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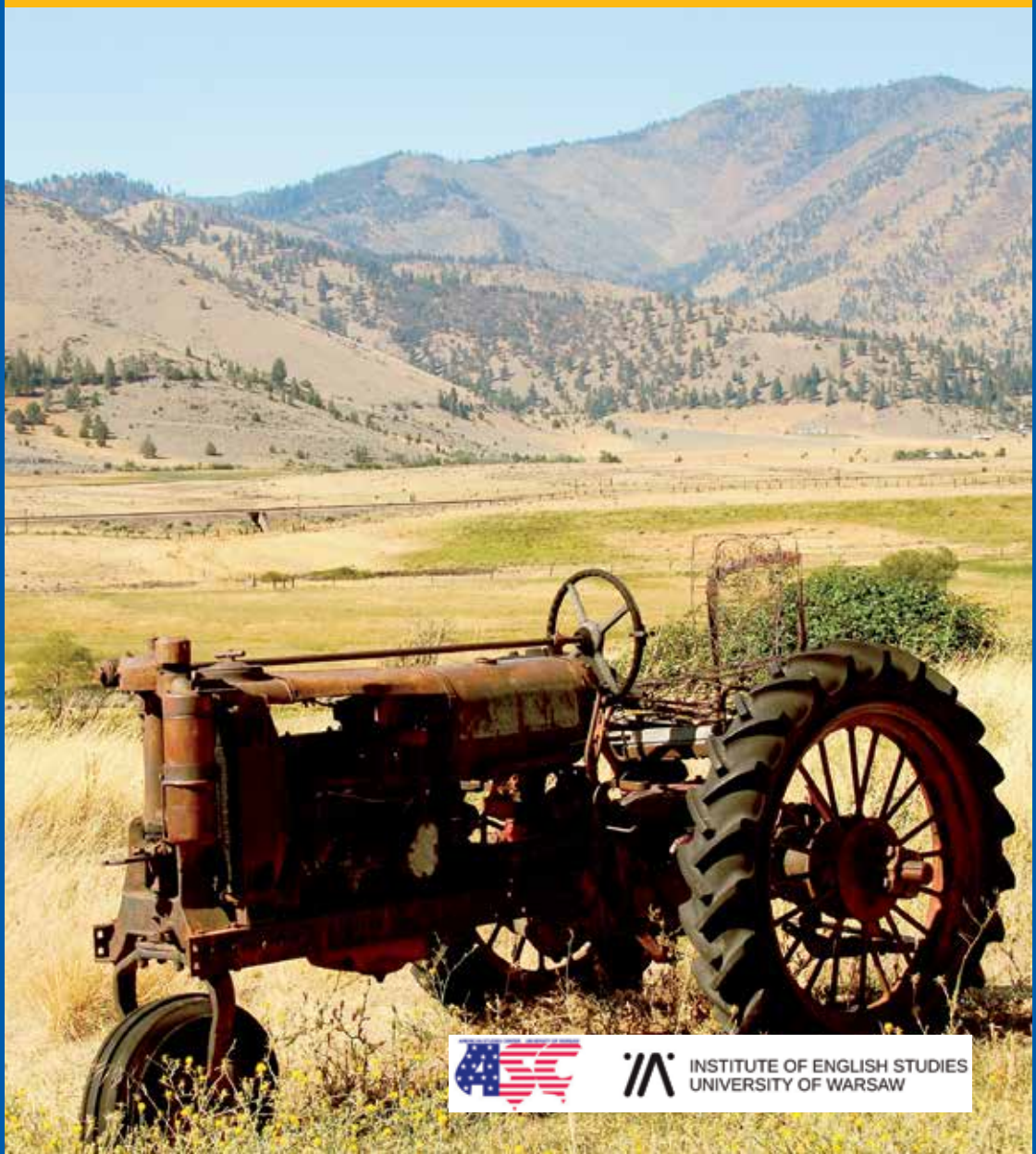

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Zbigniew Maszewski

Remembering William Faulkner's Address Upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature

Abstract: William Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for the year 1949. He officially received the Prize and delivered his acceptance speech on December 10, 1950. This article re-examines critical responses to the writer's Nobel Prize address, their interest in the address's intertextual references to Faulkner's earlier works and the works of other writers. The language of the address documents significant aspects of Faulkner-the writer's/Faulkner-the reader's aesthetic vision from the perspective of his didactic concern with the duties of the writer facing the challenges of his/her time and as a means of constructing publicly Faulkner's own literary self-portrait of universal dimensions.

Keywords: Nobel Prize, intertextuality, didacticism, self-referentiality.

The year 2020 will mark the seventieth anniversary of William Faulkner's becoming the recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature for 1949, the official statement of the Swedish Academy having been delayed until November 10, 1950. It may be seen as a sign of the award's and the writer's prestige that Faulkner's critical biographers have taken interest in the anecdotal aspects of the distinction and of the celebration itself. As for its many other winners, the public profile the Prize ensures was for Faulkner an honor that let him, a professional shape-shifter, assume the posture of one who must always put personal autonomy above worldly recognition. A correspondent of *Dagens Nybeter* learned from the laureate that he was not planning to go to Stockholm, as Stockholm was too far away from the farm "down here" in Mississippi where his, the farmer's, primary obligations were (Gray 309, Karl 806). Once he did go there, however, the pride of having his high international status acknowledged was inseparable from the need to distance himself from it by emphasizing the provincial location of his work down on the map of his native country. In a letter to a friend, Faulkner wrote: "I fear that some of my fellow Mississippians will never forgive that 30,000 $ that durn foreign country gave me for just sitting on my ass writing stuff that makes my own state ashamed to own me" (Faulkner, *Novels 1926-1929*, "Chronology" 1163). Far away from his farm, Faulkner seemed to find refuge from the officialdom of the ceremony by posing as a Mississippian: "It was as long as a Mississippi funeral," he told the reporters (Minter 219). The anecdotal in Faulkner's biographies invariably has its dark side: in 1949 Faulkner's affair with Joan Williams, not much older than his daughter, became a source of distress and anguish rather than of peace and satisfaction; neither farming nor writing could bring relief to the troubles and uncertainties of Faulkner's domestic life; in 1950 the hunt in the Delta following the news of the Nobel Prize was the time of heavy drinking which may or may not have helped Faulkner forget that, by establishing a solid stature in literary history, prizes of such renown tend to allow the shadow of the writer's younger

self darken the vision of possible future accomplishment. One could argue that it was the disquieting thought of his becoming a distinguished figure of the past, a writer who cannot help staring back at his own established canon, that dictated to Faulkner some famous lines in the text of the Nobel Prize address he delivered in the fall of 1950.

Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech (now available online) had all the features of Faulkner's "splendid failure." It proved that Ernest Hemingway was right when five years later, having found a good excuse for not going there himself, he asked the American ambassador to Sweden to read his acceptance speech in which he said that "a writer should write what he has to say and not speak it" (Baker 806). In the banquet hall Faulkner, unshaven and visibly uncomfortable, stood too far away from the microphone to be clearly heard and understood. Hurrying, slowing down, hesitating, making awkward pauses, his soft voice with a deep Southern accent drew attention to itself because it spoke of the writer's shyness and nervousness and not because its modulations helped convey the meaning of the words. Perhaps Faulkner's oral performance was listened to with interest and anticipation as a great writer's way of rehearsing the text that could only become significant by being read when printed.

The text of the speech addressed the fears of the present day from a global perspective. Faulkner spoke of the threat of a nuclear conflict in the Cold War era: "Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear for so long sustained that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up?"[1] The "I" in the question shifted emphasis from individual vision to collective experience. Powerful as it was meant to be, when written rather than when spoken, the directness of the question seems somewhat un-Faulknerian, especially when compared with a much more spirited tone of the "I" from the opening sentence of the address where the importance of the writer's life is judged on the basis of the writer's work: "I feel that this award was not made to me as a man but to my work—." The question which presupposes annihilation, negation, silence is also the question which preconditions the writer's passion for words (and the award it may eventually bring to the writer: "the purpose and the significance of its [the Nobel Prize's] origin"). This paradox is already highly Faulknerian, also in the sense of recognizing its rootedness in the tradition of literary responses to moments of historical crisis, declarations of faith (Faulkner's "I decline to accept the end of man;" "I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail") that literary texts can and should have impact beyond literary contents and contexts.

What Nathaniel Rich has recently written of another American Nobel Prize winner, Saul Bellow, would also apply to Faulkner's appearance in Stockholm in 1950: he was "describing his new position in American culture: insisting on the writer's need for independence from worldly affairs while throwing himself into them" (Rich 26). It is not easy, however, to appreciate Faulkner's concern with the "tragedy" of the feared global annihilation when it takes the form of a didactic, if not prescriptive, pronouncement on the art of writing, a pronouncement which is not immune to grandiloquence and rhetoric and which, because of the writer's and the

1 Quotations from Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech come from "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature" in *The Portable Faulkner*, ed. Cowley, 723–724.

award's prestige, is so sure of being given a pre-eminent position. "Using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail," Faulkner is telling them what they "must learn" or "relearn," what they "must teach [themselves]," what they must accept as the only thing worth writing about. Then and only then, one of them will "some day stand here where I am standing."

Not surprisingly, Faulkner scholars have had little patience with the laureate's preaching skills and a rather forceful rhythmic arrangement of the sometimes self-contradictory message sent from the elevation of the speaker's pulpit to those whose "griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars." In Richard Gray's *The Life of William Faulkner: A Critical Biography* we find less than ten sentences on Faulkner's address and the strenuous punctuation in one of them may be seen as an indication of the critic's troubled position: "The fame of the Nobel Prize acceptance speech has, by now, perhaps blinded us to the fact that it is, at best, a glorious piece of windy oratory: that tries to make up in term of rousing cadences for what it lacks in substance" (310).

The fact that some Faulkner scholars devote more space to Faulkner's speech in Stockholm may result not so much from their readiness to accept its obtrusive moralistic rhetoric and its inflated claims for originality ("to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before") as from the recognition of its capacity to offer an illustration of the trajectory of Faulkner's work and its relatedness to the works of other writers he read and re-read. When Gray asks himself the question "but how did all those references to 'the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths' fit in with a book like *The Sound and the Fury*?" (310), he means that in aesthetic terms these references failed in formulating what the book succeeded in dramatizing. The question points to the need of making the connection between the address and the book, but, out of respect for Faulkner's mature work, the critic feels no need to expand on it. Faulkner readers will easily notice that the "rousing cadences" of his Nobel Prize speech owe much to the "successive waves" of the preacher's voice on April 8th, 1928 in *The Sound and the Fury*, the voice whose "virtuosity" made the congregation forget the speaker's insignificant appearance, the voice which seemed to "consume" the speaker and the congregation as "their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words" (Faulkner, *Novels 1926-1929* 1104). In Faulkner's speech, as in the novel published twenty years earlier, the words did continue to exercise their cumulative effect until they could be sure of making the most of the repetition of the favorite one in the writer's lexicon—"to endure."

While the preacher in Jefferson "sounded like a white man" when he rose to speak, Faulkner's voice in Stockholm, according to Frederick R. Karl, sounded like the black man's and it spoke of the "Negro" with the same force as it did in *Intruder in the Dust* from 1948:

> For those who seemed surprised at the positive nature of the speech, *Intruder*, in fact, had already said it all. There Faulkner spoke of the Negro's ability to 'wait and endure and survive' until the white Southerner gives him his just rights economically and politically. In the speech, he took up this theme and brought it to a more universal application. For his sense of man's survival, he clearly had the Southern Negro as his model. As we see Faulkner position himself in race

> relations in Mississippi and the South, for him the ability to prevail and endure belongs to the Negro—and in his Nobel Speech, the Negro is at the center of his mind, at the center of the universe. (815)

Karl's critical comment sounds convincing insofar as for the center of the writer's mind we can take the universal quality of language which, as Faulkner imagined that quality in *The Sound and the Fury* and in *Intruder in the Dust*, allows the white and the black voices to speak in unison, preferably beyond the audible.

It would be more realistic and less didactic to look for the correspondences between the language of Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech and the language of the story which links the liberating hunting experience with the horror of racial history. In "The Bear," published in 1942 in *Go Down, Moses*, hunting is also writing. People can claim to own the land no more than they can claim to own the language, which is timeless and which belongs to all. The hunting places are the places of storytelling and of listening. So are, though not as good as the big woods ("bigger and older than any recorded document"), the libraries and plantation offices. The opening pages of "The Bear" tell the young men (young women are absent there), with as much intensity and dedication as the text of the Nobel Prize speech, what they must learn in order to become worthy of taking their place among the elevated company, among those who already feel and know what to believe, what to decline, what to refuse. The ritualistic incantation of ancient virtues to be slowly acquired and then rigorously followed in the wilderness—"the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive" (Faulkner, *Novels 1942-1954* 140)—are echoed in the Nobel Prize speech, repetitively and with growing strength, by listings of "universal truths" a writer must possess and be possessed by in order to overcome the fear threatening to make "a life's work" meaningless: "the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice, which have been the glory of his past." Young McCaslin must laboriously, in agony and in sweat, learn to read the signs in the family documents revealing to him, word by word, record by record, not the glory but the horror of the historical past, the truth which the timeless hunter's/writer's virtues will help him endure. In "The Bear" Faulkner emphasizes that whenever the best of all talking and the best of all listening began "[t]here was always a bottle present." Whisky, he writes, should be drunk by hunters "not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring thereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them" (141). The use of negation to make the affirmative resound with increased force is one of the trademarks, or, to use his own word "tricks," of Faulkner's stylistic method in the story. In the camp, during the annual deer hunt in the fall of 1950, did Faulkner remember these verbal patterns when he might have been thinking about the way to salute in Stockholm the art of writing which is practiced "not for glory and least of all for profit" and the award which, like the hunter's trophy, is given to him "in trust" only?

The formulations from the Nobel Prize address appear in *A Fable*, the first parts of which Faulkner had begun to send to Random House in 1946 and which he published as a novel in 1954. Though set in France months before the end of World War I, *A Fable* refers to World War II and the impending nuclear war in the decade following it. It tells of the burden of negotiating between the authoritarian power of the enslaving military system and the idealistic desire to maintain the virtues of individualism and free will,

the desire which one could associate with the powers of expression. The language of the novel, like the language of the Nobel Prize speech, lacks dramatic immediacy. As Lothar Hönninghausen observed in *Faulkner: Masks and Metaphors*: "Like mystery plays, moralities and political parables, [*A Fable*] comprises a series of didactic units or stations, unfolding not in narrative progression but like *tableaux vivants* or film stills" (151). This, of course, makes the text of the novel recognizably Faulkner's, reminiscent of the successful use of the same technique in his best novels. The problem with the language of *A Fable*, mirrored in the Nobel Prize speech, was that, relying heavily on its moral purpose, it found consolation from political as well as artistic uncertainties, in the domain of abstractions. In the Nobel Prize speech, Faulkner raises the already high-flown level of the rhetoric by substituting the verb "to endure" by the verb "to prevail," without, however, giving up the opportunity to explain expansively (and with a literary flourish that reminds the reader of his early work), that "to endure" would "merely" mean: "that when the last ding-dong of doom has changed and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then, there will still be one more sound: that of the puny inexhaustible voice, still talking." "I refuse to accept this," says Faulkner. In *A Fable*, Faulkner's savior-like voice creates a vision of other planets being militarized, a warning more developed than in the speech but one to be equally valued for the effectiveness of its cumulative articulation:

> Oh yes, he will survive it because he has that in him which will endure even beyond the ultimate worthless tideless rock freezing slowly in the last red and heartless sunset, because already the next star in the blue immensity of space will be already clamorous with the uproar of his debarkation, his puny and inexhaustible and immortal voice still talking, still planning; and there too after the last ding dong of doom has rung and died there will still be one sound more: his voice, planning still to build something higher and faster and louder, more efficient and louder and faster than ever before, yet it too inherent with the same old primordial fault since it too in the end will fail to eradicate him from the earth. I don't fear man. Faulkner (Faulkner, *Novels 1942-1954* 994).

