive from dualistic linguistic structures and totalizing monocentric habits of thought. It also includes essays on poly-

centricity and the ramifications of the postmodern condition, furthermore it analyzes the impact of culture studies, new historicism and gender theory in contextualizing literary texts, redefining the canon and restructuring priorities.

Secondly, as the Hemingway (1899–1961) centennial was celebrated in the year of the conference, four essays in the volume are devoted to Hemingway's art. By considering the significance of race, ethnicity and gender and by focusing on re-reading Hemingway's fiction and on reshaping the Hemingway canon the essay writers present issues that fit into the thematic thread of multicultural challenge.

Thirdly, Eger—Hungary, the venue of the conference, the organizers, who are teachers at the first Department of American Studies in Hungary, the majority of lecturers being Hungarian scholars of a variety of disciplines and the publication of the proceedings are all encouraging signs that American Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study which is alive and active in Hungary, in addition, the research carried out by Hungarian scholars can contribute to the development of the methodology of American Studies.

The Hungarian perspective creates a frame for the volume itself. In the first article Zsolt K. Virágos, whose works are frequently quoted and referred to in other essays of the volume, analyzes the dilemmas of Hungarian scholars when they need to answer the question whether they are ready to discuss restructured priorities of American society both in a cultural and in a moral sense. He observes the metaphoric shift from the melting pot based on consensus to the boiling pot stirred by conflict through Hungarian eyes. The writer states that multiculturalism is not an exclusively American phenomenon, and Hungarian scholars being distanced from the American scene can detach themselves from dogmatism concerning multiculturalism. He adds that participating in the multicultural context is performed on the existential level. The last two parts of the essay deal with canon formation, the boundaries of American multiculturalism and with multiculturalism as a learning process through which we can acquire the skill of reading other people's image banks. The changing assessment of the canon is illustrated by taking a closer look at the appreciation of such African-American writers as Frederick Douglass and Richard Wright.

The closing article by Lehel Vadon offers a complete, 128-page-long Hungarian bibliography of Hemingway's works. It makes the records available for the first time, which may provide a great impetus for those wishing to study Hemingway's works in Hungarian. It includes both primary and secondary sources—selections from novels, short fiction, articles, reports, letters and other works. The bibliography proves the compiler's meticulously accurate work. An additional achievement of the list is quoting the date for the first publication in English and the inclusion of the entries by unknown authors. The periodical and newspaper sources of the research are listed in a book by Vadon entitled *Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája a magyar időszaki kiadványokban 1990-ig*, which is an indispensable and unique database.

What comprises the volume in between equals in quality with the two articles of the frame. Tibor Frank's "'Through the looking glass' a century of self-reflecting Hungarian images of the United States (1834–1941)" spans over more than a hundred years of Hungarian-American relations and describes the changing images and icons of America in the eyes of those Hungarians who encountered and were exposed to American culture. Among the important and influential visitors he refers to Sándor Bölöni Farkas, Ágoston Haraszthy, Lajos Kossuth, Aurél Kecskeméthy, Iván Ottlik, Emil Zerkowitz, Zoltán Bíró, Mrs. Ferenc Völgyesi and Géza Zsoldos. Their experiences and impressions vindicate the constant redefinition of America, and the malleability of American cultural and social icons. The chronological time travel whizzes through images like America—the China of the 19th century, the country of the future, American democracy as a contrast to oppressive régimes in Europe, a world based on self-control, the country of religious freedom and economic vitality, American diligence and wealth as opposed to Hungarian idleness, lack of prejudice, civil equality. All in all, during the period observed America functioned as a model to be followed for the strengthening Hungarian middle class.

Enikő Bolobás explores the way liberal pluralistic education can open new vistas in the study of American culture. She starts the essay with a historical outline of canon formation and an analysis of the recuperation of the two ancient Greek patterns for education in recent canon wars. She traces the alterations of timelessness and change, of

permanence and temporariness, of the authoritative and the investigative and of the prescriptive and the exploratory. According to the writer the beneficiary effects of liberal pluralism initiated the rediscovery of literary works and the exploitation of the seemingly blurred and vague implications of texts. Liberal pluralism remodels the structure and our understanding of American literature and culture.

Leonard Bernstein's Jewish origin and identity permeate his Kaddish-Symphony. Péter Csató considers the work as a new way of communication through which certain characteristics of the Jewish mind might be observed. The analysis proves the writer's expertise and erudition in music as he compares differences and alterations in tonality to social, historical and philosophical questions. The final part of the essay clusters around the significance of the God figure related to the eternal question of the vindication of murdering God.

New dimensions of multicultural education are presented in Pál Csontos' essay. After providing a definition for ebonics ("black sounds") and quoting numerous examples to it he examines the way ebonics has become a part of political discourse. Among the several effects of the appearance of ebonics in political discourse he emphasizes the link between ebonics and Afrocentricity.

What commences after Csontos' writing on ethnicity is an essay dealing with another issue on the multicultural palette which is gender related questions. The essay on hate crimes by Krisztina Danko starts with a summary of a fatal incident that caused the death of a gay student in Wyoming. The writer relates hate crimes to gender issues and describes the legal aspect of gay rights on the political agenda. She concludes that Americans project their own value judgments concerning sexuality onto gender issues.

Being American and ethnicity are the main themes for Mónika Fodor's essay. She defines pluralism and then describes two processes —the first one being the social process of becoming both American and ethnic and the second process which is becoming either American or ethnic. Americanization and religion are also factors dominantly forming both an identity and a community.

Judit Ágnes Kádár's essay stretches the boundaries of the earlier pieces by extending the scope of observation to the Canadian social consciousness. She applies the multicultural and multivocal challenge to Canadian grand narratives. The long title itself contains a multitude

of allusive terms that could be explored in depth, but within the confines of the essay they are only anticipated. The analysis of works by Robert Kroetsch, Ruby Wiebe, Jack Hodgins and Bowering expands on such contextual and literary theoretical notions as the mythic connotations of the West, intertextuality, historiographic metafiction and discourse analysis. She concludes that the iconoclastic distortions imposed on the original narratives may destabilize the central focus of the narratives aiming at the single truth.