The ease and a certain degree of pleasure we can find in discovering intertextual dependencies of Faulkner's speech on his writings takes us back again to the anecdotal and darker aspects of the ceremony honoring the author. Although, as he said, he was going to speak about his work rather than about himself, one may still wonder to what extent the writer was sincere in mentioning, or, in fact, giving it a pivotal role in the design of the speech, the historical fact of threatened peace (the unmentioned reality of the Soviet blockade in Berlin and the Korean War). When he spoke of the need to create something that "did not exist before," was he summoning the spirit of modernity of resurrecting the body of modernism? Was William Faulkner really addressing young men and women who, knowing and rejecting fear, should responsibly follow him in their choice of literary themes, or was he actually addressing himself, the writer who felt dissatisfied with his work in a more mature but less hopeful way that he had felt dissatisfied with it at the beginning of his literary career, the time of his splendid failures? Growing old and more assured of the significance of his work, did Faulkner want young men to listen to him, or was he talking to the younger Faulkner? Did

the fact that his daughter, Jill, was listening to him during the Nobel Prize ceremony remind him of the presence, back in his native country, of Joan Williams, a young woman he was in love with and resolved to help in her literary career, knowing also that in doing so, he would be helping his own work?

As early as in 1945 in *The Portable Faulkner* (the revised 1967 edition of which would include the Nobel Prize address), Malcolm Cowley had to some extent anticipated these questions when he emphasized close links between Faulkner's particular novels and the writer's practice "to understand the present in terms of the past." That practice linked Faulkner also to other writers, among whom Cowley favored Nathaniel Hawthorne. Like Faulkner (and "like a hunter behind a rock," as Cowley wrote), Hawthorne knew how to listen to the voices of his native land and how to transcribe the "moral fables" they told into his own art, albeit "more cautiously than Faulkner… with more form and less fire" (Cowley xxix). The form which the moralistic strain took in Joseph Conrad's writing may then have proved even more appealing to the author of the Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Frederick R. Karl, who was also the author of *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*, was the first to notice correspondences between Faulkner's way of addressing the man enduring and prevailing (in the last sentence of the speech: "The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, pillars to help him endure and prevail") and the language of Conrad's 1897 preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* where the writer speaks "to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn" (Karl 813). Taking into consideration the sentiments of the Nobel Prize speech and their re-formulations in *A Fable*, equally striking may be the similarities between these and Conrad's 1917 preface to *Nostromo* in which he wrote of his own and his characters' "conflicting emotions" and "the secret purposes of their hearts revealed in the bitter necessities of the time" (Conrad xli).

As the title of his critical study promises, in *Faulkner and Hemingway: Biography of a Literary Rivalry* (2012) Joseph Fruscione finds in Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech a confirmation of its reliance on the formulations of another writer not in terms of a shared aesthetic and moral vision but in terms of opposition. That opposition, to be sure, is also quick to recognize the strengths of the opponent's work which for a writer of Faulkner's stature make it justifiable to address on such a formal and elevated occasion. This does not convince. In his pursuit of symptoms of "psychocompetitive" anxiety of influence, Fruscione wants to believe that in addressing artists as young men and women who might one day receive the Prize, Faulkner was implicitly alluding to Hemingway who deserved it without deserving it. Speaking of the "human heart in conflict with itself," Faulkner spoke of his own heart rather than Hemingway's (in his own acceptance speech recorded in Havana in 1954 Hemingway would also speak of what is in the writer's "heart," pronouncing the word "heart" in such a way that it could almost be heard as "art"). Neither does it seem convincing that for his speech in Stockholm the year the award was "made" for him and not for Hemingway, Faulkner should choose, denotatively or connotatively, a reference to a conversation between

Frederick Henry and Gino in *A Farewell to Arms*. Unlike Hemingway's character who was famously declaring words such as glory, courage, honor, sacrifice to be "obscene", although he did say them with a measure of satisfaction prognostic of the moralistic strain in *The Old Man and the Sea*, Faulkner made his listings of abstract words considerably and intentionally longer; he found them as appropriate for the Stockholm occasion as they were in his writings, and yet, perhaps, in need of the supportive company of the texts of great writers he kept reading and re-reading. The drive to read Faulkner's and Hemingway's speeches as embodiments of "a linguistic opposition" (which in itself may be helpful in defining Faulkner's style) makes Fruscione, at the end of his argument in the Nobel Prize section of his book, seek the balance of a broader and more universal perspective in a somewhat questionable style: "Despite their differences and digs at each other in their speeches, Faulkner and Hemingway were both devoted craftsmen" (169).

Faulkner's trust in the originality of his work, the trust supported by his joining in the ranks of Nobel Prize recipients, allowed him to approach the question of literary indebtedness and borrowings not with a sense of anxiety but with a sense of freedom displaying characteristic features of his posing and role-playing stylized practices. The writer who defended the right of literature to speak openly about its moral function told undergraduate students of the University of Virginia in 1957 that a writer also has the right to be "completely amoral":

> He takes whatever he needs, wherever he needs, and he does that openly and honestly because he himself hopes that what he does will be good enough so that after him people will take from him, and they are welcome to take from him as he feels that he would be welcome by the best of his predecessors to take what they've done. (Gwynn 20-21)

Another paradoxical quality about the writer's statements, induced by the fame his work received abroad rather than in his native country, was the declared awareness that the writer's natural need to read, to absorb and to accept as truly his own the texts of other writers coincides with the idea of anonymity in the republic of letters. The veil of anonymity, like the veil of abstract words calling for the recognition of literary correspondences, interconnections, resonances, quotations, both hides and communicates the need for absolute privacy and the satisfaction of the highest public acclaim. Not many months before he received the Nobel Prize, and perhaps already expectant of it, Faulkner wrote to Cowley that it was his "ambition" not to leave a mark in history as "a private individual" but as the author of his work. William Faulkner would like to have the honor of leaving his printed books unsigned, "like some Elizabethans" (Cowley, *The Faulkner—Cowley File* 126).

No names of writers, of the past, of the present, or of the future, are given in Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. It was only for the editorial purposes of the volume titled *The Faulkner Reader* (1954) that Faulkner let readers know that when during his Nobel Prize address he said that he believed it was the writer's privilege "to help man endure by lifting his heart," he was using the words of another Nobel Prize recipient, the Polish writer, Henryk Sienkiewicz.

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Jerzy Sobieraj

Lynching, Memory, and Memorials

Abstract: This article touches upon three important topics—lynching, memory, and memorialization—looked at from the perspective of the twenty-first century. As far as lynching is concerned, it focuses on a significant growth of interest in this painful historical, social, and political issue. In the context of lynching it discusses memory and the process of memorialization, sometimes seen as a relatively new trend, and the creation of memorial sites, such as the American lynching memorials in Duluth, Minnesota and Montgomery, Alabama.

Keywords: lynching in America, memory, collective memory, memorialization, lynching memorials

"Scars have the strange power to remind us that our past is real."
—Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*
"Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist."
—Guy de Maupassant, "Suicides"

Writing about American encounters with the Civil War, Michael Kreyling quotes W. Fitzhugh Brundage who claims that "[f]or a historical memory to retain its capacity to speak and mobilize its intended audience, it must address contemporary concerns about the past" (qtd. in Kreyling x), or in other words, there is a certain "continuity [that] extends from the present into the past, and in this transcendence the past is known through its meaningful relationship with the present" (Morris 7). Thinking about lynching in the context of the Senate apology over total failure on anti-lynching legislation, one may ask the question: why now? And, obviously one may try to answer that question. It seems that in 2005 it was high time, at the dawn of the new millennium, to point to the failures that occurred in the previous one. It was, perhaps, the time to speak about and condemn the atrocity when one of the last of the lynching survivors, James Cameron, a 91-year-old man at the moment of approving the Senate resolution, was still alive. Or it was the last moment to apologize for the horror when the addressees of the apology and the descendants of the victims were still alive too. As one of them commented, "Someone is finally recognizing our pain," adding "I have to let God be the judge… because I don't know if they [the Senators] meant it out of their heart or they're just saying it out of their mouths" (qtd. in Stolberg).

The turn of the twentieth century was the time when much public awareness was directed towards the racial crimes of the past, especially the atrocities of the civil rights movement era, and American prosecutors tried to revisit the killings from that period. Between 1989 and 2006, 29 civil rights period killings were reinvestigated (Kemper). In 1994 Byron De La Beckwith was convicted of 1963 assassination of Medgar Evers, the civil rights activist. In 1997 the case of the notorious 1963 Alabama church bombing was reopened. The explosion at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killed four black girls—Addie Mae Collins (14), Cynthia

Wesley (14), Carole Robertson (14), and Carol Denise McNair (14).[1] In May 2000, the two suspects, Thomas Blanton Jr. and Bobby Frank Cherry, were charged with the crime, and in April 2001 the trial opened. *The Crisis*, and many other media outlets, announced in Summer 2004, that the U. S. Department of Justice assisted by the Mississippi District Attorney would reopen the case of Emmett Till, an African American 14-year-old boy, who was brutally murdered in the state of Mississippi in 1955 ("Emmett Till" 7).[2] In 1997, President Clinton issued a call for a national debate on race. Sherillyn A. Ifill commented on this "idea of a conversation involving the entire nation" as "naively ambitious, although admirable" (133). The conversation was soon sparked by the 1998 lynch-like murder of James Byrd Jr. in Texas.[3] Dwight D. Murphey, writing in 1995 about his interest in lynching, clearly combines the atrocity with what happens in late twentieth century America: "What has caused my interest to grow has been a realization that lynching raises important unresolved historical issues that are significant in the context of today's social tensions" ("Lynching").[4] The turn of the twentieth century was also marked by several projects focusing on racial issues, including racial violence. The Greensboro, North Carolina Truth and Reconciliation Commission was the first TCR started in the United States of America. It dealt with the examination of a racial murder committed in 1979. Another attempt, which Ifill calls "reconciliation initiative" (174), was the creation of the Southern Truth and Reconciliation (STAR) project. The organizations and projects tried either to initiate discussions about racial violence or tried to reopen old cases of lynching. All these initiatives are of prime importance as both reminders of the past and lessons about America's shameful history. As Ifill points out, "[t]he lessons about race, trust, violence, and community will live on, even as the names of the participants and the details of lynchings fade from memory" (175).

On July 13, 2005 the U. S. Senate admitted to its own failure to enact any anti-lynching legislation in the whole history of American Congress. All attempts to pass such legislation, including the Dyer Bill (1922) and the Costigan-Wagner Bill (1935), failed. Each time the House of Representatives (three times in its history) successfully approved anti-lynching legislation, it was blocked in the Senate. Finally, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Senate apology, co-sponsored by four fifths of its members, was passed. As Sen. Mary Landrieu (D. Louisiana) remarked before the vote, "[t]here may be no other injustice in American history for which the Senate so uniquely bears responsibility" (qtd. in Thomas-Lester).

The bill was an expression of apology "to the victims of lynching and the descendants of those victims for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching

1 In 1997 Spike Lee made his famous documentary film, *4 Little Girls*, about the bombing.

2 One of Bob Dylan's early lyrics, "The Death of Emmett Till," commemorates this murder.

3 One of the white men convicted of killing Byrd was recently executed in Texas.

4 In recent years and months one could also witness relatively many instances of revising American racial history which has resulted in certain significant growth of awareness among, for instance, the participants of academia in the United States; the decision of the president of Yale University to remove the name of John Calhoun from a residential college, after a series of protests, the decision to sue Harvard University for earning profits from nineteenth century photographs of slaves, or Georgetown University's decision to pay reparations to the descendants of Maryland slaves who were sold by its Jesuit founders to offset college debts.

legislation" (S.Res. 39). The resolution stressed that lynching was a crime and widely acknowledged practice. In the words of the resolution, the Senate

> (1) Apologizes to the victims of lynching for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation;
> (2) expresses the deepest sympathies and most solemn regrets of the Senate to the descendants of victims of lynching, the ancestors of whom were deprived of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United States; and
> (3) remembers the history of lynching, to ensure that these tragedies will be neither forgotten nor repeated. (S.Res. 39)

There is an unfortunately profuse history of lynching in America. And there were numerous attempts to enact some anti-lynching federal laws. Although the awareness of lynching was common, it almost never resulted in a successful legal reaction to the horror. What we know about acts of lynching comes from newspaper reports, from photographs taken during lynching, and sometimes from the narratives of the witnesses. Moreover, more than once, the local newspapers gave advance notices, and the reaction to such news was far from protesting; what happened was maybe even just the opposite: more people gathered at the scene. As Senator Landrieu, who co-introduced the resolution, said about the well-documented lynching of Claude Neil,

> The newspapers in Florida had given advance notice, and they recorded it, one horrible moment after another. One of the members of the lynch mob proudly relayed all the details that reporters missed, seeing it in person. Yet, even with the public notice, 7,000 people in attendance and people bragging about the activity, federal authorities were impotent to stop this murder. State authorities seemed to condone it. And the Senate of the United States refused to act. ("Senate Apologizes")

The way we learn the history of lynching is somehow blurred since the witnesses often shared their narrative only in local circles. For obvious reasons, the witnesses neither shared what they saw by radio nor did they speak about it, later, on television. Irrespective of that, the history of lynching is relatively satisfactorily documented, however not ideally. Borrowing, *mutatis mutandis*, from Hayden White, one could say that, in case of documenting lynching, it was not always easy to translate or transfer "knowing into telling" (1). It seems that sometimes both the witnesses and the family (or friends) of the victims, tried to remove this experience from their memory; "Anthony Crawford's granddaughter went to her grave without speaking to her own children about his lynching, so painful was the family history" (Stolberg). In case of certain witnesses the mechanism of such removal, or distortion of memory, could be similar to the mechanism of what Primo Levi calls the memory of the offense.

> An extreme case of the distortion of memory of a committed guilty act is found in its suppression.… The rememberer has decided not to remember and has succeeded: by dint of denying its existence, he has expelled the harmful memory as one expels an excretion or a parasite.… The best way to defend oneself against the invasion of burdensome memories is to impede their entry, to extend a *cordon*

> *sanitaire*. It is easier to deny entry to a memory than to free oneself from it after it has been recorded. (20)[5]

Thus, as in lynching, in many other cases the representation of the past events is even more incomplete as, according to Pierre Nora, history which "is the reconstruction, [is] always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer" (8). As one can see, the reasons for not telling are different. Mark Twain who thought about writing a history of lynching in America, abandoned finally this idea, "fearing that he would alienate too many of his readers who accepted or even approved of the practice" (Arnold 30). Edwin T. Arnold, writing about the absence of the lynching topic in research, especially between late 1930s and late 1970s, finds the reasons for this particular silencing in shame and embarrassment. As he writes, "This shameful period became an embarrassment, and several generations of Americans developed collective amnesia" (185). Tracy Thompson writes about certain code of silence: middle-class white Southerners did not talk much about lynching and "[b]lack Southerners kept their lips sealed, too. They walked a tightrope between the need to tell their children enough to keep them out of danger and the desire to shield them from knowing that such horrors existed" (72). Silence often results in forgetting; Kenneth Foote, referred to by Arnold, examined historic sites across America and suggested "four categories for the way these sites are remembered or intentionally forgotten: sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. Of these, the fourth is traditionally associated with lynching. 'Obliteration results from particularly shameful events people would prefer to forget…. As a consequence, all evidence is destroyed or effaced'" (qtd. in Arnold 192, Foote 7-8). This category shares much with Primo Levi's concept of the memory of the offence.