Centralizing and decentralizing themes and the metaphors of centripetality and centrifugality are the recurring concerns of three of the essays in the volume. Éva Miklódy defines the multiform relationship of the marginal black writing with the central and dominant Anglo-Saxon writing. In the second essay Ágnes Surányi provides us with strategies to approach the representation of all-black communities in Toni Morrison's works. Finally, András Tarnóc's essay encapsulates four points of the convergence of parallel cultures: evolutionary process, mythmaking patterns, therapeutic self-justification and the prevalence of centripetality over centrifugality. Unlike the two previous essayists, Tarnóc extends the scope of his observation by examining patterns of minority aesthetics in both African-American and Chicano cultures.

The genre spectrum of the volume is widened by Klára Szabó's essay on two approaches to American cultural diversity in one-act plays. Horovitz's and Shange's plays offer two different perspectives on representing otherness. The former remains an outsider whereas the latter's focus resides in the inner core.

Beside Vadon's aforementioned bibliography, Donald E. Morse's essay sets the tone for the second part which is illustrated with portraits of Hemingway and with photos at Key West, where 'Papa' lived. Morse reveals the Hemingway hoax which is the result of creating multiple, parallel universes and intermingling three characters, who are guises of Hemingway figures. The analysis of the recuperated Hemingway characters in the Möibus strip of Joe Haldeman's *The Hemingway Hoax* (1990) presents incidents in Hemingway's life and discusses different opinions by Hemingway biographers.

The perspective of intertextuality is a critical perspective which sheds new light on texts, and enables the critic to observe channels

through which texts can communicate with each other. Ádám Molnár practices this method of analysis when comparing Hemingway's and Carver's works. He also introduces us to the classification of intertextual connections by referring to hypertextuality and paratextuality.

When on a Fulbright grant, Gabriella Varró grappled with reviewing the manuscrips of Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* which are three times longer than the published version of the novel. That significant difference in proportion made her meditate over understanding re-reading. Re-reading triggers the nascence of several layers of interpretations of the text, namely re-reading gender, race, Eden and the concept of art.

The editor of the volume succeeds in compiling a memorable collection of essays which records the issues that scholars at the end of the 20th century were dealing with. In their heterogeneity of topics—race, gender, ethnicity and conflict—all the scholars write about one homogeneous geo-political entity which is the United States. All the essays are firmly based in and supported by theories on multiculturalism. Not only do they absorb ideas from secondary sources but they are argumentative as well. Those who want to plunge into multicultural studies should refer to the rich reservoir of works cited after the essays. The volume manages to capture the essence of an era in American culture, and by offering a pluralistic and cross-cultural approach to American literature, it makes an outstanding contribution to American studies.

JUDIT ÁGNES KÁDÁR

ZOLTÁN ABÁDI-NAGY: *VILÁGREGÉNY—REGÉNYVILÁG: AMERIKAI ÍRÓINTERJÚK*

(The Novel of the World—The World of the Novel: Conversations with American Writers.) Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997. 251 pp.

Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's recent collection of interviews provides an invaluable insight into the world of contemporary American novelists. His earlier books incorporated comprehensive surveys of recent American prose writing: *Válság és komikum: A hatvanas évek amerikai regénye* (Crisis and Comedy: The American Novel of the Nineteen-Sixties, Magvető, 1982.), *Az amerikai minimalista próza* (American Minimalist Fiction, Argumentum, 1994.) and *Mai amerikai regénykalauz 1970–1990* (Guide to Contemporary American Fiction between 1970–1990, Intera, 1995.). All these make attempt to provide an overview on the critical panorama of contemporary U.S. novel as well as detailed analyses of numerous literary voices, trends and critical perspectives. However, here, in *The Novel of the World—The World of the Novel*, Abádi-Nagy successfully tries his hands in a new job: that of the literary critic/journalist and becomes a mediator between the reader and the writer, disclosing for us the personal world of the latter. He takes advantage of his personal encounters with prominent characters in contemporary mainstream(?) fiction writing along with his own research experiences. His aim is to create six so called 'deep interviews', all but one is based on personal meetings with Kurt Vonnegut, William Gaddis, E. L. Doctorow, Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman, while the one with Walker Percy is a result of extensive correspondence.

The structure of Abádi-Nagy's book reflects his own understanding of the development of the novel form from the rather conventional, through Vonnegut's 'pop novel', Doctorow's pseudo-historical fiction and Gaddis's entropic satire, towards the radical formal experimentation of Sukenick and Federman, both of whom seem to break with the traditional concept of the mimetic function of literature and to create a self-reflexive world of fiction. The preface invites us to join him for a visit to the workshop of these writers, where in fact the act of writing as craft and the various narrative strategies are meticulously studied. The selection of the text of interviews is difficult but firm hands and critical eyes enable the author to (re)construct the dialogues, add significant critical remarks and data, as well as introduce with scholarly precision his understanding of the recent developments of American fiction.

At the beginning of each section the interviewer shares with us his first impressions on the writer, for instance a description of Vonnegut's outlook, complexion, smoking and talking habits (Abádi-Nagy: *Világregény*, 81), or the first-hand personal impression confronting the pre-interview preconceptions regarding Gaddis's inaccessible image (119). The interviewer often adds his own opinion regarding the 'second (post-interview) impression' of the given artist, for example

> Mélységes humánumtól fűtött, az ostobaságot és esztelenséget tűrni képtelen, hatalmas műveltségű író, aki a mai élet nagy összefüggéseibe ágyazva, széthullásképletű szatírikus parabolákban vizsgálja egyén és világ viszonyát. [Gaddis is a writer of deep humanity and impressive erudition, who cannot stand any form of stupidity or folly. In addition, he investigates the relationship of the individual and the world in satirical deconstruction parables that are embedded in the greater context of contemporary life.—Trans. mine.] (120)

These subjective perceptions help us develop an image of the novelist as well as visualize the conversation between the novelist and the interviewer. In addition, this method establishes some kind of a personal touch, a virtual link between the world of the reader and that of the novelist. Following the brief introduction, a summary of the given writer's literary output is provided before the actual dialogue. The critic/journalist often briefly refers to issues already discussed in

other interviews, however, the flow of conversation is not broken since footnotes enrich the text ergonomically. Interestingly, the author shares his doubts with us regarding his quest for the most suitable approach to certain issues; his 'professional elegance' provides a delicate balance between what we can learn from the novelist's own views and what further background materials may add to our understanding of the prose texts.

As for the scope of questions, inevitably they all had been elaborated finely. The author deliberately excluded those issues that had already been discussed elsewhere earlier, with the aim of formulating some kind of a complex unity of comprehension of a particular writer's literary output, providing further insight into the context of the novelist's ouvre as well as to some major tendencies in American literature, clarifying the notions of post-modernism, making distinctions between various sub-trends in realism, modernism and post-modernism. At the same time Abádi-Nagy's questions are very economically designed and delicately structured. This pre-set structure allows the interviewer to present some order as well as to let some freedom work throughout the conversation, enabling the participants to develop further points spontaneously. This playfulness does not ruin the overall efficiency of the conversations but rather adds some kind of a personal touch that may color the reader's impression of the writer. Based on his profound knowledge and critical understanding of the texts in question as well as the critical context of the novelist's work, the interviewer anticipates certain sub-tendencies that the novelist may or may not feel akin with, but certainly responses and locates himself in or against that (e.g. Sukenick's views on formalist versus visionary approaches to literature 199). However, the careful clarification of distinctions, sometimes incorporated in the body of the questions and occasionally developed in the course of the dialogue with the given novelist enables us to obtain a precise panoramic view of various artistic approaches to the problem of mimetic versus non-mimetic functions/technique of writing (e.g. Sukenick interview 184, 187), or the triangle of the writer/reality/reader, take Federman's views on fact/fiction/reader (233), as he claims:

> Én nem azért írok, hogy hűen ábrázoljam az életet. Jobban érdekel a viszony, a kölcsönös játék köztem meg a valóság közt. Az érdekel,

> ami közbül esik. A folyamat. [I write not with the aim of truly reflecting reality. I am a lot more interested in the relationship between me and reality. I am excited about what is in between. The process itself. —Trans. mine] (236)

Furthermore, discussion is devoted to the question how the novelist relates himself to the tradition of fiction writing, his forerunners and followers (e.g. 133–4 Gaddis interview, 191–3 Sukenick interview), postmodernism as such (e.g. interview 185 Sukenick) and its sub-directions (e.g. surfiction in Federman's notion 215, 218).

Abádi-Nagy tends to motivate or even provoke the novelist to make him reflect upon his own theoretical ideas, such as Vonnegut's "bacterium theory" (87), Gaddis's deep interest in alchemy (132–3) and his 'post-psychological novel' (149), Doctorow's cyclic notion of history (163) or his distinction of fact and fiction (167) in his mock-documentary novels. Occasionally the interviewer facilitates the novelist to come to terms with seemingly controversial concepts (e.g. 91). Sometimes a virtual mirror seems to be held in front of the writers with the help of references to earlier utterances and/or the texts of the novels themselves. Their concepts about literature, philosophy and other fields of life are tested and analyzed thoroughly. The author's own critical views are also implied, for instance in the Percy interview (36–7), where Abádi-Nagy refuses to adopt the traditional periodical classifications of a writer's literary release. As a result, Percy seems to somewhat re-assess a few milestones in his own career (18). At other times there seems to be a minor clash of opinion between the novelist and the interviewer, for example in the Doctorow interview (165, 169). Surely it may derive from their different critical positions, nevertheless, the creative discussion seems to dissolve most of these disputes and both the questions and answers mutually enrich our comprehensive understanding of the novels and novelists, too.

There are certain challenges that a literary critic/journalist faces by necessity because of the specific genre of his endeavor. On the one hand, various perspectives and interests are contrasted and claim for being kept in balance. On the other hand, the depth and spectrum of questions depend greatly on the level of knowledge of the anticipated reading public. A further question to consider is: what is the reasonable extent of sticking to pre-elaborated order and selection of questions versus the opportunity of letting some spontaneity work in

the conversational situations. The critic/journalist must allow for some necessary time and spatial limitations and must take the frustrating challenge of sorting out the less relevant questions sometimes only minutes before the actual interview takes place, just in the case of the Doctorow interview (161).

Enormous amount of background information help us understand not only the main currents of contemporary prose writing but also hidden ramifications that occasionally seem to be unveiled even for the writers themselves throughout the conversations, for example in the Percy interview (24), where the novelist seems to reconsider his own texts and approaches to literature in a new perspective. The rich cultural, philosophical and literary theoretical implications of the dialogues often give a roundup on significant notions, such as the concept of the American South and the way the novelist relates himself to that particular awareness of the region (24). The interviewer's comprehensive expertise in literary criticism often unmasks itself in the course of longer explanatory notes incorporated in the body of the questions (e.g. Vonnegut interview 88) that are almost briefs in the study of a particular literary text.

A further culture specific addition of the interviews is Abádi-Nagy's remarks on the apparent relationship between the novels and various aspects of the critic/journalist's own (Hungarian) culture. Gaddis's *The Recognitions*: Valentine, Doctorow's Houdini figure in *Ragtime*, Sukenick's Evelyn in *98.6*, Vonnegut's perceptions regarding the unique Hungarian sense of humor or Federman's appreciation for Hungarian people and culture.

The Novel of the World—The World of the Novel presents a study of narrative strategies and their development as well, for example on Gaddis's 'sustained dialogue' technique (150), Sukenick's collage technique (197) and generative prose writing vis-á-vis the dominance of mimetic functions (Sukenick interview 207), for instance Vonnegut's time technique (103–4), the structure of his texts (105) as well as his sense of humor, with regards to the social, historical and political context of his novels. In the case of Vonnegut the dialogue seems to include relatively more references to contextual factors shaping the text of his novels, for instance a brief overview on relevant issues in American history and current sociopolitical questions is presented in the dialogue. In my view the genre of the

critical interview in this regards provides an exciting opportunity for the reader to expand his/her scope of literary works and artists, quite similar to reading an autobiography, like in this case Vonnegut's *Fates Worse Than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s* (1991). As for another approach, Abádi-Nagy addresses critical points of investigation related to some fictional characters in the given novelist's texts in a way that the writer's own view and motivations in the creation of a certain protagonist enrich the range of possible interpretations that might have been previously hidden from the reader's eyes, as the example of the Vonnegut interview presents.