Another factor causing the disappearance of lynching from public conversations was the tendency to remain silent about the horrific events, especially when the division between the victims and the perpetrators was significantly formed along the racial line, and when the ones involved feared any kind of punishment and revenge. Ifill goes to some examples:

> The news blackout in the *Salisbury Times* the day after the lynching of Matthew Williams, the decision by white clergymen to exclude the lynching from their Sunday sermons, the refusal of witnesses to come forward and identify lynchers, the determination of black witnesses… to never speak of the lynching—all of these are examples of the silence imposed by the terror of lynching. And the silence of lynching can last for decades. (133–134)

Ifill more deeply discusses the reasons for this silence. Lynching, as a past event, is never or almost never discussed by members of white communities. Interracial conversations occur extremely rarely. African Americans, however, sometimes talk about lynching in the form of stories, often passed from generation to generation. As Ifill writes,

5 Levi's "memory of the offence" finds its equivalent in serious academic psychological research which examines all kinds of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); negative, traumatic memories are often suppressed blocking the memory in the present.

> Whites fear or resent being branded as racist, or they simply refuse to see themselves as responsible in any way for incidents in which they were not directly involved.… The reasons for maintaining this silence are plentiful. For them, discussing lynching is merely an exercise in dredging up the past, and an unpleasant past. Other whites may fear that breaking the silence on these violent events will place them on the defensive, that blacks will be accusatory and will try to compel whites to take responsibility for actions that many will claim they knew nothing about.… Whites may find themselves deeply conflicted by the realization that family members were Klansmen, present at lynchings or deeply implicated in racial murder or assault. (134)

However, in a black community, especially in African American families, stories about lynching are sometimes passed from generation to generation. This can be "a way of ensuring that the children knew the potential for violent reprisals by whites if they crossed racial mores or boundaries" (135). It seems that lynching is somehow more rooted in the minds of African Americans than in the minds of white citizens. The memory of the victim contains the picture of the wrongdoing, whereas the memory of the perpetrator is suppressed in different ways. "The memory of lynching," in Ifill's words, "is indelibly engraved on the collective psyche of blacks. Even blacks who never witnessed a lynching can describe one" (143). The memory is passed into communal, racial memory for African Americans. One lynching victim becomes, in a sense, everyone's murdered ancestor. This process is similar to commemoration understood as certain "collective being together" (Leichter 23), here as a group of people whose members experience the same. One is also tempted to consider this experience of sharing as close to what Jan Assmann and his followers call communicative memory. The memory that "contains memories… that an individual shares with his contemporaries" (Assmann 112). Communicative memory comprises only some recent past, three to four generations, less than one hundred years, so "[i]t is bound to the existence of living bearers of memory and to the communicators of experience" (Welzer 285). Here one can mention the remaining survivors of lynching, families and friends of lynching victims, anti-lynching activists and so on.

Speaking about racial categories, one cannot escape from two attitudes towards painful and traumatic events in which the two races were involved, one as perpetrators, the other as victims. Arnold writing about Sam Hose's lynching speaks about the "negro version" and the "white version" (185, 191) concerning the event. One version may dominate the other depending, among others, on who has power and thus better access to the media, more difficult in the times of our information age. Writing about how to remember and what to remember or forget, one can quote Jonathan Markovitz's observations: "Decisions about what and how to remember and forget… are always open to contest and based on struggles over meaning and power" (xxii).

Another question is why certain traumatic past events are discussed now and why some of them are brought to our minds more intensively than the others. Raj Andrew Ghoshal asks a question "why do some efforts to transform collective memory of traumatic pasts attain greater success than others" (330)? Trying to answer this question he focuses our attention on three elements of mnemonic opportunity

structure, as he calls it: "(1) an environment's present-day *commemorative capacity*; a past incident's (2) *ascribed significance*; and *moral valence* of its characters *at the time it occurred*" (330–331). Irrespective of this or that theory, it must be admitted that today there are more and more efforts in the U.S. to commemorate traumatic past, including the horrors of lynching. For years lynching was excluded from public commemoration, but in the last two decades new monuments commemorating lynching have been erected, and more ceremonies remembering the atrocity have been held in various American states. Still lynching memorials seem unusual to many; LaTonya Autry, doctoral art history student, remarked, while visiting the Duluth Lynching Memorial: "I didn't know lynching memorials existed" ("Scholar"). The memorial is a big-scale architectural and artistic site on which the members of the Duluth community organize the annual day of remembrance, commemorating the triple lynching that occurred in the town. Another significant project is Bryant Stevenson's wall with jars containing soil from all confirmed lynching sites in Alabama (Mayfield and Olson 37). Commemorating traumatic events, and erecting memorials is, undoubtedly, of primary importance and significance for a collective memory.[6]

Commemorating or, in other words, memorializing different significant historical events and paying tribute to important people, in this case important Americans, is certainly a crucial activity within so-called memorialization practices. In comparison to commemorative activities concerning, for instance, the American Civil War, commemorating lynching or racial violence as such was relatively rare till the last decades of the twentieth century. The beginning of the new millennium witnessed a strong commemorative impulse as far as lynching is concerned. Perhaps one of the reasons for this impulse was the increasing importance of heritage in many discussions over the nation's history, filtered through the significant events of today. Sabine Marschall, alluding to the work of Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins, emphasizes that since the last decade of the twentieth century "heritage discourse has emerged as one of the principle sites for negotiating issues of culture, identity and citizenship" (1; see also Shepherd and Robins 124). She focuses on the fact that heritage "relates both to the past ('history') and the present ('living heritage')" (1). Various attempts at commemoration, according to Marschall, take the shape of a certain global tendency and commemoration in America and elsewhere manifests itself in similar ways; it can be "(re)naming of streets, … the construction of new museums, … the installation of memorials [and] monuments" (2). As Assmann would say, "groups tend to make [a memory] by means of things meant as reminders such as monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic institutions. This is what we call cultural

6 Our personal memory, sometimes referred to as our individual memory, was the only one known until the research done by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s. The achievement of Halbwachs was the concept of so-called collective memory that "is composed from… convergent individual memories; the collective memory fixes itself as a mass of common remembrances that gain consistency as their members remember it vividly" (Cordeiro 13). These remembrances in a sense "unite" the groups of people who share the same or similar memories, for instance the memories of racial hatred, experienced or painfully learned about. The collective memory is thus shared by members of a group. "For Halbwachs, memory is always collective and recollection is the effect of our inclusion in the groups which provide it with 'frameworks'" (Péquinot 80).

memory" (111).[7] The process of commemorating (or memorializing) must often revise popular narratives that during the workings of cultural memory lose some of their significance giving rise to new interpretations of significant events and/or important historical people. Often these people or groups previously marginalized in the public national discourse, as for instance the victims of lynching, regain their position in public memory. Though one remembers the past, the past is always interpreted in the context of "now."

Memory itself is viewed today as a collective activity. As Iwona Irvin-Zarecka states, "[a] 'collective memory'—as a set of ideas, images, feelings about the past—is best located not in the minds of individuals, but in the resources they share" (4; also qtd. in Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 14). It must be also noted that this type of memory is constantly influenced by social, political or other group demands. That leads one to the conviction that the way we (collectively) remember (or do not remember) things, people and events is a result of a certain clash that is observed in the process of gaining and retaining power. Thus, to translate "knowing into telling," to borrow once again a phrase from Hayden White (1), often depends on the groups in actual power who, in some sense, "control" collective memory, and the way they control it can be seen as certain expression of various social and/or political issues.[8] As Edwin Arnold notices, the exceptionally brutal lynching of

> Sam Hose was lost to history, as were so many victims of that horrible crime.… More recently, … the burning of Sam Hose has slowly taken center stage as a primary example of lynching at its worst, and in the process, what Professor Willcox labeled the 'negro version,' has gained acceptance over the white narrative that explained and attempted to excuse the event. (185)

In order to better explain how this (collective) memory works, Blair, Dickinson and Ott present different popular scholarly approaches to the issue: "(1) memory is activated by present concerns, issues, or anxieties; (2) memory narrates shared identities constructing senses of communal belonging; (3) memory is animated by affect; (4) memory is partial, partisan, and thus often contested; (5) memory relies on material and/or symbolic supports; (6) memory has a history" (6). To follow all these approaches one may state that the way "groups tell their pasts" is filtered through "their current moment" (6). The unity and exceptionality of a group is built upon its collective memory. The process involves some "emotional attachment" that is often a decisive factor that determines which events or people are worthy of preservation (7). Public memories can be challenged by different versions of the past, by introduction of different information or valuations.

7 For Assmann, "[c]ultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural identity" (110).

8 Johnson gives an example of politicizing a memory site reporting the heated debate about the decision of the city council to place a memorial to Arthur Ashe in Richmond's Monument Avenue, the South's most significant Confederate memorial site. The potential placing resulted in serious tensions between black and white inhabitants of the city. Both groups opposed the location; African Americans did not want the statue in a white neighborhood representing white Confederate history, whereas white citizens emphasized that despite all Ashe did for tennis, he had not achieved enough "to be located adjacent to Confederate soldiers" (323).

Based on the discussion above one may certainly conclude that collective (public)[9] memory responds "to needs of the present, animating the present" (12). Since public memory is "believed to be true," it may acquire certain cultural but also social and/or political authority. Collective memory ("believed to be true"), in order to connect the past with the present, often enters into conversation with place and space, sometimes treated as equivalent terms. (23) One of the reasons for the importance of place in memory is that "[p]articular kinds of places are more closely associated with public memory than others, for example, museums, preservation sites, battlefields, memorials and so forth" (24). The study conducted by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen resulted in the conviction that "Americans put more trust in history museums and historic sites than any other sources exploring the past" (qtd. in Blair, Dickinson and Ott 25).[10] Speaking about such memory places, different from each other in many respects, Blair, Dickinson and Ott mention their credibility and also touch upon the importance of "their capacity to attract and secure the attention of visitors" (25). Memory places are significant sites performing multitudinous functions; according to Rosenzwieg and Thelen, they create a certain solid space for public identification as they "represent, inspire, instruct, remind" (qtd. in Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 26). The visitors "'consummate' their relationship to the place" in various ways "[b]ut the primary action" the place initiates is "traveling to and traversing it" (26). The conclusion that emerges from the study is that the visitors should feel the authenticity of such places as if participating emotionally in what really happened.

Various memory places, as Blair, Dickinson, and Ott claim, are places of significant attention being sites of "significant memory of and for a collective" (25). As Rosenzwieg and Thelen emphasize, "Approaching artifacts and sites on their own terms, visitors… could feel that they were experiencing a moment from the past almost as it had originally been experienced" (qtd. in Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 26). Memory places show very well the way cultural memory works as they make a visitor not only imagine a "connection to people of the past, but" make him/her experience "connections to the people in the present" (27).

Erecting memorials and monuments is certainly an expression of the process of commemoration. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Sabine Marschall clearly sees "[a] global trend towards commemoration spurred on by a quest for identity through recourse to public memory" (20). In the case of monuments, but also memorials, the visitors to such places can often regain their identity and the identity of the ones close to them; they can commemorate what was often marginalized or forbidden to be shown or uncovered. Individuals or groups, important for public memory, who are often "politically" neglected or erased from the public realm, can reenter and find deserved recognition in public space. As Marschall states, the so-called heritage products "can be viewed as visual signifiers communicating ideologically [and often politically] charged 'messages' to diverse audiences in different contexts" (9).

9 According to some researchers as, for instance, Nuala C. Johnson, the term "public memory" practically equals the term "collective" memory (323).

10 An example of this interest in and caring for historic sites in The United States is the Commemorative Works Act (1986, with several amendments), which is the federal law that regulates the construction of such sites in Washington D.C.

Any attempt to differentiate between a monument and a memorial is difficult, and dictionary definitions are often blurred. Marschall in order to provide her readers with the distinction between the two, goes to Arthur Danto's attempts at distinguishing both terms. According to Danto, "Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honour the dead. With monuments we honour ourselves" (qtd. in Marshall 11; see also Danto 112). Another scholar, Neville Dubow claims that "[m]onuments outwardly proclaim something. Memorials invite introspection and interpretation" (qtd. in Marschall 12; see also Dubow 375). However, it must be admitted that even monuments, though simpler in their construction, obviously can and often do undergo some interpretation. Memorials, being more compound and sophisticated creations, involve more complicated and advanced processes of interpretation, aiming at more introspective considerations/ contemplations by those who come to the place.

Speaking about commemorating lynching, it is clear that history of American lynching memorials is not long. The first lynching memorial, the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, was erected in Duluth, Minnesota[11] and was officially open to public on October 10, 2003. It was erected to memorialize three victims of white hatred: Elias Clayton, Isaac McGhie, and Elmer Jackson, who were lynched in 1920. They were accused of raping a white young woman, though the evidence supporting this accusation was weak, and the local physician did not find anything that could indicate the crime. The mob, with no resistance from the town police, broke into the jail and seized six African Americans suspected of the rape. During the illegal and grotesque trial the members of the mob found three of them guilty of the rape. Then they were severely beaten and hanged, surrounded by a crowd of men, women and children.

The idea to create a memorial devoted to the lynching was developed by Heidi Bakk-Hansen, a local white journalist who in 2000 together with Henry Banks co-founded a committee that would work on the erection of the Duluth lynching memorial. The main task of the committee was to "secure land, city and private financing for the project. With the deaths of the principal perpetrators, many felt it was time for a public 'healing' of an old but still festering wound" (Apel 222). The idea to erect a memorial devoted to the Duluth lynching was also understood as an opportunity to "bring communities together," to "embrace and celebrate" growing communal diversity, and also embrace the "shared values," as Minneapolis Mayor, Sharon Sayles Belton said (225). The creators of the lynching project chose for it quotations appealing to the visitors of the memorial, especially to their morality and sense of justice in the light of the evil done. Among several, one can read Siddhartha's statement: "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it on someone else; you are the one getting burned," going then to Einstein's sentence: "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."

11 Duluth, Minnesota is a birthplace of Bob Dylan, who alludes to the lynching or lynching as such in his song "Desolation Row": "They're selling postcards of the hanging, they're painting the passports brown// The beauty parlor is filled with sailors, the circus is in town."

As Dora Apel emphasized, some relatives of those responsible for the lynching came to the opening ceremony to apologize for the Duluth atrocities; among them was Warren Read who took "responsibility for the actions of his relative" (226). As often on such occasions there were also negative reactions to the memorial, ranging from individual commentaries such as: "those [lynched] men wouldn't have been killed if they hadn't done nothing, would they? Come on" (qtd. in Davey A22 and Apel 230) to more serious racial incidents. Memorialization as such creates significant context for moral reflection, individual and communal healing, and awareness of evil, but it may also result in the outburst of negative emotions towards its subject.