All the six interviews present some significant similarities. Firstly, the novelists share more or less the belief that the text stands on its own feet, i.e. there is no need to keep adding explanatory remarks to enable the reader to appreciate them, to enjoy the process of reading that all of them consider as an essential part of the creative process (e.g. 121). Secondly, they are largely disinterested in traditional contextual critical approaches and evaluations, such as reader response and reception theory (e.g. 122–3) or 'cerebral criticism' (188) and populist criticism (200). They are reluctant to give utmost relevance to the impact of the critical environment of their works, or at least tend to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant ideas. Moreover, they seem to dislike being pigeon-holed, for instance the interviewer's tricky reoccurring question, i.e. how would the novelist label his own writing, occasionally stimulates equally tricky answers like that of Gaddis: ask the same question ten years from today (154). Furthermore, they are even less interested in the extent their texts are reader friendly, easy to digest intellectually (Gaddis interview 155). All of the interviewed novelists restrict themselves in order to avoid the pitfalls of philosophical/ moral/ critical overkill (e.g. Doctorow interview 178). Thirdly, they are all often presented as non-mainstream, experimental and elitist but in fact they demand an active role of the reader "creative reading" (Gaddis interview 154), therefore they are non-populists but rather look forward to the birth of a new consciously critical reading public, as stated by Sukenick (192).

Another shared feature is their dislike of pretence of any sorts, for instance Sukenick admits the lack of a systematic knowledge working behind his texts (208) as well as the preference of leaving the analytical intellectual discourse behind for the sake of focusing on the

experience of the writing process (e.g. Doctorow 168). They all disregard the relevance of preconceptions formulating the texts versus the role of a partly spontaneous play with language and intuitions.

As for another thing, the world of the novel and the novel of the world are problematized through the language of their novels (e.g. Sukenick 184). A fundamental question Abádi-Nagy addresses to Sukenick (189), but touches in the other interview as well is: "Hogyan segít bennünket sorsunk lényegének alakításában az a széppróza, amelyik elutasítja a mimetikus modellt? [How can prose writing, that refuses the mimetic model, contribute to/foster the better management of our own life?—Trans. mine] A shared answer seems to be similar to Sukenick's reaction: art is not a therapy but rather a way of thinking on its own right (190), while Federman adds that the function of literature is not to make the world a better place but a nicer, more habitable one (226).

A further common marker of these artists is the thorough understanding of contemporary America. For instance regarding the order/chaos disparity in the Doctorow interview (170–1) or Gaddis's understanding of the corporate world and its 'hones hypocrites' (136), Abádi-Nagy claims, that "A *JR* írója nyilván hatalmas tudással rendelkezett a spekulációs és manipulációs dzsungel mentalitására és kliséire vonatkozóan. [The writer of *JR* undoubtedly possessed an immense intellectual capacity to capture the mentality and clichés of the jungle of speculation and manipulation.—Trans. mine] (137)." The critic/journalist's own understanding counterparts that of the interviewed persons', for example regarding the American Dream and the socially non-mature dreamers who are easy to manipulate (137). In addition, for all of them insanity appears as a quintessential part of contemporary existence (Gaddis interview 135), and they tend to investigate strategies how to cope with it, how to comprehend manipulation strategies and how to escape them.

Finally, all of them seem to be satisfied with the interviewer's set of questions and openness. Gaddis's interview presents a rising interest in answering after having experienced epiphanic revelations regarding some aspects of his writing that had been unrevealed even for himself before, take Gaddis's view on *Carpenter's Gothic* (142) and later on his appreciation of Abádi-Nagy's critical interpretation of the novel (145). As for another example, Federman "Őszintén

feltárulkozva beszél, mint aki maga is kíváncsi, mit fedezhet még fel magában az egyes kérdésekkel kapcsolatban.” [He speaks honestly as someone who is eager to diagnose something previously hidden in himself in the view of the specific questions.—Trans. mine] (213).

Zoltán Abádi-Nagy’s masterly undertakings apply an overt critical approach, similar to the openness these novelists present in their approaches to reality, their artistic perceptions as well as the writing process itself. Hungarian readers of American literature are made to read previously unknown pieces as well, or re-read some others in the view of a new perspective, without the exclusion of any less well-informed readers of American literature. At the same time, a comprehensive insight to the world of these novels is provided for the more sophisticated and/or professional reading public, too. *The Novel of the World—The World of the Novel* presents another exemplary display of the critic/journalist’s professional merits; in fact this book of interviews formulates an invaluable contribution to the palette of American Studies in Hungary, a significant tribute paid to László Országh’s heritage.

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JUDIT ÁGNES KÁDÁR

CANADA AND THE MILLENNIUM—PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2ND CANADIAN STUDIES CONFERENCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Editor: Anna Jakabfi. Budapest: Loránd Eötvös University—Hungarian Canadianists's Association, 1999. 215 pp.

Reading the Anna Jakabfi edited *Canada and the Millennium—Proceedings of the 2nd Canadian Studies Conference in Central Europe* provides us with an invaluable selection of perspectives on some current trends in Canadian culture and literature in particular. The book commemorates the anniversary of Canadian Studies in Hungary and celebrates the teaching, research and cooperation of the higher education institutions as well as the Hungarian Canadian Friendship Society. Among the writers of the included essays there are prestigious literati from Central-European countries and Canada. These contributions offer a wide variety of exciting topics ranging from a comprehensive discussion of multiculturalism to specific analyses of trends in literature, such as drama and the problem of canonization, postmodern discourse criticism, or human rights in the context of children's literature. The focus of the book is certainly rather literary, a number of further essays elaborate new approaches to French and European poetry, female and the feminist novel or to specific texts by authors like Margaret Atwood and Timothy Findley.

Structurally the collection of essays is divided into two parts, the first incorporating writings of a rather general interest ("Past, Present, Future—Summing Up") and the second including specific literary investigations of some individual writers' contribution to the Canadian

literary scenario ("Canadian Authors Speak"). David Mills' introductory historical survey on Canada's early history entitled "A Journey to Canada" is really an invitation for a broader reading public to focus on the particular Canadian context of studies done by European scholars. This essay starts a series of essays dealing with history and Canadian letters, followed later on by Peter Szaffko's paper on Canadian drama and the problem of canonization, with special reference to history. Szaffko considers two features to characterize the particular Canadian pattern of historical plays, one is the period choice that presents a general interest in outstanding events and characters ranging form the early 19th century up to the 1960s, and the other is the less political than sociological approach dramatists in the three investigated 'canonic' anthologies seem to share. The third essay with a historical perspective is that of Anna Branach-Kallas. She focuses on postmodern historiographic metafiction and argues that in Canadian the prose texts she analyzed historical characters have equal status with the fictional ones.

The present collection of essays offers two interesting treaties in the broad sphere of culture studies. Lawrence L. Szigeti's "Multiculturalism a l'americaine", a highly critical paper on the comparison of the concept of multiculturalism in Canada, U.S. and Central Europe, and Wilfried von Bredow's well-constructed essay on "Ironic Myths of Sovereignty". The latter explores the controversies stemming from the effects of economic globalization challenging the concept of nation state, sovereignty and even political and national identity formulation processes. Referring to findings in the fields of public law as well as political science, Bredow offers us an update and thorough insight into the social context of the millennial Canadian intellectual public arena. The writer investigates two particular sets of myths of sovereignty, that of Quebec and the First Nations' and makes interesting remarks on patterns of contradictory myth formulation. Similarly to Bredow's focus on the global versus national axis, the prominent literary expert David Staines's essay with the same title as that of the whole periodical, investigates the shift of paradigms in recent and contemporary Canadian literature, marked by the writers' shifting interest in exploring not so much the traditional question of "Where is here?" rather "What is there?". This essay is a valuable

addition to Staines's critical survey that appeared in his 1995 book entitled *Beyond the Provinces: Literary Canada at Century's End*.

The collection includes papers on two specific traditional Canadian research interests, reflecting a broad national intellectual excitement, too: landscape and nationalism in literature. Victor Kennedy's essay entitled "Metaphor and Metalandscape of Nationalism in Contemporary Canadian Writing" differentiates Canadians' critical understanding of Canadianness from that of the Europeans' and calls attention to the need to recognize patterns of romantic idealism, provincialism and colonialism in literature as well as in other public intellectual discourses. The writer argues that irony in literature proves to be a powerful means of challenging negative tendencies in national image and identity formulation.

Donn Kushner explores how "kidlit" advocates human rights, with special regards to patterns of victimization in Canadian children's literature and society. A different literary approach to human rights is Anna Olos's partly post-communist perspective of Findley's fiction. A further essay dealing with human rights focuses on a contemporary topic: Internet-related social and legal issues. András György Tóth's formally somewhat different paper that presents a case study of the 1998 Ice Storm disaster and its coverage on the "privileged tool," i.e. the internet. The writer argues that websites operating at the time of the natural disaster provided not only a technical facility as a medium of aid, consolidation and encouragement for the victims, but also supplied a precious opportunity for the collective exchange of ideas as well as it presented the power of individual initiative in time of need.

A rather popular current research interest in discourse analysis is reflected in the collection as well. Eva Kusher calls attention to monological and dialogical discourses in French and English poetry with a wide array of examples, while Éva Martonyi focuses on the literary phenomena of Quebec Francophone literary avant-garde and postmodernism. As for other literary genres, Szabolcs Szilágyi's paper compares the text and performance versions of a drama by Alun Hibbert, attempting to re-evaluate the artistic merits of the text in view of the actual performance participants of the Seregélyes Conference enjoyed. However, other significant thematic interests in contemporary literary criticism, like the discussion of the female discourse of writing, are also represented in the selection. Three

papers analyze Atwood's art. Monika Bottez provides a contextual analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*, while Edina Szalay's paper explores the process of getting rid of certain self-deceptions in the course of what she calls "the Gothic Mother-Daughter Plot." One of the most outstanding papers in the collection is Michelle Gadpaille's textual analysis of the complex metaphoric and metonymic language of *Alias Grace*. Another interesting essay is János Kenyeres's paper that reflects a great respect for the heritage of Northrop Frye in Canadian as well as in world literature. The writer analyzes Frye's notion of 'kerygma', a vision of truth revealed by a sense of interpenetration, present in his seminal books of criticism. A challenging notion sums up the distinct features of Frye's legacy arguing that in Frye's criticism "rhetoric is tied in with freedom".

Incorporating literature and culture studies, historical and current issues in a post-conference periodical or practically any collection of essays is always a challenge. In *Canada and the Millennium* an attempt was made to find a proper selection and ordering criteria. All in all, a tribute must go to the editor who provides the opportunity for European as well as Canadian contributors to explore various perspectives, a wide range of subject matter, style and depths of analysis, reflecting the variety of the critical horizon in Canadian letters.

ANDRÁS TARNÓC

TIBOR FRANK: ETHNICITY, PROPAGANDA, MYTH-MAKING: STUDIES ON HUNGARIAN CONNECTIONS TO BRITAIN AND AMERICA 1848–1945

Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999. 391 pp.

"Multunk mind össze van torlódva
s mint szorongó kivándorlókra,
ránk is úgy vár az új világ

(József Attila "Hazám")

The focus of Tibor Frank's ambitious and extremely valuable study bears relevance to today as well since in an age when the international agenda is dominated by such issues as globalization versus the preservation of national identities and cultures, propaganda and mythmaking can function as effective tools of identity preservation. In his book Frank focuses on a critical period of world history as in the virtual century between 1848–1945 both the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Anglo-Saxon world underwent tremendous changes including a revolutionary wave shaking the feudal system in Central Europe and the birth and fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy along with the shift of geopolitical dominance from Britain to the United States.

Whereas the subtitle of the book might imply that the author assigns priority to the Hungarian point of view in his inquiry, the essays covering three large areas: nativism and immigration restriction, propaganda and politics, and a reevaluation of the relationship between Marx and Kossuth reveal a mutual dependence

in the international relations explored. Frank describes his own approach as historical philology entailing the identification and rigorous analysis of historical documents via multiple readings. The twenty two articles comprising this truly significant volume represent intercultural communication and appear to share one unifying theme, culture projection. Whereas the term defined by Merelman as "the conscious and unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups and the general public" (3) is originally applicable within a macro-social context, the author's scholarly scope suggests the expansion of the culture projection concept on to the global scene recasting the image exchange process not between social groups, but countries. One of the main values of Frank's work is that he does not examine the topics in isolation, but places its subjects in an interactive context.

Culture projection can take place in four forms: hegemonic culture projection entails the instigation of the projection process by the privileged group, syncretization means the fusion of various cultural impulses on the part of the initiator, the counter-hegemonic mode sees the less favored or subordinate group as the principal provider of the new images, and polarization suggests a mutual rejection of culture projection. Whereas this approach on the surface appears to suggest a simplified zero-sum game outlook and a hierarchic categorization of countries, it must be noted that culture projection is a highly fluid and volatile process, during which both the image creator and receiver are defined and redefined.