When in April 2018, the biggest lynching memorial, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, was opened in Montgomery, Alabama, one of the biggest groups that came to the opening ceremony was "the 34-member contingent sent to represent Duluth," as Brady Slater described the group (Slater). The National Memorial for Peace and Justice is the fruit not only of growing interest in the twentieth century racial past of the United States of America, but its erection can also be a result of the racial incidents that occurred in the country at the end of the twentieth and in the twenty-first centuries. If so, the idea of the memorial, as probably of any memorial, could be activated by present concerns, showing public memory at work. Though its prime goal is to commemorate lynching, the memorial is said to be "dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence" ("The National").

Mathew Shear describes the important part of the memorial in the following way:

> Entering the structure, viewers come face to face with 800 rectangular steel slabs, each representing a county where at least one lynching took place. Each slab is about the height of an adult and appears to hang from the ceiling on a metal pipe. Some slabs hold scores of names. Victims who remain unidentified… are marked 'unknown.' In addition to the permanent slabs inside the memorial, an identical set of slabs will be placed outside it, to be claimed by the named counties and erected back home. The design challenges people in places where lynchings occurred to acknowledge that history. (22)

In this sense, the memorial becomes, as if, more active and more dynamic in spreading its message; it crosses its own borderlines "sending the memory" of the atrocities back to the places they had occurred. Creating such institutions as the National Memorial for Peace and Justice shows how significant and multifaceted the process of memorialization is. It activates in individuals, communities and, sometimes, societies moral reflection, a sense of justice, awareness of the unity of group members, and responsibility for what happened in the past. It teaches truth about various past events, activates discussion between and among opponents and proponents of certain ideas. One of its initiators, Bryan Stevenson, emphasized the important goal of the Montgomery memorial which is to search for "truth and reconciliation in America" (qtd. in Shear 22). Here collective memory tries to connect the past with the present, enters into the conversation with place and space, to repeat a phrase expressed elsewhere in this text.

The active and dynamic aspect of the memorial attracts and makes people aware of what happened, not only the visitors but also people in distant places where lynchings occurred, making the memorial place borderless. Creating memory sites, as here in case of commemorating lynching, makes it clearer that memory "is also anchored in places past," not only in time past, and the idea to create "movable slabs" as a part of the Montgomery monument, the slabs that can be claimed by individual counties and located exactly, if possible, in the place lynching occurred, makes one more aware of the link between memory and place. This kind of mapping process could be a part of "the ongoing project of establishing individual and group identities, symbolically coded in public monuments" (Johnson 323).

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Jerry D. Leonard

Horse and Class in *True Grit*

Abstract: This essay returns to Jane Tompkins' original theory of horses in her 1992 book *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* as a means of analyzing Charles Portis' 1968 novel *True Grit*, a work which Tompkins does not address. Arguing for a Marxist ideology critique of *True Grit* with a focus on the main character (and narrator) Mattie Ross and her horse named Little Blackie, the essay offers a critique of Tompkins' idea of the "material presence" of horses in American Western narratives.

Keywords: *True Grit*, Jane Tompkins, Little Blackie, materialism, ideology

> "Then I saw the horse. It was Little Blackie! The scrub pony had saved us! My thought was: *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner*."
> —Mattie in *True Grit* (214-215, emphasis in original)

1.

Appearing in 1992, Jane Tompkins' book *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* includes a chapter on "Horses" (and another chapter on "Cattle") which, I believe, could certainly be considered one of the earliest interventions—particularly concerning popular American Western stories—toward what is now known as animal studies and/or posthumanism in contemporary literary and cultural theory.[1] Tompkins' elaboration of what she calls the "dynamic material presence" (94) of horses in Western narratives clearly preceded by many years such works as Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal*, and Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*.[2]

Tompkins' analysis of horses (89-109 [chap. 4]), like the rest of her book, is offered in what she seems to intend as a counter-"academic" rhetoric, thus also marking her text as representative of so-called "post-theory" in the American humanities.[3] For example, in her introduction, while Tompkins can at one moment articulate her critical position that "there is nothing trivial about the needs [Westerns] answer, the desires they arouse, or the vision of life they portray" (10-11), at another moment she relaxes

1 In general, see Kalof, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*; Taylor and Twine, eds., *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*; Nocella et al., eds., *Defining Critical Animal Studies*; Mishra, ed., *Bhatter College Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*; Vint, ed., *Science Fiction Studies*. For a distinctly Marxist viewpoint, see Faivre, "Fictions of the Animal; or, Learning to Live with Dehumanization," and Cotter et al., eds., *Human, All Too (Post)Human*.

2 See also the more recent anthology *Deleuze and the Animal*, eds. Gardner and MacCormack.

3 On "post-theory," see the anthology *Post-Theory, Culture, Criticism*, eds. Callus and Herbrechter, especially Donald Morton's essay, "Transforming Theory: Cultural Studies and the Public Humanities" (25-47).

herself, as if we are sitting in her living room, by talking about "the men I talk to" about Westerns as she was "trying *manfully* to write about Westerns, starting from zero and getting bleary-eyed in the process... I'll never catch up" (15, emphasis in original).

This essay examines Tompkins' arguments from the perspective of Marxist theory, about which she has nothing to say, despite her attentiveness to notions of "work," "working people," and the "work" of horses (14-15, 17, 90). In general, therefore, I am interested here in drawing out the class politics and ideology of a number of Tompkins' most significant arguments concerning the horse in Westerns. In doing so, I will also attempt to test the reliability and limitations of her theory by looking in particular at Charles Portis' 1968 novel *True Grit*, which features the life and death of "Little Blackie," the horse owned by the main character and narrator, young Mattie Ross.

While Tompkins' book does list a short quotation from *True Grit* in her second chapter on "Women and the Language of Men" (50) and even includes a full-page image of John Wayne as Rooster Cogburn (124), she does not discuss the story of *True Grit*. Portis' novel was quickly adapted into the blockbuster 1969 movie starring John Wayne as Rooster Cogburn, Glen Campbell as LaBoeuf, Kim Darby as Mattie Ross, and Robert Duvall as Lucky Ned Pepper. In 2010, of course, *True Grit* was brought back to life with the Coen brothers' version. My critique of Tompkins, however, is not simply based on the fact that she sidesteps Portis' well known novel and the still more popular movie of 1969, although it is a curious omission. It is curious because Tompkins thinks and writes from a certain feminist viewpoint, and *True Grit* itself is often regarded as a "feminist Western"—written by a male author, nonetheless (see e.g. Muir; Tweedle).

In the tale, Mattie proves that she also, at the age of fourteen, possesses a "true grit" heroism of unremitting determination and perseverance that is the equal of Rooster's or LaBoeuf's. As LaBoeuf himself argues *against* Rooster at a certain point, also reversing his own initially adamant and hostile opposition to Mattie's insistence on riding along with them in the pursuit of the outlaw Tom Chaney, he proclaims, "She has won her spurs" (Portis 167). In any case, Tompkins' avoidance of this story only serves to make way for an original analysis of it *in light of* her broader and more definite positions. One such position, as I mentioned, is the idea of the "material presence" of the horse.

2.

Tompkins argues that it is "the physical existence of horses above all that makes them indispensable in Westerns" (93-94). The "dynamic material presence" of horses is the signification of "their energy and corporeality," which "call out to the bodies of the viewers, to our bodies," thereby inviting us (as viewers or readers) to "be excited by their mass and motion," to "vicariously be in contact with their flesh, feel their breath, sense their strength and stamina, [and] absorb the flow of force" (94) that horses represent in the storyline and its meaningfulness.

Why is this "material presence" so significant? Her explanation is that the "key to what horses represent" is actually "something very simple," namely, the expression of

"a need for connection to nature, to the wild" (93) in the particular form and incarnation that the horse provides. The animality of the horse is not the calmness of "songbirds or running brooks" but instead is the presence of "power, motion, size, strength, brought under human control and in touch with the human body" (93). Thus the physicality of horses operates "to galvanize us," Tompkins says, as "they symbolize the desire to recuperate some lost connection to life" (94) and "a longing for a different *kind* of existence" (93, emphasis in original). This different kind of existence is one in which "people have close physical contact" with "something they can touch, press against with their bodies," something "alive, first of all, something big, powerful, and fast-moving," and "[s]omething not human but [also] not beyond human control, dangerous, even potentially lethal, but ductile [i.e., readily led and influenced] to the human will" (93).

Tompkins' reading actively unsettles the familiar inclinations of reading-as-a-consumer of cultural productions. In consumptive reading, although one obviously "notices" the horse as one of many other entities that make the Western tale a "Western" in the first place, the horse's significance as a bearer of social meanings—to "stand for something larger" (92)—is usually not something taken very seriously. Her reading of the horse's "dynamic material presence" involves a mode of inquiry toward explaining how and why the horse is "*socially* present" (92, emphasis in original) and yet, as she puts it, the human characters themselves who ride them "don't pay them much attention, and as far as the critics are concerned they might as well not exist" (90); hence the oddly shifting "presence" of what she identifies as "this strange invisibility" of the horse as an (in)significant site of social intelligibility where "everything in the genre is hidden" (90).

She argues that this "strange invisibility" is the mark of the "paradox of horses" (92) in Westerns: "you can't have a Western without them, visually they are everywhere, and symbolically they carry a tremendous payload, but the mind doesn't count them... or give them... the time of day" (92). Thus, she goes on to say, "we never think about whether the horses are tired," whether they "want to be galloping after the villains, or, if asked," whether the horse "would choose" (92) to do the things they are called upon to do. With these postulations in mind, let us turn to *True Grit*.

3.

In chapter five of *True Grit*, Mattie is making her final preparations for what she variously sees as "the job" (Portis 92) to be done (for which she privately contracts with Rooster) as well as the "adventure" (94) and "journey" (111) to "avenge her father's blood" (11) by tracking down her father's killer, Tom Chaney. She has long considered Chaney to be "trash" (14, 180) and "riffraff" (16). According to Mattie, quoting the Bible from memory, "'The wicked flee when none pursueth'" (17). The Coen brothers elevate these guiding words of wisdom as an epigraph in the opening of their 2010 movie. It is during this time that Mattie returns to Colonel Stonehill's office and corral, where she purchases the horse which she names Little Blackie, a "black one with white stockings in front" (90-91).

As one might expect, of course, the selection of a horse is not an arbitrary decision. But this is especially so in a social context where the ownership of a horse

reflects the owner's individual right to private property. Indeed, this issue of possession and ownership of a horse is one which Tompkins stresses, for "when the rider *owns* the horse," she says, "that is not a relationship among equals" (99, emphasis in original). Although the owner-rider may be gentle and regard the relationship as that of "pals" in closeness and partnership, the "actual relationship" makes the horse a "servant" (99). Mattie also considers Little Blackie to be her new "pal" (Portis 93) and "chum" (101). With Mattie, her choice not only involves an observation of this horse's demeanor and physical stature in general, but also the specific characteristic of his white forelegs.

In her confidently educated manner, she informs us that her father (Frank Ross) would never have owned a horse like this, having "more than one white leg" (90), because of a "foolish" (90) superstition among horsemen which holds that any horse with more than one white leg is "no good" (90). But Mattie consciously defies the proverb. Following some negotiation with Stonehill over the fair "market price" (91) for the horse, she buys Little Blackie for eighteen dollars. Mattie's disregard of the "foolish" superstition about horses with white stockings suggests her "grit" of independent-mindedness as well as her seeming devotion to purely rational decision-making and behavior; yet her rationalism is often insistently underlined by her characteristic mixing of legal and economic ("market") knowledge along with religious doctrine. These qualities are also demonstrably revealed in her highly determined, persistent, savvy wranglings with Stonehill the stock (animal) trader. As she pompously tells Stonehill, for example, "The good Christian does not flinch from difficulties," to which Stonehill replies that she is simply "wrongheaded" (92).

In terms of Tompkins' conception of the "material presence" of horses, Mattie's first encounter with Little Blackie does indicate the initial phase in the story where the "physical existence" of the horse calls the reader to become "vicariously... in contact" with his "mass and motion" and at least the potentiality of his "strength and stamina," his "flow of force." Little Blackie is chosen as the necessary non-human counterpart to Mattie's own "journey" beyond the ordinary boundaries of her safe home life and into the "wild" world in which the pursuit of Western justice demands "true grit." However, it is not merely the physical corporeality of Little Blackie's "flesh" and "breath" in relation with our reading "bodies" that constitutes the decisive *ideological* impact of this scene in which Mattie identifies with the horse.

Tompkins is obviously attempting to theorize the political and social meaning of the horse's "material presence." But her concept of the "material" is unreliable for the transformative politics of reading that Marx signals with his call for "revolutionizing practice": "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as "*revolutionizing practice*" ("Theses" 61, emphasis in original). For Marx, the "reality" of "sensuousness"—including the literary or filmic representation of the horse—needs to be conceived not "only in the form... of *intuition* [*Anschauung*]" but more importantly as "*human sensuous activity, practice*... human activity itself as *objective* [*gegenständliche*] activity" in order to "grasp the significance of 'revolutionary,' of 'practical-critical,' activity" (61, emphasis in original).

In other words, Tompkins' concept of materiality is a rearticulation of bourgeois empiricism and experientialism mingled with "intuition." The "presence"

of "physical existence" that she emphasizes is distinctly (and politically) ironic when closely examined from the standpoint of Marxist *materialism* and *materialist dialectics*: she is postulating a "material presence" of corporeality which surreptitiously excludes and displaces the objective knowledge of the reality of social *class relations* and their determining influence on the political meaning of "experience." The "presence" she is talking about is actually an updated extension of bourgeois "experience" as knowledge, which makes class consciousness *absent* and effectively invisible. This is ironic because in the "existence" of all social formations based on class division—particularly in the Western ideology which invariably calls on readers to "intuit" capitalistic class relations as "common sense"—class is never absent but instead is the fundamental material "logic" of social and cultural "life."

The subtitle of Tompkins' book is *The Inner Life of Westerns*. This is important because it suggests, in Marxist terms, the dialectics of studying the "inner life" of human consciousness in relation with the objectively knowable "outer life" of society's material basis and organization. The material structure of society is reflected, among other ways, by the conflictuality of "law and order" as well as by the social role of horses in the "sensuous activity" of human and non-human labor (see Wright 34-58, 83-105). As Mattie suggests, the pursuit of the "wicked" requires not only "true grit" but also a good horse whose own "sensuous activity" makes the pursuit a "practical-critical" reality. But the "inner life" that Tompkins has in mind is an un-dialectical inner life which represses the development of class consciousness for "revolutionizing practice."

As they elaborate their critique of Ludwig Feuerbach in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels argue that the concept of revolutionizing practice is not "merely to produce a correct consciousness about an *existing* fact" (60, emphasis in original)—which is the essence of Tompkins' reading—but rather, "for the real communist it is a question of overthrowing the existing state of things" (60), a "question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things" (62). Through her theory of the horse, the question then arises as to how Tompkins can be read as calling for a changing of existing things, to borrow Marx and Engels' words.

In the concluding pages of her chapter on horses, Tompkins argues that the horse—its "material presence"—occupies a symptomatic and subliminal site which is "integral to the work Westerns do" in transmitting to readers or viewers "a sadomasochistic impulse central to Westerns" (Tompkins 107), a "constant spectacle of the horse's submission to human control... and sometimes killed before our eyes" (109). The next question that needs to be asked, however, is a *materialist* question: whence the "impulse"? Where does it come from? What is its "material" source? She says that there is an "ethos of domination" (106) in the horse-rider relationship, and one has "a sense of something bad going on" (107). But Tompkins does not seem to think that this "something bad" has much, if anything, to do with the integral workings of capitalist society's material base and its necessary transmission—in the superstructural arena of culture—of legitimizing meanings in the Western ideology.