Similarly to the societal scene, the question of the (re)establishment of identity is applicable to the book's context. The internal dynamics of a multicultural society can be discerned in the international framework too, as in the present work instead of one multicultural society, three multicultural entities or countries are juxtaposed to each other. Similarly to minority groups victimized by stereotyping, distorted images, or the "a disruption of the organic set of human features for manipulative functions" (Virágos 132) can be applied to nations as well. Consequently, following the pattern of the representatives of minority groups struggling against distorted images, the destruction of Hungarian stereotypes maintained by England and the U.S. was the primary goal of Hungary's political decision makers. The book, however, reveals the principal paradox of culture

projection, that is, its categorization primarily depends on the position of the observer. Namely, if a social group or country perceives itself in a subordinate position, the image projection qualifies as counter hegemonic. Similarly, a nation presenting primarily counter hegemonic impulses can also be a source of hegemonic culture projection demonstrated by the insistence on the pre-eminence of the “Hungarian race” in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

While in Hungary the decline of the old order is paralleled with a painful adjustment to a post-World War One era, the American side also displays the growing pains of a prospective superpower. Consequently, both sides are in a crisis searching for their identity in the new world order. In this crisis situation both countries experience the need to define their identity or protect it from outsiders and it is the volatile issue of race and ethnicity that emerges as the key component of the identity protection process. One of the added values of the work is its theoretical framework facilitating a simultaneous examination of the conflicting and competing histories, thereby demonstrating the interdependence of the two worlds. Whereas the author grouped the articles into three different categories, the analysis of the respective culture projection processes yields a different conceptual apparatus.

Hegemonic culture projection, in which the image originates from the dominant country, is primarily applicable to U.S.—Hungarian relations. Since during culture projection the image creator is defined as well, the main motivator of this type of intercultural communication was the American fear of the social and political consequences of New Immigration. The arrival of the immigrants not conforming to the WASP model appeared to threaten the cultural foundation of the U.S. and elicited a nativist response best summed up by Madison Grant’s infamous words: “If the melting pot is allowed to boil without control, and we continue to follow our national motto and deliberately blind ourselves to all ‘distinctions of race, creed, or color,’ the type of native American of Colonial descent will become as extinct as the Athenian of the age of Pericles, and the Viking of the days of Rollo” (qtd. in Frank 154). Franz Boas’ anthropological examination of Austro-Hungarian immigrants contributed to the Dillingham Report and to the principal product of this culture projection process, the subsequent immigration restriction legislation clearly considered

hegemonic to minority communities within and without the U.S. The U.S. government sponsored investigation of immigration from Austro-Hungary achieved mixed results. On the one hand the inquiry reinforced the similarities between the two nations and came to a somewhat arguable conclusion that Hungarians were "the most contented and happy people of all" (115). Also, it reiterated that the principal source of immigration to the U.S. was the Slovak region and the Carpathian Mountains "where the people are the most ignorant and the soil the most unproductive in the country" (115). It is natural that the creator of the projected image preconditioned by its own values and historical experience posited the target country with a similar multicultural framework. This type of hegemonic culture projection offers a blue print or action pattern to which the image creator expects conformity. However, the initiator of intercultural communication, being aware of the limits of this desire, resorts to a conative approach describing the target country in terms it wants it to be seen.

Hegemonic culture projection takes place within Austro-Hungary as well demonstrated by the government's insistence on an "indivisible, single, Hungarian nation" (74) and by the assertion of the "superiority of the Hungarian race" (82) Frank reveals the paradox of Hungarian immigration, while considered superior at home, relegated to second class citizenship in the host country (82). The author's research helps to ascertain the efficiency of the culture projection process as well. The goals of immigration restriction legislation, if indirectly and partially, had been realized after all as responding to the nativist outcry Hungary began to regulate its own immigration policy screening potential applicants and allowing only "eligible candidates" to leave (117). The argument maintained by U.S. immigration officials that the Hungarian (and Italian) government's policy encouraging temporary immigration over permanent dislocation amounts to a modern day colonization process (117), reveals a unique sense of national self-doubt casting the U.S. in the unlikely role of the colony and offers proof to the assertion that the categorization of the culture projection process, whether it qualifies as hegemonic or counter hegemonic mainly depends on the vantage point of the observer.

Syncretization, the fusion of opposing cultural impulses, or the mutual acceptance of the pictures or images projected by two nations or cultures can also be identified in Frank's book. Naturally, this is the

most successful type of culture projection, as both the image sender and receiver appear to share a common denominator. Synretization can be discerned in the acceptance of the importance of the study of anthropology and its application to the respective multicultural scene by the Hungarian educational and political establishment. Frank aptly quotes the acclaimed Minister of Hungarian Education, Ágoston Trefort: “Anthropology is a fertile field in Hungary which was and is inhabited by different races in times ancient and modern” (25). The question posed by Aurél von Török the Ponor “whether or not the Hungarian type progressed in a physical sense due to this continuous mixing of the blood” (28) reminds one of the quandary of the American nativists. Consequently, anthropology on both sides of the Atlantic was far from being value neutral and during the examined period it was used to prove the superiority of one group over another. Kossuth’s self-promoted image of an Anglo-Saxon ideas inspired freedom fighter acquiring English proficiency during his readings of Shakespeare while imprisoned as a martyr for the cause of the freedom of the press is another example of syncretization and naturally, of a successful culture projection. It is important to realize, however, that Kossuth did not represent the official Hungarian government, yet his monumental tour of Britain and the U.S. established an eternal connection between him and Hungary in the American mind. The “mythological transformation of Kossuth’s autobiography” (216) was a carefully designed public relations campaign successfully appealing to the heart of the Anglo-Saxon public. The image created by Kossuth is the reification of the basic ideals of Anglo-Saxon democracy and functions as a living proof of the viability of the English and American ideal

The American view of Miklós Horthy also offers a proof of syncretization. Frank demonstrates that the Regent of Hungary was seen by the American government as a guarantee of political stability and a bulwark against the potential restoration of the Habsburg monarchy in the post World War One era. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the American observers, General Harry Hill Bandholtz, Nicholas Roosevelt, and John F. Montgomery allude to the decadence and anachronistic nature of the Hungarian aristocracy and to the refreshingly middle class values of the gentry represented by Horthy. While Bandholtz emphasizes Horthy as a guarantee against

the return of the Habsburgs, N. Roosevelt sees the Regent as a staunch foe of Bolshevism. Captain Roosevelt also welcomes that Horthy displays the same values that are held in high esteem in America, as he describes Horthy and his brother as "men of force, energy, and character— simple, practical, and intelligent at the same time. that they were well-bred and courteous" (242). John F. Montgomery, the strongest supporter of Horthy cast him as a politician supporting Britain and the United States over Nazi Germany. Horthy appeared to American observers as a person espousing American values, sympathizing with Franklin Roosevelt and the fact that he sent his son to work for a year in Detroit, at the Ford Motor Company further improved his American perception.

Another example of syncretization, or the mutual acceptance of culture projection originating from Hungary toward the Anglo-Saxon world, primarily to Great Britain, is the establishment of the *Hungarian Quarterly* through the efforts of Count István Bethlen and mainly, József Balogh in 1936. The motivation behind the launching of the periodical: the promotion of the policies of Hungary, the acquisition of support for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, and the achievement of an overall improvement of Hungary's image may present the *Hungarian Quarterly* as an example of counter hegemonic culture projection. However, the incorporation of the values and stylistic elements emphasized by the target countries suggest syncretization Whereas represented by the long list of contributors Balogh's painstaking efforts and editorial rigor resulted in the acceptance of the periodical in England, the culture projection process toward the U.S. was not as successful, mainly due to the Anglophile attitudes of the editorial board. The *Hungarian Quarterly* also contained literary pieces and managed to maintain a creative connection with the reading public of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The author also retraces the fluctuation of the image of Hungary in the United States. First Hungary in the beginning of the 19th century appeared as an "exotic curiosity" (309) and as a result of the Revolution and War of Independence in 1848–49, and the highly acclaimed visit of Lajos Kossuth in 1851–52, the country became a romantic and idolized symbol of freedom. Frank, on the other hand, notes the principal paradox of the American perception of Hungary, namely while its exiled political leaders were considered heroes of

liberty, the immigration policies of the official government and the immigrants themselves were given a hostile reception. Following World War One the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as one of the defeated powers was seen as an anachronism incompatible with the values of democracy. This is aptly demonstrated by Nicholas Roosevelt's allusion to the anecdote recalling of a Hungarian Count confessing to his useless life on his deathbed, by the infamous statement: "Just shot hares, Lord. Shot hares. Shot hares. Shot hares" (317). It is no wonder that the emergence of Horthy, representing the lesser gentry and being a proponent of American values struck a sympathetic cord with the U.S. public and helped to rework his image as a potential buffer against Bolshevism and a guarantee against the return of the monarchy. The American view of Hungary's World War Two role was also ambiguous at best, describing it as a nation caught between the need to fight against Communism and the insistence on the gains achieved through an alliance with Nazi Germany.

A significant section of the essays suggest *counter hegemonic culture projection*. Hungary, or the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy due to historical and geopolitical reasons was seen in a less superior position compared to Great Britain and the United States. Consequently, counter hegemonic culture projection can be observed in Vienna's efforts to popularize the Dual Monarchy in England between 1866–70. The main purpose of this campaign was to convince the British public and indirectly the country's policy makers of the desirability of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a commercial and political partner. Furthermore, while Kossuth's monumental speaking campaign in Britain and in the U.S. also started as a counter hegemonic impulse as discussed above it eventually turned into syncretization. Frank's treatment of the censorial career of János Reseta between 1832–1848 reveals a counter hegemonic culture projection displaying the efforts of a person originally entrusted with the control of the press, thereby limiting a fundamental civil liberty, evolving into an indirect protector of the freedom of the press and speech, core values of the Anglo-Saxon democracies. Reseta's efforts included suggesting revisions in the Hungarian translations of British and American works, preventing libelous publications from reaching the press, or excluding texts promoting anti-Semitism and ethnic hatred from circulation.

Counter hegemonic culture projections toward the U.S. primarily fall into two categories, immigration related issues and aspirations designed to gain political support for the causes of the post-1848 exile community and for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon. The counter hegemonic culture projection process entails the reception or acknowledgement of the image sent by the less privileged entity on the part of the dominant country. In Frank's analysis of the picture of the U. S. created by returning immigrant inmates of mental asylums the duality of intercultural communication can be discerned, as the America image of mentally unstable immigrants is a result of the U.S. showing its "inhospitable, unaccommodating face" (140). These broken and shattered dreams are produced by two groups of people, either suffering from mental illness prior to emigration, or developing mental instability during the American experience. Frank's investigation reveals that the condition defined by Dr. László Epstein as "emigration psychosis" (137) is usually brought on by financial strain. Another example of a counter hegemonic impulse is the failed effort to publish a historical overview of Hungary tailor-made to the tastes and preferences of Anglo-Saxon readers, to counteract the potentially damaging consequences of the publication of R. W. Seton-Watson's *A History of the Rumanians: From Roman Times to the Completion of Unity (*1934). Whereas the purported work was an example in therapeutic historiography, it is worthwhile to note that Seton-Watson's book amounted to hegemonic culture projection eliciting a counter hegemonic response in Hungary. The planned publication of the English and French version of *The History of Hungary* however, fell victim to backbiting and to professional and personal tensions between the organizer of the publishing efforts, József Balogh and its chief contributors, the noted historian, Gyula Szekfű. Despite these failed efforts works aiming to familiarize the Anglo-Saxon reading public with the Hungarian past were produced by Domokos Kosáry and Joseph Eugene Tersánszky.

Polarization, or the rejection of culture projection can be discerned in Frank's analysis of the relationship between Marx and Kossuth. The author provides a detailed analysis of the political and cultural dynamics of the post 1848 émigré world. The Hungarian immigrant community divided between Kossuth and Szemere is juxtaposed to Marx's exile career. Taking advantage of the misinformation

campaign conducted by two infamous police agents Gusztáv Zerffi and János Bangya, the alleged long-held hostility between Marx and Kossuth is utilized by the Habsburgs. In his assessment of the exchanged images Frank reveals that the purpose of the Habsburgs was to divide and undermine the credibility of the Hungarian émigré community, thereby to discredit and eliminate a potential threat. Frank, however, proves that the hostility between Marx and Kossuth appears to be an exaggeration, as Marx considered the Hungarian leader his "fellow fighter" (344). In this case the intercultural communication process takes place not between countries, but individuals suffering a similar political fate. Thus the culture projection process is carried out between two refugees as neither Marx, nor Kossuth represent the official government of their countries. Whereas Marx was residing in England, Kossuth in Turkey, and Szemere in Paris, neither of them attempted to convey images in order to change the international perception of their chosen home. Consequently, culture projection only takes place on the individual level, and the end result is the mutual rejection of the projected images.