4.

As I pointed out, Tompkins' theory of the material presence of horses as "physical" existence, corporeality, body, flesh, breath, energy, and so on, is interrelated with two other issues: (1) although horses are "visually... everywhere" in Western stories, the human characters "don't pay them much attention," and hence they function as a "strange invisibility"; and (2) horses function symbolically as a "desire to recuperate some lost connection to life" and a human "longing for a different *kind* of existence."

In *True Grit*, while it is more or less true that the male characters (Rooster, LaBoeuf, Stonehill, and Lucky Ned Pepper) generally ignore their horses, the same certainly cannot be said of Mattie. From the very beginning of the tale, although she remarks that she had "never been very fond of horses" (Portis 13), Mattie is almost constantly "paying attention" to the presence of horses, whether it is her father's horse Judy, Tom Chaney's gray horse, Rooster's "big bay stallion" (105) named Bo, LaBoeuf's "shaggy cow pony" (105), or of course Little Blackie: "He was a pretty thing" (90) to whom she "talked softly" (93) as she rubbed his neck, "saying silly things" (104) to him. Horses are not "strangely invisible" to her, as Tompkins broadly theorizes. Indeed, from the very outset of Mattie's "true account of how [she] avenged Frank Ross's blood" (224), it is her father's own "scheme" to make a "cheap... investment" (12) in a string of Texas mustangs—to "breed and sell" (12) them—that sets Portis' entire story in motion. In any case, Tompkins' theory nonetheless enables us to recognize Mattie's attention to horses as an exception to the general proposition of the subliminal "paradox."

Is Mattie's attention to horses—especially Little Blackie—a sign in the narrative's symbolic code, which points us to the desire for "some lost connection to life" and a longing for some "different kind of existence"? Perhaps one might argue that Little Blackie becomes Mattie's substitute for her "lost connection" to her father's life; thus, the different kind of existence this fantasy envisions is one in which she returns to the way things were before the murder. However, as I suggested earlier, a more precise decoding of the "material presence" of Little Blackie for Mattie lies in her conscious recognition of the horse's two white stockings. To Mattie, Little Blackie's white forelegs mark him, according to cowboy superstition, as "no good" or perhaps unlucky. But Mattie deliberately rejects the folklore and chooses Little Blackie as her own.

Symbolically, choosing Little Blackie is Mattie's way of self-reflexively choosing—and allying herself with—the "outcast" horse. By this point in the tale, Mattie surely comprehends that she herself, being a "fourteen-year-old girl" (11), is also "naturally" marked by her sex/gender and age in the Western's patriarchal social order. She is an outsider, an unwanted and undesirable "presence" in the "wild West" world of law and disorder that is commanded by Rooster and LaBoeuf *as well as* by outlaws like Lucky Ned Pepper and his bandit gang-members. Despite the fact that Rooster and LaBoeuf are formally positioned on the opposite side of the law from the bandits, they (Rooster and LaBoeuf) nonetheless occupy an internally conflicted socio-economic space which necessarily includes their underworld counterparts. In the surface logic of Portis' story, the entire point of the "journey" is for us to witness the

"'graphic' writing" (43) of details and pontifications that signify Mattie's disruption of the patriarchal Western order and her ultimate "success" *within* it as a youthful female with "true grit."

All of this also requires that Mattie must have her own horse, and that *specific* horse is Little Blackie. It is no coincidence that Little Blackie himself is one of the "mustang" horses that her father originally bought from Stonehill. She buys the horse back from Stonehill, not with her father's profit motive in mind but rather as a means to exact "Western justice" in a world—an "existence," as Tompkins puts it—that alienates and confounds her.

In light of Tompkins' theory, Mattie's *exceptional* attention to Little Blackie (as well as other horses in general) is symptomatic and symbolic of her own conflictual position as an "outsider" on a journey of vengeance-as-justice within the patriarchal social (dis)order of the Western world. It is a world which in fact includes her own family, despite its appearance of serenity. Her family role as "little Mattie the bookkeeper" (178), as Tom Chaney himself mocks her, is only a thin cover for the fact that her father is the actual patriarch and owner of their home and considerable private property (480 acres), where he employs and exploits "tenant"-workers in the agribusiness of growing and selling cotton.

Mattie's "paying attention" to Little Blackie reflects her longing for a "different kind of existence" where young females like herself are liberated from the rigid prejudices and institutionalized structures which effectuate the dominant political logic that they are "no good" for genuinely significant and fulfilling social roles. As she proclaims late in the novel, Little Blackie is the horse who "saved us" and proved that the "*stone which the builders rejected... is become the head of the corner*" (214-215, emphasis in original). In Tompkins' terms, Mattie's "desire" for a close connection with Little Blackie reflects her desire to claim or reclaim "some lost connection to life" in a developing set of circumstances where she refuses to be "rejected" as merely a "baby" (86) or a "shirttail kid" who will be "crying for [her] mama" (87), as Rooster tells her.

As I have been arguing, however, Tompkins' "material" ideas about how to analyze the symbolic role of the horse in relation with the human "lost connection to life" or the "desire" for a "different kind of existence," are neither materialist nor dialectical in the distinctly Marxist *class sense* of "revolutionizing practice": a theorizing mode of interrogating the class politics and ideology at work beneath the surface logic of the Western story. Engels explains in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* that the

> *materialist conception* of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in [people's] brains, not in [people's] *better insights into eternal truth and justice*, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch. The growing perception that existing social institutions are unreasonable and unjust, that

> reason has become unreason, and right wrong, is only proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have silently taken place with which the social order, adapted to earlier economic conditions, is no longer in keeping. (Engels 42, emphasis added; see also Smith; Ebert)

In condensed form, this is exactly what Tompkins' "material" intuitions of desire and longing effectively make *absent* from her reading strategies. Although Tompkins' analytic conception is useful in directing our attention to the symbolic and symptomatic "presence" of "better insights into eternal truth and justice," as Engels says here, the vaguely abstract character of the "different kind of existence" she anticipates is actually a rearticulation of bourgeois intuition as a "growing perception that *existing* social institutions are unreasonable and unjust... and right wrong." Tompkins' reading is a class intuition masquerading as a classless "insight" that marginalizes the "revolutionizing practice" of class analysis. Engels signals this *kind* of revolutionizing class analysis here. It points us to the radically different *kind* of social existence and culture that this class analysis makes possible through the dialectics of "practical-critical" class consciousness, with the taboo argument for grasping the "final causes" of social injustice in the mode of production of material "life": namely, the capitalist mode of production, which is ever-present yet "strangely invisible" in the Western ideology.

For example, Tompkins' viewpoint does not offer the materialist conceptual grounding that is necessary for re-understanding the class politics of Mattie's identification with Little Blackie according to her theological revelation that he stands for the "stone which the builders rejected," just as she has also been socially positioned as the "rejected" one who goes on to prove her "true grit." The problem that is "silently" raised here, as Engels puts it, is that the politics of "rejection" subtly eclipses the wider, systemic question of why rejection is symptomatic of the existing social order itself: rejection from what?

If Mattie and Little Blackie prove to "the builders" that their rejections are unfair and unjustified—as they do through their different forms of "true grit"—then they become, according to Mattie's religious doctrine, the "head of the corner" (a foundation) of the same system from which they were previously rejected as "outsiders." This is an arche-reformist logic of individualistic inclusion, not a conscious "revolutionizing practice" that points to the need to reject and transform the social totality of the system itself. What's more, even when analyzed by means of Tompkins' theory of a desire for some "different kind of existence," Mattie's (political) logic obscures the objective fact—transmitted ideologically to the fictual narrative—that she, in a sense, "enlists" Little Blackie as the animal labor for her "adventure" within the pervasive Western code of individualized capture and revenge as the expression of law and order being endlessly restored: it has to be endlessly restored because the underlying mode of production and the contradictory social relations determined by it are never questioned. One finds the continual need to "adapt" these social relations, as Engels says, without overthrowing the mode of production itself. In *True Grit*, Tom Chaney's murder of Frank Ross is framed as a senseless moment of unreason, yet the margins of the frame also clearly articulate Chaney's desperate obsession with the loss of his wages as well as his bitter alienation from Frank and the tranquil common sense he embodies.

The revolutionizing practice of overthrowing the mode of production itself requires a decisively *other* kind of collectively organized "true grit" with a class-conscious social purpose that is materially "different" from the "graphic writing" of Portis' story. To borrow Engels' words, Mattie's ideological role as the heroine with "true grit" is to show that she and Little Blackie are actually "in keeping" with a reformed regime of Western "rough justice" based on capital's fundamental class structure of exploitative wage labor. Here is a "different kind of existence" where Mattie finds that she is able to buy her way into the business of hunting down the system's criminal elements. As she insists to Rooster, "When I have bought and paid for something I will have my way. Why do you think I am paying you if not to have my way?" (Portis 98).

5.

In fact, my Chinese students are often abruptly taken aback by Mattie's highly individualistic, marketized conceptions of "getting justice." This is because they have been educated to understand the goal of social justice in collective terms and certainly not in terms of buying one's way into an "adventure" for revenge. While they have empathy for Mattie's loss of her father and recognize the strength of her "gritty" ways, they critique the "different kind of existence" she seeks—to use Tompkins' idea—as one which is intrinsically dehumanizing and vulgar. In addition, by slowly and carefully examining the rhetorical turns of the story, students learn to recognize how Portis goes out of his way to have Mattie appear at once sincere and unreflexively comical.

In sum, Tompkins' argument that the horse's "dynamic material presence" is part of a symbolic "desire" and "longing" to reclaim "some lost connection to life" is substantially limited as a theoretical framework for enabling a strong *ideology critique* of "life" based on the class structure that Westerns encode in their narratives. As Mattie protests to Lucky Ned Pepper, "My family has property and I don't know why I am being treated like this" (183). Little Blackie may indeed be read as the horse whose tireless labor—and ultimately his death by sheer exhaustion—symbolizes Mattie's "lost connection to life." But the kind of class life that Little Blackie saves is most certainly not a "revolutionizing practice." On the contrary, Mattie's "desire" is the ideological longing of the bourgeois subject for her private property in a "true grit" world where the violence and alienation of capitalist social relations are relegitimized as the stuff of heroism.

From the Marxist materialist point of view, Little Blackie is the hero. To be more precise, he is a martyr hero because the "final cause" of his brutal death is labor performed in the interests of the ruling class. The revolutionary theory that connects readers with Little Blackie—especially in his death scene as portrayed so extravagantly in the Coen movie—is, to paraphrase Marx and Engels (*Manifesto* 76), that he has nothing to lose but the chains that oppress and exploit him. Instead, the "pretty thing" with white stockings loses his life.

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Agnieszka Matysiak

Sam Shepard and the "True" West

Abstract: The theateer of Sam Shepard has almost emblematically been considered the epitome of the American, particularly the Southwestern, myth of the frontier and, hence, the vastness and masculine expansiveness it traditionally symbolizes. However, Shepard's theatre attains, I believe, its true potential only when approached in the perspective of the (Neo)Baroque paradigm. Therefore, this article will indicate an alternative manner of interpreting his dramatic thought; the manner, which, as I will argue, allows for re-contextualizing the position of Shepard on the American stage.

Keywords: Sam Shepard, family, (Neo)Baroque, major/minor strategy, representation, theatre, drama

The theater of Sam Shepard has almost emblematically been considered the epitome of the American, particularly the Southwestern, myth of the frontier and, hence, the vastness and masculine expansiveness it traditionally symbolizes. As Frederick Jackson Turner pointed out in his "mythopoetic" essays, the frontier, together with the conditions of the frontier life, exerted a profound impact on the American mind and self-perception:

> From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The works of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. (*The Frontier in American History*)

The national implications notwithstanding, Shepard's theater attains, I believe, its true potential only when approached in the perspective of the (Neo)Baroque paradigm. Therefore, this article will indicate an alternative manner of interpreting his dramatic thought; the manner, which, as I will try to show, allows for re-contextualizing the position of Shepard on the American stage.

The year 1989 saw the publication of Susan Harris Smith's article entitled "Generic Hegemony: American Drama and the Canon," in which the author, while referring to the status of American drama, considered it "an unwanted bastard child" (112) of the American literary tradition epitomized, as it has been believed, by canonical fiction and poetry. What is more, in the 1997 monograph, *American Drama: The Bastard Art*, Smith advanced even a more radical thesis by claiming that

"American drama [was] deliberately buried alive in the cover-up of what was perceived embarrassedly and fearfully as a vital manifestation of cultural provincialism, feminine emotion, and unstable radicalism" (11). It thus comes as no surprise that the approach to the American dramatic arts was frequently confined to derogatory remarks on its "enfeeblement" or "mindlessness" (qtd. in Schroeder 420).

The opinion that the English stage was the only legitimate representative of the high culture when it comes to the theater realm in English-speaking countries contributed to the American drama being demoted to the locus of provincial folly—such an opinion was bitterly summarized by Richard Gilman who stated that "[t]he American drama [was] itself almost mindless" (qtd. in Smith, *American Drama* 10).[1] However, those strenuous efforts to maintain a view of the generic hierarchy in American literature seemed to be a futile endeavour in, to invoke Patricia R. Schroeder's observation, such a heterogeneous society (423). Appositely, I would propose to recognize Sam Shepard's drama *Buried Child* as a representative (Neo)Baroque play that materializes the structural and thematic tensions between both the canon (the major strategy) and its critique (the minor strategy); the presentation of characters and their initial acts (the major strategy) and re-definition of their functioning in the play (the minor strategy).

The origins of both the major and minor strategies, which William Egginton applies to his analysis of the baroque aesthetics, are to be traced back to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of Franz Kafka's work. This eponymous philosophical concept that both scholars introduce in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) does not posit "a minor language" as the source of "a minor literature;" rather, minor literature is "that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16).[2] By grounding its existence in a "deterritorializing" facet of language, the literature designated as "minor" "leav[es] behind normal structures of sense by following the 'lines of flight' or escape that such language inevitably carries with it" (Egginton, *The Theater of Truth* 27). Hence, Egginton's idea of the minor strategy always already entails the major strategy being at work in the same material as the minor strategy is – hence, it is impossible to discuss them separately.

1 In the article "Lag and Change: Standards of Taste in Early American Drama," George Winchester Stone, Jr. proposes an interesting theory of the development of the early American drama. Invoking Allardyce Nicoll, "the dean of English drama historians" (338), that the English theater was extremely unwilling to accept the influences from the continent, hence the lag in acknowledging the Italian, German, and Scandinavian impulses, Stone coins the phrase "secondary lag" for designating the process that took place on the emerging American stage. He explicates that it was an incessant movement of "English repertories, actors, and managers" (338) to the New Land in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that "helped mould public taste" (338) in American theaters.

2 In the Introduction to the volume on the Gothic mode's indebtedness to Shakespeare's works, John Drakakis also acknowledges Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "minor" literature and posits the legitimacy of its use in the context of Gothic writing (10-12). For further discussion of Shakespeare's significance to the Gothic convention, see *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis and Dale Townshend.

The Modern Baroque Theater

The use of the term "baroque" in the discussion of dramatic arts might be construed as an act of further enhancing the elusiveness of this already ephemeral phenomenon.[3] Indeed, to invoke, for instance, Anne Ubersfeld, theater "is both eternal (indefinitely reproducible and renewable) and of the instant (never reproduced identically). It is an art involving instances of performance that are bound to a given moment or day and cannot be the same the next day" (3). This singularity of a dramatic performance legitimizes Ubersfeld's further statement that, at least in principle, the only constant entity in the theater is the very dramatic text (the script), which is to be realized on the stage (3).[4] On the other hand, while considering the semiology as the "theory of the existent," Julia Kristeva presents a substantially more radical viewpoint, declaring that the "modern theater does not exist—it does not take (a) place [since] its semiology is a mirage" (277). It is therefore language—*le langage*—that epitomizes the only inhabitable locus of interplay for the modern human beings' experience. Kristeva claims that

> [s]ince no set or interplay of sets is able to hold up any longer faced with the crises of state, religion, and family, it is impossible to prefer a discourse—to play out a discourse—on the basis of a scene, sign of recognition, which would provide for the actor's and audience's recognition of themselves in the same Author.... As its only remaining locus of interplay is the space of language, modern theater no longer exists outside of the text. (277)

However, Kristeva also declares that the text of a play is to be regarded not as a perfectly homogenous entity but "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality [since i]n the space of a single text several *énoncés* from other texts cross and neutralize each other" (qtd. in Elam 93).[5] The analysis of a dramatic text cannot thus ignore the existence and impact of discourses on each other and the whole performance as well.

3 In the article "Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* and the Semiotics of Censored Theater," Andrew James Hartley speaks about the characteristic "instability of theater" (361). The concept of "instability" and its role in *Buried Child* will be dealt with in the further part of this article.

4 "But surely the text, at least in theory, is intangible and forever fixed" (Ubersfeld 3). Nevertheless, the idea of a dramatic text's invariability seems to be put in question by Tadeusz Różewicz and his manner of exploring the potentiality of both the theater and drama. Having written the early plays during the censorship imposed by the communist government, Różewicz did change his works, e.g. *Kartoteka rozrzucona*—once the censorship ended—was re-written back, as Robert Looby puts it, "to what, presumably, they would have been if it had not been for the censor." Moreover, Looby continues, the variability of *Kartoteka*'s script is built into the text of the play by means of stage directions that force the director into making a choice (e.g. 'the curtain falls or it does not fall')."

5 It seems worth noting here the epistemological shift of emphasis from the stage to the page, which Timothy Murray examines in *Theatrical Legitimation: Allegories of Genius in Seventeenth-Century England and France*. While analyzing the approach to theater and drama both in England and in France in the seventeenth century, he concludes that it was the contemporary public theater that "nurture[d] significational free play and intertextuality, [whereas] the printed text offer[ed] the playwright the opportunity to transcend authorial anonymity and linguistic ruin through various operations of textual self-representation. The textual materialization of authorship thus enacts the regeneration of the figure of the Self through its objectification in the printed text" (16).

If "the space of language" is seen as the only valid "locus of interplay" in the discussion of the modern theater, where the premises of semiotics operate, it is possible to claim that the abundance of intertextual relationships and permutations discerned in the space of a single dramatic text induces tensions between those co-existing discourses. Incapable of identifying unequivocally with the only one dominant discourse as "the space of language," the dramatic text has to acknowledge other discourses as well. José Lezama Lima's inquiry into the baroque poetics may shed light on these ambiguous tensions in the dramatic text. Although achieving the desired unity of arts, the baroque cannot be confined, Lezama Lima argues, within the frame of one exegesis. The emerging "tension[s] of the Baroque" (qtd. in Egginton, *The Theater of Truth* 71) emphasize the significance of the components.

Constituting a vital element of any dramatic text, the clashing discourses epitomize Egginton's idea of the baroque tension as the one "between two directions or strategies... a centrifugal versus a centripetal force, a major versus a minor strategy, a molar versus a molecular vector (*The Theater of Truth* 71). I would propose to categorize the discourses that can be discerned within a single dramatic text according to their correspondences with centrifugal/centripetal forces; major/minor strategies; molar/molecular vectors. The criterion adopted for placing discourses in a particular category will be based on each discourse's relation to the fundamental baroque dilemma, that is, a relationship between the representation and the notion of a reality concealed behind it or a lack thereof.

How the Minor Strategy Meets the Major Strategy

In applying Egginton's viewpoint to the analysis of the modern drama, the discourses and the characters who embody them will be recognized as those that "assum[e] the existence of a veil of appearance, and then sugges[t] the possibility of a space opening just beyond those appearances where *truth* resides" (*The Theater of Truth* 3, emphasis mine), i.e. the possibility described by Deleuze and Guattari as "major."[6] These discourses are considered representative of Egginton's re-interpretation of the major strategy. Nonetheless, a dramatic text is also permeated with other discourses and inhabited by other characters whose construction is subordinate to the representation itself. Having thus "nestl[ed] into the representation and refus[ed] to refer to... some other reality, but instead affirming it [representation], albeit ironically, as [the] only reality" (*The Theater of Truth* 6), these discourses and characters represent the minor strategy. Therefore, "the tension of the Baroque" refers here to the phenomena occurring between the major and minor strategies.

I would propose to consider the "tension of the Baroque" a phenomenon

6 Egginton claims that such an approach to major strategy supports "to some extent Walter Benjamin's thesis that modernity is founded on a sense of melancholy for the loss of tradition, the past, and the stability it offers, and that the aesthetic sign and origin of this melancholy is the Baroque" (*The Theater of Truth* 132). A parallel observation was made already in 1935 by George Williamson who, having inquired into the cause of melancholy and mutability, affirmed that their origins were to be found in the contemporary firm conviction about the unbridled decay of the world, which, according to Benjamin, was also the epitome of the seventeenth-century sense of instability ("Mutability, Decay, and Seventeenth-Century Melancholy").

generated by the mutual embeddedness of the two strategies, whose clashes create liminal spaces.[7] The incessant collisions of different versions of "truth" emerging from a particular dramatic text initiate a rise of a spatial relationship between the major and minor strategies, which obscures their difference and generates the interstitial space, that is, the "in-between" space imbued with the premises of them both.

It is at the boundaries infused with the potentialities of those two combating strategies that the possible "truths" are generated. Since one strategy (major) strives for imposing its own "veracity," while the other (minor) multiplies its representations and severs the representation's links to the "ultimate truthfulness," the excess seems to be an inevitable consequence. The foregoing discussion on excess draws on Omar Calabrese's idea of this concept, which "describes the overcoming of a limit in terms of an exit from a closed system. Excess escapes by breaking through. It crosses the threshold by making an opening, a breach" (49). Therefore, the collisions between the boundaries of the involved strategies "upset" a seeming immutability of the view of reality held by the major strategy and, as a result, generate the excess of the possible "truths."

What is more, the focus on the boundaries also resembles a Gothic strategy of organizing the universe by erecting borders, where the "legitimate," "proper," and "sane" are discriminated from the "illicit," "indecent," and "lunatic." The very existence of the borders, both the material and spiritual ones, generates, nevertheless, "the possibility of transgression and suggest[s] the proper punishment for those rebels who cross them, who 'go too far': to be immured, incarcerated, imprisoned, in the attics, dungeons, or secret chambers of the family or the state" (Williams 12). The idea of the boundary and boundary-transgression endows the Gothic space with a purely geometrical dimension, thus making possible its description in quasi-mathematical terms. Similarly to the principles pertaining to mathematical sets, their borderlines, which separate set A and set B—as far as intersecting sets are concerned—belong both to the set A, and to the set B. Therefore, it is impossible to state with absolute certainty where the end of a space belonging to set A, or where that of a space belonging to set B is.

As Manuel Aguirre explicates, in the Gothic realm, the very same dilemma pertains to the distinction between the threshold and the Other space that can be done away with as the threshold is already the part of the Other (Aguirre, "Geometria strachu" 20).[8] Aguirre further suggests that the essence of the threshold lies in its

7 Far from being a stable or unfluctuating process, the idea of the clash between the borders corresponds with the creative processes taking place in Nature as they are also concentrated on incessant change, impermanence and fluidity. Spinoza's principle of *natura naturans* seems thus to operate within the space of a dramatic intertextual interplay as well. For further references to Spinoza's philosophy, see Warren Montag's *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and his Contemporaries*.

8 "rozróżnienie pomiędzy progiem i Inną przestrzenią może być zniesione, bowiem próg jest częścią Innego" (Aguirre, "Geometria strachu" 20). Aguirre also maintains that "[t]he ambiguity of the threshold—limen—is paradoxical in its nature. We stand hesitating on the threshold and don't know whether to cross it or not without realizing that we are already on the Other side. We enter this no-man's-land believing that it is only a transition to the Other but the moment we enter it, we have already entered the Other. Thus, the threshold terrifies us like the reality behind it. The threshold is, both, a place and a non-place, or, as Victor Turner put it, 'a place which is not a

double ontological nature, which allows for the appropriation and colonization of the limen's borders (Aguirre, "Geometria strachu" 21). That being so, both the Gothic and Egginton's baroque aesthetics converge exactly on that interstitial space which simultaneously belongs to the minor and major strategies. A perfect embodiment of that convergence is, I would suggest, Sam Shepard's drama *Buried Child.*

"Legitimizing the Bastard Child": The Convergence of the (Neo)Baroque and the Gothic in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*[9]

In the monograph on Sam Shepard's theatrical aesthetics, Stephen J. Bottoms maintains that the playwright conflates in his works "the 'high' or 'romantic' modernis[m], the 'late' modernis[m], and... the reluctant postmodernism" (4), thus following the formal principles of constructing a collage. Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi also recognizes "a collage character" in the playwright's dramas, which he defines as "an amalgam of a variety of extreme mood states, roles, fantastic deformations and symbolic compositions" (18-19).[10] Since a collage is composed of the material fragments that conventionally vary in texture, volume and density, Shepard's theater seems to pertain to analogous premises because it is built of

> fragments, and often of verbal and visual glut, in which disparate elements butt against each other in abrupt or unsettling juxtapositions, and in which intense, disturbing confrontations are inextricably entwined with a certain playfulness and madcap comedy.... This inclusive approach often makes the plays seem unwieldy or somehow incomplete, yet onstage it is also this very 'flaw'—the lack of structural or thematic resolution—which makes his best works so provocative. (Bottoms 2)

Those attributes make Shepard's works the embodiment of postmodernism, or, as Bottoms suggests, the "reluctant postmodernism" for, "by accident or design—the plays have become gradually more sophisticated in their handling of the kind of disruptive, unresolved formal qualities typical of postmodernist art" (11).[11]

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place,' both this and that or neither this, nor that" ("Geometria strachu" 20-21, translation mine). ["W tym tkwi problem dwuznaczności limen—progu, w jego paradoksalnej naturze. Stoimy pełni wahania, czy próg ten przekroczyć—i jesteśmy jednocześnie już po Drugiej stronie. Wkraczamy na ziemię niczyją traktując ją tylko jako przejście, które wiedzie do Innego: jednak wkraczając nań wkroczyliśmy już w Inne. Stąd sam próg przeraża nas tak samo, jak rzeczywistość leżąca za nim. Dlatego próg jest i miejscem, i nie-miejscem zarazem, czy też, jak ujął to Victor Turner, 'miejscem, które miejscem nie jest', zarówno tym, jak i tamtym, lub ani tym, ani tamtym."]

9 The play is considered the second movement in Shepard's "family trilogy" that consists of *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978) and *True West* (1980). Nonetheless, as Thomas P. Adler posits, a quintet might be created out of the dramatic trio by means of completing it by two corresponding movements, that is, *Fool for Love* (1983) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985) (111).

10 For further discussion of the psychological/psychoanalytical examination of Shepard's characters, see his *The Splintered Self: Character and Vision in Sam Shepard's Plays*. For further analysis of Shepard's fragmenting both the characters and the dramatic action, see Gay Gibson Cima's "Shifting Perspectives: Combining Shepard and Rauschenberg."

11 While pondering upon the idea of dramatic realism, Michael Vanden Heuvel proposes an interesting

However, those "unresolved formal qualities" and a defective construction which resembled "a posture that has not yet grown into a cohesive play" (qtd. in Bottoms 153) were initially the reason for the play's severe criticism. The strongest condemnation of *Buried Child* was expressed by Walter Kerr who, in the scathing review of the drama entitled "Sam Shepard: What's the Message?" and published in *The New York Times* on the 10th of December, 1978, criticized the playwright for not presenting the audience with, as Bottoms summarizes it, "a cohesive message" (153), which would be in accordance with the premises of domestic naturalism. Such a designation of Shepard's dealings with the dramatic art once again evokes a baroque problem of the relationship between the major and minor strategies. That being so, I would argue that labelling *Buried Child* as the epitome of the postmodern drama (Bottoms 152) or the antagonist to "drama proper" (Kerr) is a simplification which can be overcome by adopting Egginton's (Neo)Baroque paradigm and his idea of the major/minor strategy dynamics.

Act One[12] of this drama[13] opens with the stage directions that delineate the stage design, which is manifestly not consonant with the emblematic form of the Rockwellean bliss;[14] the playwright sets his play in a dilapidated room in an eerily

analysis of the "text-oriented playwrights, the absurdists, and especially Beckett," among whom he places Shepard as well, designating his dramas as "hybrid texts." The critic argues that "[a]ll of these artists, while maintaining elements of conventional realism, have found unique ways to express the sense that the old tonal coherence and competencies of the traditional texts of classic realism have been irretrievably lost, and each has moved closer toward the realization of hybrid texts that maintain a semblance of classical order while they simultaneously invest in the strategies of performance to destabilize those texts" (54).

12 Apart from the division into the acts, there are no separate scenes in the play.

13 *Buried Child* had its premiere on the 27th of June, 1978, at the Magic Theater in San Francisco, where Shepard was the playwright in residence from 1974 to 1984. The drama was directed by Robert Woodruff with the following cast: DODGE – Joseph Gistirak; HALIE – Catherine Willis; TILDEN – Dennis Ludlow; BRADLEY – William M. Carr; SHELLEY – Betsy Scott; VINCE – Barry Lane; FATHER DEWIS – Rj Frank. Founded in 1967 by John Lion, a Graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, who worked under the tutelage of Professor Jan Kott, the Magic Theater formulated its artistic credo on the grounds of Lion's enchantment with "the Off-Off-Broadway model of intimate, informal atmosphere, the promotion of experiment, and (crucially) the right to fail" (Bottoms 126). Therefore, when moved into San Francisco from the contemporary locations in Berkeley, the Magic—as the theater is frequently called—became the centre of San Francisco's theatrical experimentation and "dr[ew] on a rich pool of young acting talents for its dramatic productions, including now-established names like Ed Harris, Amy Madigan, and Danny Glover" (Bottoms 126). The artistic collaboration between Sam Shepard and John Lion begun when Lion took residence in San Francisco, and continued successfully till 1984.