One of the basic values of Frank's book is that it displays the objectivity of the scholar and provides an analysis of the main issues not only from the Hungarian point of view, but from the American and British one, too. "It is his questions that make a historian" (7) as Frank quotes László Németh. Indeed the author poses many questions, forcing the reader to re-evaluate Hungarian connections with the Anglo-Saxon world. However, Frank should not limit himself to being a professional historian as the work reviewed here offers a major contribution not only to the field of history, but to American studies and cultural studies as well. As a result of the historical philologist approach Frank does not simply examine historical events, but investigates the forces that help to shape the perception of those events. By focusing on the perception of events and the reception of certain historical developments both in Hungary and in the Anglo-Saxon countries he reinforces the fact that these cultures are interrelated and interdependent. In fact, the author's research methodology of finding sources, and reading and rereading them are instructions to heed for those encountering this truly significant achievement because a work of this magnitude indeed should be read

and reread several times by historian, scholar of American studies and interested observer alike.

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LEHEL VADON

ORSZÁGH LÁSZLÓ—VIRÁGOS ZSOLT: AZ AMERIKAI IRODALOM TÖRTÉNETE

(A History of American Literature.) Budapest: Eötvös József Könyvkiadó, 1997. 394, [2] pp.

László Országh's work titled *Az amerikai irodalom története* (A History of American Literature) published in 1967 represented a milestone both in Hungarian literary studies and in the development of American Studies in Hungary. It functioned as a significant step in the realization of a scholarly program outlined in the form of a manifesto titled *Az amerikanisztika feladata Magyarországon* (The Mission of American Studies in Hungary) in *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok* (Hungarian Studies in English) in 1965. In his essay the "father of American Studies" in Hungary defined the most important tasks required for the establishment and development of high standard and professionally sound American Studies programs and research efforts. Professor Országh not only laid down the foundations of a new discipline, but he established a school along with creating a program whose crucial objectives he realized himself. One of these tasks included the compilation and publication of a scholarly work focusing on the history of American literature. This seminal effort not only marked a milestone in Hungarian book publishing, but it was a significant contribution both to Hungarian literature and culture. The fact that the book was written in an age when the contemporary political and scholarly establishment assigned the United States and the study of its culture and literature into the "tolerated" category of the infamous tripartite evaluation scheme ranging from "state supported" through "tolerated" to "forbidden" further reinforces the

work's bibliographic value and high esteem in Hungarian cultural history.

Since the author was requested by the Gondolat Publishing House to follow the form and size-related guidelines of its already released books focusing on Bulgarian, Czech, Slovakian, and classic Greek literary history, the form of Országh's work suggests that its primary aim is the education of the interested general public. While Országh's book successfully realizes the latter objective, the *A History of American Literature* as a pioneering effort bridging the gap in contemporary philological and literary studies goes far beyond a science propagation and popularization function. It is a synthesis of Professor Országh's scholarly efforts in literary history, a high standard work built on the solid foundation of the author's vast knowledge and extensive professional background. The clear, logical structuring of the accurate and scientifically sound content knowledge, the all inclusive and extensive bibliographic section, the deep and engaging portrayal of the careers of the leading literary figures and the thorough illustration of the respective social, cultural, and historical developments make Országh's work a truly outstanding scholarly achievement and the first and so far only Hungarian language survey of the three and a half century history of American literature. The author discusses the historical periods and the development of the American nation along with analyzing the economic and social forces impacting American literature in a vivid and enjoyable style. In describing the leading figures and achievements of American literature Országh testifies to the possession of a sensitive and sophisticated aesthetic taste as well.

This work of Országh has always been considered an indispensable resource for researchers, college and university professors and students, in addition to appealing to the interested general public. Professor Péter Egri in a tribute to his Department Chair's achievements in literary history described the never fading, always current appeal of Országh's work with the following words: "Országh's *A History of American Literature* sparks both the interest of the reader and the professional researcher through its pioneering topic selection, summarizing capability, the involving description of respective literary trends, the content's solid foundation in history and cultural history along with its clear and lucid structure, in addition to

the restrained, yet concise and painstaking logic of the authorial approach."

The astuteness of the Eötvös József Publishing Company to honor the significant mission of Hungarian book publishing by making available Országh's work at the ninetieth anniversary of the author's birth cannot be overestimated. This volume, however, was not a simple reprint of the previous one as Országh's work contained only a twenty page overview of the development of post World War Two American literature until 1960. The publisher's objective of accurately informing the reader on the complex and varied developments in American literature in the past half century was realized in the best possible manner through the invitation of a former Országh student, Zsolt Virágos, a professor at the Department of North American Studies at Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen, to summarize the history of American literature in the post-1945 era. Virágos as one of the most outstanding representatives of the Országh school has provided several significant contributions towards the preservation and promotion of Országh's intellectual heritage and achievements in literary history and criticism. The rightness of Virágos's long pondered decision to continue the milestone work written thirty years earlier by his teacher was justified by his impressive professional background, his dedication to Országh's achievements, the mutually shared literary critical and aesthetic judgment criteria along with his professional humility and devotion towards the respective task. Consequently, Virágos's endeavor resulted in the extension of the autonomous life of Országh's landmark effort as the added section follows the original formal and structural guidelines, along with its intellectual spirit thereby making it an integral part of the initial work

Called upon to describe the history of American literature in the past 50 years in 140 pages, Virágos encountered a daunting yet challenging and stimulating task. Following Országh's structuring philosophy, he discusses more than two hundred literary figures and their significant works. Furthermore, he describes the profound changes impacting American society, culture, and politics, while retracing the respective development trends and highlighting the significant and defining tendencies in fiction, poetry, and drama in a concise and logically structured manner. In addition to being very informative and richly documented this extensive closing chapter

adhering to the proportional and structural guidelines of the original work employs a well-justified selection criteria and prioritizing system as well.

Unfortunately, the abundant photographs, pictures, illustrations, and the extensive bibliographical section of the original volume were not included in the newer edition.

The new enlarged volume was published in May 1997 and it can be considered the most significant book publishing achievement of that year. Its reception was similar to that of the original as in a short period it was sold out and in December 1997 was published again.

Zsolt Virágos dedicated his contribution to the book to his one-time master Professor László Országh. The names on the title-page—mentor and disciple—show a pleasing symbolic authorial cooperation and continuity in the history of American Studies in Hungary.