14 On every occasion critics and scholars discuss Shepard's literary preoccupation with the concept of the American family. In the interview granted Matthew Roudané on the 5th of May, 2000, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the playwright articulated his viewpoint on that theme and admitted that "[t]he one thing that ke[pt] drawing [him] back to it [was] this thing that there [was] no escape from the family. And it almost seem[ed] like the whole wilfulness of the sixties was to break away from the family: the family was no longer viable, no longer valid somehow in everybody's mind. The 'nuclear family' and all these coined phrases suddenly became meaningless. We were all independent, we were all free of that, we were somehow spinning out there in the world without any connection whatsoever, you know. Which [was] ridiculous. It [was] absolutely ridiculous to intellectually think that you [could] sever yourself, I mean even if you didn't know who your

isolated, deteriorating homestead that heretofore has been a part of a flourishing farm.[15] The sparse furnishings as well as any other elements in the room are either "old," e.g. "[o]ld wooden staircase" (I:63),[16] "old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots" (I:63), or do not function properly, e.g. "a large, old-fashioned T.V. [emitting solely a] flickering blue light... but no image, no sound" (I:63). Notwithstanding the information in the stage directions that the play is to begin in the daytime, the hues of colours used for describing the furniture onstage stand in striking contrast to those, which are normally associated with this particular time of the day. There is no mention of intense and light colors; each one of them is either "pale," e.g. "pale carpet" (I:63), or "dark," e.g. "dark green sofa" (I:63), "dark elm trees" (I:63).

Furthermore, the remark about "the shapes of dark elm trees" (I:63) in the background introduces intertextuality in the play as it is a direct allusion to Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). However, thus initiated intertextual allusion is not limited to the elm reference because, analogously to O'Neill's play, Shepard's drama presents a story "of darkly destructive family traits repeating themselves down the generations" (Bottoms 157). Bearing in mind Egginton's emphasis on the differentiation between the major/minor strategy, I would argue that already the very beginning of *Buried Child* suggests the operation of the major strategy, which, as mentioned earlier, "assumes the existence of a veil of appearances, and then suggests the possibility of a space opening just beyond those appearances where truth resides" (*The Theater of Truth* 3). The "veil of appearances" is to be discerned, I believe, in the representation of an allegedly ordinary room of a western house, where, indeed, the basic equipment is installed. However, the faded colours that probably were to camouflage the veracity, together with various medicines scattered on the small table and shabby furnishings indicate that "the reality hidden behind [that, which is a representation]" (Egginton, *The Theater of Truth* 6) is far from being the ordinary and peaceful one. The truth emerges like "the stuffing coming out in spots" (I:63) from the old sofa—it discloses itself gradually, yet incessantly, and seems to envelop every piece of equipment and each of the characters that appear on the stage. It appears that the truth must be connected with the revelation of the family's horrifying secret. Nevertheless, since the moment of his appearance, Dodge, a patriarchal figure, strives

mother and father were, if you never met them, you [were] still intimately, inevitably, and entirely connected to who brought you into the world—through a long, long chain, regardless of whether you knew them face to face or not. You could be the most outcast orphan and yet you [were] still inevitably connected to this chain" (qtd. in Roudané 67-68). Norman Rockwell, in turn, was called the most beloved illustrator of America who, as Steven Spielberg asserted in the *American Master*'s series, "painted the American dream—better than anyone." Rockwell created 317 covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* and was the author of a series of the 1943 oil paintings entitled *The Four Freedoms* (or *Four Essential Human Freedoms*), which were reproduced and distributed during the World War II in the form of propaganda posters by the Office of War Information. The admiration of the public notwithstanding, the works of Rockwell's were dismissed by most critics as devoid of artistic merit and true-to-life social reflection.

15 Rodney Simard's insightful analysis of the drama allows him to venture a hypothesis that the play is "a postmodern dramatization of 'The Wasteland'" (87).

16 From now on the numbers in brackets (I:63) will refer to the act followed by the page number.

to conceal those clear manifestations of the minor strategy's operation.[17]

This male character, who seems to perceive his "paternity only as a phallic exercise of potency" (Auerbach 44), does literally crusade for retaining his position as the ruler of the house as it is the only way to prevent the secret from being uncovered. Yet, surprisingly, by celebrating the representation of the world he lives in as the only reality, he embodies, I would suggest, the minor strategy as well. Moreover, his desire seems to mirror the yearning of absolute monarchs of the Baroque era who wanted to preserve their image of absolute patriarchs. That is why, to invoke Kristiaan P. Aercke's observation made in *Gods of Play: Baroque Festive Performances as Rhetorical Discourse*, they organized splendid performances which

> acted as one of the most powerful agents that could draw a court together (and thereby define the microcosm of that court-world vis-à-vis the macrocosm of the world beyond) in an at least temporarily stable communion around the figure of the sponsor-ruler, who alone could provide the sort of 'mediation' that Bataille[18] considers a necessary factor in the interattraction between people.... We might say that essential fear of the ruler kept the court together, and that the splendid festive performance served as an unusually privileged and significant means of placating the shared source of fear—which leads us back to the notions of serious (even cultic) play and sacrifice. (5)

Dodge equally wants to be a "God of Play" and hankers after instilling the same "cultic" fear as the baroque rulers did. Like a monarch on the throne, he also occupies the central part of the room/stage but, in defiance of the status of the king, he faces a TV set that is out of order, sips cheap whiskey rather than the finest alcoholic beverage, and must hide the bottle under the "old brown blanket" (I:63), rather than the royal ermine robe.

Notwithstanding the efforts, Dodge, the "king," is no longer young and powerful but "very thin and sickly looking, in his late seventies" (I:63), and his formerly rich robes transformed into "a well-worn T-shirt, suspenders, khaki work pants and brown slippers" (I:63). What is more, Dodge's absolute authority is further undermined by his wife's voice incessantly pestering: "Dodge! You want a pill, Dodge" (I:63), "What're you watching? You shouldn't be watching anything that'll get you excited! No horse racing!" (I:65). The juxtaposition of the baroque ruler's attributes and Dodge's peculiarities makes feasible an assertion that his endeavours to maintain the absolute control of the major strategy is an internally contradictory aim since this character is equally permeated by the elements of the minor strategy that he tries so desperately to suppress. Therefore, in spite of focusing on the representation of the "patriarchal legacy" (McDonough 65), Dodge's senile impotency only proves that he remains under the rule of both the major and minor strategies. Hence, a dual character of Dodge's personality does generate a particular form of what Lezama Lima refers to

17 Designating the character of Dodge as a mere "source of the play's comedy" (Krasner 109) is, I believe, a simplification. A peculiar laugh that this dramatic persona might evoke is much more in the vein of quasi-Fletcherian hopelessness (Blau 280) than just a comic foolishness.

18 In the quotation, Aercke refers to George Bataille's "Collège de sociologie" (309-311) from the second volume of *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Denis Hollier.

as the "tension of the Baroque" because it conflates in itself both strategies, although, it must be stressed, the playwright initially shapes this character as the figure who epitomizes only the major strategy.

At first, Halie, Dodge's wife, seems to be created for the same purpose as Dodge is, that is, to demonstrate the premises of the major strategy, which would enable the family secret to be kept unrevealed. Therefore, she enacts the major strategy by cultivating a glorious past of the house's golden age. Nestled in the room on the first floor of the building that is not visible on the stage, she keeps maintaining appearances, which is typical of the major strategy, by displaying pictures of the formerly wealthy, land-owning family. Halie's presence is initially conveyed solely through her disembodied voice projected from the offstage space stretched out somewhere beyond the visible top of the staircase. Yet, that very act of her being relegated to the marginalized unseen locus seems to suggest that the preservation of the major strategy is only possible from the area which is not exposed to the gaze of the others, and, paradoxically, can be identified with the minor strategy's field of operation.

Halie's anticipated appearance onstage only enhances the collision between the major strategy represented by her and that of Dodge's fantasy. In *American Drama and the Postmodern: Fragmenting the Realistic Stage*, David K. Sauer seems to advance an analogous thesis not referring, however, to the (Neo)Baroque aesthetics. Nevertheless, his observation on the language Shepard employs in this drama unmistakably invokes the tension between the major and minor strategies:

> [i]n Shepard's play, characters make... assertions, which seem to be declarative statements of fact or feeling, but in truth they are not, as [, for instance,] the opening dispute about horse racing demonstrates. That scene offers assertion and counter-assertion as each seeks to impose his or her view of the past on the other. From the outset there is no literal truth here for the audience to determine. Rather, the two struggle for dominance over each other, pretending that they are talking about a real event. But the audience will never know who is telling the truth, and the literal truth is not the issue here. (202)

Assuming the role of a respectable matron bewailing the loss of both the beloved son, Ansel, and Dodge's impaired ground-floor dominion, she believes that those desperate acts will protect the representation of reality she has designed. However, though their aims are the same, Halie's manner of mediating her "reality" collides with the one advocated by her husband, thus creating a tension which provokes other characters to reveal their own versions of reality. Yet, it is the abrupt appearances of Tilden, an allegedly mentally deranged oldest son, and Bradley, an automaton-like amputee with a wooden leg, that initiate the final overthrow of the hegemony of the major strategy represented by Dodge and by Halie. Having perversely mutilated his father by almost completely scalping him off, Bradley, in a Samson-like Jacobean manner, deprives Dodge of his power and, as a consequence, the strength to defend his fantasy. The final overthrow, however, is performed by Tilden who eventually discards both the father's and the mother's representations of reality.

When appearing for the first time on the stage, the oldest son carries "the ears of corn in his arms" (I:69) that he has picked "right out back" of the house. In the

discussion of the theatrical objects and their function on the English Renaissance stage, Douglas Bruster points out that even "[i]n early modern illustrations, hand properties seem not the exception but the rule" (74). He validates his theory by invoking the baroque concept of *horror vacui* and its connection with keeping the figures' hands always occupied:

> [i]llustrators preferred that hands be used for gestures, or rest on something, or grasp an object, rather than remaining empty. Whether we explain this tendency through content (through what a hand held) or process (through the fact that a hand was doing something), illustrations connected with the early modern stage routinely feature characters holding things. (74-75)

Appositely, Shepard seems to follow the principle mentioned above in constructing the figure of Tilden whose hands are never empty, either. What is more, particular dramatic genres also specified "not only the number but the kinds of props which appear on stage" (79). Thus, Bruster continues, "certain kind of properties serve as generic signals: a lute or a hobby horse might signal a comedy, a skull or a dagger a tragedy. And knowing the genre of a play can lead one to expect it to feature certain properties" (79). The morbid crops and the muddy package Tilden carries in the final act suggest that the play is tragic, rather than comic. Such a hypothesis seems to find its confirmation in the fact that the ground in the back of the house has been infertile for over thirty years, the phenomenon which Dodge remembers to comment on: "There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That's the last time I planted corn out there!" (I:69). Halie and her vehement denials of a very possibility of the crops' flourishing in the back of the house instantly create an aura of conflating the established temporal dimensions related to, for instance, seasons, and institutes an incessant overlapping of seemingly exclusive phenomena, such as lack and plenitude, past and present, memory and forgetting, abundance and insufficiency.

Appositely, Carlos Fuentes points out that "[t]he Baroque language of abundance, is also *the language of insufficiency*: only those who possess nothing include everything. Their horror of vacuity is not gratuitous; it is due to the certainty of the fact that one is in emptiness, that one lacks security" (qtd. in Egginton, *The Theater of Truth* 73, emphasis in the original). Following Fuentes' thesis, I would claim that *Buried Child*'s perplexing language of abundance, e.g. "tons of corn" (I:69), "Back yard's full of carrots. Corn. Potatoes" (II:93), in reference to the previously infertile ground, is simultaneously the language of insufficiency, and, hence, an actual embodiment of a (Neo)Baroque idea. That paradoxical co-existence of the double-natured language in the play seems to justify a comparison of the language use with the operations of the two strategies that are clearly visible in the drama. Shepard's language of abundance coincides with the minor strategy, which strives for preserving the representation as the only reality, whereas the language of insufficiency corresponds to the major strategy that is intent on not letting anyone in on the secret hidden behind the veil of fertility and bountifulness.

The plenitude of crops is universally recognized as the prognostication of a sumptuous feast, and designated by Mikhail Bakhtin as the "triumph of life over

death" (qtd. in Bednarek 10, translation mine).[19] Notwithstanding, Bogusław Bednarek also points to the fact that not every feast symbolizes Bakhtinian celebration and notes that there were also the "infernal banquets" that took place, as the bygone beliefs hold, in the *infernum*'s abyss.[20] Therefore, the expected feast that is to be held in *Buried Child* seems to be more of the "infernal banquet" than the "triumph of life over death" as the crops have grown on the ground fertilized by the decomposing body of Halie's illegitimate child, which was a disgrace she wanted to conceal. However, the status of that death-over-life triumph is an ambivalent one because Bakhtin's portrayal of feasts is invariably identified with the "moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man.... [m]oments of death and revival, of change and renewal" (9). Hence, the very existence of "death" induces "life" because both phenomena are interdependent and cannot function without each other. That is why the notion of the "infernal banquet" allows to re-consider the child's death in the Bakhtinian perspective since its murder and grotesque decomposing corpse might equally symbolize the very restoration to life.

Initially a carefully constructed human being, the child's decomposing body becomes the "formless form," which "produces a phenomenon of suspension and neutralization, since we are currently dealing with a being that is neither 'well formed' nor 'deformed'" (Calabrese 97). It subverts the ontological certitude of an internal integrity, thus becoming the epitome of the first level of instability, which manifests itself in the (Neo)Baroque aesthetics in terms of represented "themes and figures" (Calabrese 105). As the materialization of Lezama Lima's "tension of the Baroque" generated by the final clash between the minor and the major strategy, the buried child not only signifies the ultimate eradication of what can be interpreted as the major strategy, that is, Dodge's and Halie's celebration of their fantasies, but also constitutes a link between Tilden's ostensible retardation and the family's hypocrisy.

Indeed, it is Tilden who acknowledges an indecent status of his incestuous relationship with his own mother, yet also realizes the horrid cruelty of drowning the infant by his betrayed father. Since the baby's tiny body is, as Inverso declares, "simply the matrix of—not the reason for—defilement [and is to be recognized as] a kind of 'fault' in the geological rather than in the moral sense, a crack in the otherwise seamless surface of things, from which shock waves radiate outward" (151), it is this contagion generated by its decomposing body that is capable of destroying the family's illusionistic, artificial representation of reality.

While discussing the idea of death in the context of infancy and history, Giorgio Agamben observes that it is not only the state of death but also the act of birth that generates the "unstable signifiers":

> just as death does not immediately produce ancestors, but ghosts, so birth does not immediately produce men and women, but babies, which in all societies have a special differential status. If the ghost is the living-dead or the half-dead person, the baby is a dead-living or a half-alive person. It too, as a tangible proof of the

19 "triumf życia nad śmiercią" (qtd. in Bednarek 10).

20 "napomknijmy o 'bankiecie piekielnym' odbywającym się—wedle dawnych wierzeń—w otchłaniach infernum" (qtd. in Bednarek 10).

> discontinuity between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and between the diachrony and synchrony, and as an unstable signifier which can, at any moment, be transformed into its own opposite, thereby represents both a threat to be neutralized and a means enabling a passage from one sphere to the other without abolishing its signifying difference. And just as ghosts have a corresponding function to that of children, so funeral rites correspond to initiation rites, in their purpose of transforming the unstable signifiers into stable signifiers. (83)

Hence, the threat posed by the flesh of the bastard infant is to be recognized in its potentiality for signifying "a passage from one sphere," that is, the major strategy, to the minor strategy's representation. Aware of this menace, Dodge, in order to preserve the external propriety, has to eliminate this disturbing being: "We couldn't let a thing like that continue. We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness" (III:124).

Tilden's act of unearthing the "formless form" of the murdered child's decomposing body concealed in the offstage space does annihilate the family's endeavours and signifies, through this invasive movement, the "encroachment by the diegetic realm into mimetic space" (Inverso 153).[21]

Having explored the work of the offstage space in the seventeenth-century French theater, John D. Lyons considers this absent space an area where both literal and figurative functions are fulfilled (73). The critic declares that entering to the unseen site is possible solely by crossing the threshold of characters' narratives, which shape both the spectators' ideas of the offstage space and the onstage characters (77). What is more, Lyons asserts that

> [b]y reminding ourselves [the spectators] of the physically nonexistent nature of the offstage space, we can perceive the fact that what we hear in the *récit* is what the character believes, wishes, or fabricates—not what *is*. Far from being the 'crude reality' which, in Spitzer's description, is filtered by the narrative, the content of the *récit* gives the image of the recesses of the character who presents the narrative. At times this process advances to the point of undermining all credibility of the character [and the dramatic event/dramatic phenomena as well], of isolating him with his private account, his private 'elsewhere,' within the public world of the stage. (77-78)

Therefore, I believe that Shepard's treatment of the offstage space is equivalent to Issacharoff's idea of the invisible, which "invades and finally overcomes the visible" (61). Therefore, this (Neo)Baroque excess emerging in the offstage space spreads to the onstage space with Tilden carrying the child's decomposing body that, to quote

21 The concept of the diegetic space (the off-stage space) is to be understood here in the context of Michael Issacharoff's thesis, according to which the diegetic space is "*described*, that is, referred to in the dialogue, and therefore confined to a merely verbal existence" (58, emphasis in the original). That being so, I would consider that diegetically understood backstage not a neutral medium but a heterogeneous area where the phenomena ostensibly absent from and indiscernible on the stage are set.

Deleuze, "does not really vanish, but folds in upon itself, abruptly involuting into the again newly dormant seed by skipping all intermediate stages" (8). The "formless form" of the child's grotesque corpse is indeed the materialization of that diegetically approached backstage space.

While analysing the dramatic performance in Shepard's dramas, Florence Falk asserts that the playwright's works "constitute the American Family Album, [with] its members caught in various poses—frozen like the volcanic victims at Pompeii—as they try to perform their way out of, or around, disaster" (182). That being so, I would also suggest that Shepard's characters, having indeed strived for creating "other scenarios within the main storyline of the play" (Marranca 20), and thus inducing "not the play-within-the-play [structure] but *play within the play*" (Marranca 19, emphasis in the original),[22] do in fact crusade for preserving the truth which manifests itself in the major strategy that veils the minor strategy's illegitimate crimes performed by proliferating excess.[23] That is why it is precisely the minor strategy that epitomizes the real threat to the family's vision of reality.

The drama thus articulates the (Neo)Baroque tension between the "Inside" of undesirable imperfections and disgraceful improprieties, and the "Outside" of appropriate and hence "pure" representations of the defective "Inside." These illicit "Internal" phenomena, veiled by the seemingly righteous "External" representations seem to represent, in turn, Shepard's strangulated voice, which strives for liberation and apprehension. Therefore, these seemingly perfect representations are devised with a deliberate intention of creating the verbal façade that, in spite of epitomizing the decent and, hence, acceptable material (i.e. in opposition to the verbal/diegetic) exteriority, is nonetheless under an incessant threat of being invaded and raised by the suppressed illicit phenomena residing within the realm of the diegetic interiority. What is more, the epistemological chaos arising from the chiasmatic interchangeability of the major and the minor strategies operating in the drama seems to situate Shepard's work within the dynamic continuum of unfolding fold whose seeming ending is, in fact, the new beginning, always "in-between."[24]

22 As Patrice Pavis clarifies in his *Dictionary of the Theater*, the technique of the play within a play concerns a "play or performance whose subject is the performance of the play. The external audience watches a performance within which an audience of actors is also watching a performance" (270). By eliminating hyphens and immediately evoking the notion of performance, Marranca emphasizes the role of the actor in Shepard's plays.

23 Marranca's re-interpretation of the play-within-the-play concept is oriented to incorporating the model of structural analysis to the thematic discussion of dramatic works. That being so, her idea, when considered in the context of Shepard's play, seems to correspond with what Viveca Füredy calls the "intact but reified boundary" (754).

24 It seems worth pointing out that, notwithstanding a thirty-five-year time span, one of Shepard's latest plays, that is, *Heartless* (2012) and *A Particle of Dread*, which had its première on November 28, 2013, still revolve around the concepts of intertextuality and re-presentation that frame the predominant themes of family secrets and demons of the past.

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Jarosław Milewski

Privilege, Access, Shunning: Familial Homophobia and Its Representations in the Works of Sarah Schulman

Abstract: In her book *Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences* (2009) Sarah Schulman explores the way in which heterosexual privilege interacts with the institution of family, and criticizes its destructive impact on familial relationships. According to her theory, the basis of homophobia is a pleasure principle inscribed in the image of family which encourages every privileged family member to enact their dominance on the excluded. Although Schulman has expressed this idea in clear theoretical terms much later, I argue that it has been a visible element of her writing since the 1980s. This paper demonstrates how the author expressed this idea in the past using diverse sociocultural contexts, and how numerous plots from her oeuvre serve as examples to mechanisms of familial homophobia discussed in *Ties That Bind*.

Keywords: queer, AIDS, family, homophobia, Schulman

Introduction

Family in Western culture is predominantly defined through the criteria of consanguinity or marital relationship. Both criteria are rooted in the central metaphor of reproduction. Since this immediately excludes any non-reproductive couple from full participation in kinship, such an assumption is inherently heterosexist. For gay people, it is coming out to one's relatives, and the following implied failure to fulfill one's expected reproductive role, that used to mark the departure from the heteronormative role within the infinitely multiplying nuclear family. Unsurprisingly, this institution has been subject to analysis and criticism of queer theorists and activists, while gay people often experimented with alternative forms of kinship that could redefine the criteria of belonging. Sarah Schulman, a proliferate lesbian writer and activist, discussed the family and its role in the intergenerational transmission of homophobia in her book *Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences*. This article aims to explore how the development of Schulman's ideas about blood family and chosen family has been visible in her fiction and argues that it is the latter that she identifies as a potential space for affinity and unconditional love.

The definition of family which is constructed around a heterosexual reproductive couple has a long-standing tradition within the Western culture. In an early anthropological study of the ways in which kinship is understood in the American context David Schneider states: "The blood relationship, as it is defined in American kinship, is formulated in concrete, biogenetic terms. Conception follows a single act of sexual intercourse between a man, as genitor, and a woman, as genetrix." (23) It is the figure of intercourse within the heterosexual dyad, where one half complements the other, which results in the birth of a child that underscores the dominant understandings of kinship. One belongs to a family either through shared genetic material, a testament to the biological apparatus of reproduction, or through marriage, the culturally

prescript reproductive institution. This constitutes the heterosexual script of how life is supposed to develop.

This reference to a 1968 study of the American family is useful to understand the dominant notions of kinship which predated and likely influenced Schulman's writing project. Since this article attempts to deal with an oeuvre that spans over 35 years, it is necessary to establish a timeline of ideas related to the subject of gay kinship. In 1969, after the Stonewall Inn riots, the gay liberation movement began to argue for embracing gay identity. According to Kath Weston and her study of gay kinship *Families We Choose*, it was "a period when coming out to relatives witnessed a kind of institutionalization" (41), i.e. the idea of coming out to one's blood family became thinkable. Partly in response to tensions within their blood families, partly because their own relationships were not legally recognized, an idea of chosen family as an alternative way of understanding kinship emerged and gained popularity among gay people in the 1980s. Since the 1990s gays activists have been increasingly expressing the demand for marriage equality, which has influenced greatly the way queer kinship is understood, bringing it closer to a nuclear family. In 2015, the ruling in the civil rights case *Obergefell v. Hodges* brought about legal recognition of same-sex marriage throughout the United States.

This shift may influence greatly the way in which gay people fit into the American construct of kinship. However, most of Schulman's novels were published in the 1980s and 1990s, and same-sex marriage remains a distant concept in them. Only in Schulman's latest novels, such as *Maggie Terry*, does same-sex marriage as understood today constitute an element of social life, and even there it does not play a very significant part in the plots. Thus, this article deals mostly with a historical situation in which gay people did not fit into the normative concept of kinship because their relationships were neither recognized legally, nor understood to form nuclear families.

In *Ties That Bind*, Schulman argues that the experience of being mistreated by their family is one that almost all gay people share. "We have each, at some time in our lives, been treated shoddily by our families simply, but specifically, because of our homosexuality" (1). While the degree of displayed homophobia may vary, from microaggressions to disowning and shunning, very few gay people do not suffer any kind of mistreatment from their family. This wrongdoing does not have to take form of the overt acts of homophobia. Since family is expected to provide a network of emotional and economic support, the mistreatment often manifests as acts of withholding. As Rayna Rapp claims in an article on family and class, "it is within families that people experience the absence or presence, the sharing or witholding (sic), of basic poolable resources" (281). Thus, being kept away from these resources makes one especially vulnerable. Schulman states that unequal access to family wealth often keeps gay people at a financially disadvantageous position that helps in their subjugation. It is due to the threat, spoken or unspoken, to withhold the resources that gay people are kept within the family structure, yet treated as its second-class members. This mechanism can be also translated into emotional support that families grant.

Schulman explores a complex relationship between homophobia and various systems of power. In her account, the withholding of support is often enacted by the relatives indirectly:

> They vote for politicians who hurt gay people; they contribute to religious organizations that humiliate gay people; they patronize cultural products that depict gay people as pathological. They speak and act in ways that reinforce the idea of gay people as 'special interest.' In many ways, the message is clear that the gay person is not fully human. (*Ties That Bind* 19-20)

The choice of a religion, a political party or a brand that partakes in the oppression of gay people constitutes a betrayal of kinship ties. Yet, it is not construed as such, since empathy and loyalty towards gay kin are considered optional, whereas such bonds with straight kin are not typically put in question by religious or political institutions.

Early Manifestations of the Ideas

These ideas have been present in Schulman's writing from the very beginning. Her debut novel, *The Sophie Horowitz Story*, published in 1984, tells the story of a lesbian journalist who investigates the case of a bank robbery committed by feminist Marxist radicals. Sophie's relationship with her parents is mentioned for the first time as the protagonist reminisces about her childhood fascination with such radicals. Her mother was thankful that Sophie, already displaying signs of disobedience as a child, had been born too late to become a communist. Later, after Sophie comes out, the mother castigates her, compares to a drug addict, and threatens to sell the house and move somewhere where no one would know about her. She also imagines reasons for her homosexuality to be some kind of dysfunction: "Your problem is that you never accepted that you're a woman. Your father says it's all my fault because I took you to see Martin Luther King and that you hit your head a lot when you were little, the gay thing I mean" (64). These notions are grounded in an understanding of homosexuality as the orientation that lacks something (e.g. reproductive potential or a partner that differs from one in the crucial categories of sex and gender), whereas heterosexuality is the only full, intended and natural order of sex.

While the next novel, *Girls, Visions, and Everything* paid less attention to familial homophobia, it does include a scene where Lila, its main character, considers an idea for a story:

> You know Lacy, for years I've been trying to figure out parents, since I've never been one, just had them. But now, I get it. They live their lives and then they want to live yours too. Gives me an idea for a story. Something about parents who only want one thing in the world and that's for their child to fail so that they can prove that they were right all along. (55)

Lila perceives parents to be, universally, people who want to control the lives of their children and would rather see them fail and be right than witness their success and be wrong. This is in line with the novel's larger themes of gay community and its common experiences; Schulman's contention in *Ties That Bind* that familial abuse is almost a universal experience for gay people is already visible here in Lila's off-handed criticism of family that is to be expected from a lesbian.

It is also *Girls, Visions and Everything* where a rare example of Schulman's positive portrayal of familial relations can be found. In the novel's final chapters Lila encounters among various contingents in Pride parade relatives that come out to support their gay kin: "She cheered Grandmas for Gays and felt, yet again, overcome to the point of tears at the sight of Parents of Gays, with their handpainted signs, 'We Love Our Gay Children'" (127). The rare cases of relatives who are invested in the reality of lives of their gay kin enough to take part in Pride are presented as a positive example of familial love. Yet the scene serves a double purpose, as Lila's tears are a sign of her own experience of familial homophobia, not suggested anywhere but for the previously discussed idea for a story. It is precisely due to the ubiquity of familial homophobia that Lila's response is decipherable as an index of abuse since abuse is expected to have happened.

Schulman's fourth novel, *People in Trouble,* is her first one to cover the AIDS epidemic. Moments of the high visibility of familial homophobia are thus related to death and mourning. Towards the end of the novel one of the gay characters, Scott, dies of AIDS. His life partner is entirely omitted in The New York Times obituary:

> The New York Times obituary said that Scott was 'survived' by two daughters, a wife, mother, father, and sister in Kansas City.
>
> Then Kate found a privately placed notice at the bottom of the obituary page.
>
> Scott Yarrow died in the arms of his lover, James Carroll, with whom he shared a vision of freedom for lesbians and gay men. (218)

The sharp contrast between the two areas of mourning brings to light inequality and erasure of queer grief. It is the family understood through the criteria of consanguinity and marriage that is entitled to grieve publicly, and that gets their place in The New York Times official obituary. A gay life partner gets relegated to the private sphere (if they get acknowledged at all), hidden from view. In the time of death, the heterosexual supremacy is enacted through the imposition of the official heterosexual script despite the fact that the deceased resisted this ideology. As gay kin cannot protest anymore, they become reabsorbed into the family on the supremacist terms, at least within the official media narrative. Erasure of Scott's agency and his personality for the sake of propriety is another instance of dehumanization performed by the family.

One more interesting case of the supremacist ideology destroying kinship ties may be found in Schulman's historical novels: *Shimmer* and *The Cosmopolitans*. While they both discuss similar mechanics of exclusion as the rest of Schulman's oeuvre, in none of them does homophobia ignite them; Bette, the protagonist of *The Cosmopolitans,* is not even gay. What causes the exclusion in both cases is the protagonists' failure to adhere to the heterosexual script in relation to marriage. *The Cosmopolitans* follows Bette's lonesome spinsterhood in the 1950s, which is a result of her exclusion from her family decades earlier. Bette's transgression was a passionate love for a man in her hometown, which resulted in them having sex. On the next day, the man in question was announced to be a fiancé of her cousin. Bette protested and tried to make the man admit publicly the love he had promised her in private, but as he refused to do so and denied they had sex, Bette's family assumed her to be

jealous and destructive, and shunned her. The transgression of Sylvia, the protagonist of *Shimmer*, is a more general pursuit of a career in the 1940s, and lack of interest in finding a husband and having children. Bette is given a one-way ticket to a bigger city, whereas Sylvia is the object of her parents' constant criticism and disapproval. Both of the characters are in a sense queer, even if not gay, as they are unwilling to follow the heterosexual script of a nuclear family. The mechanics of punishment are similar regardless of their sexuality.

Acquisition of Power Through Familial Homophobia

Such examples may be found in any given novel by Schulman, and from now on they may be considered in more detail in relation to particular mechanisms of familial homophobia analyzed in *Ties That Bind*. Among them there is a lack of congruence between many relatives' politics and their homophobic behavior:

> One of the most pervasive uses of homophobia within a family is by family members who actually have no inherent prejudices toward gay people but manipulate their family's prejudices to achieve greater currency internally.... Although theoretically it sounds ridiculous, in applied real life terms it's much easier to love gay people and not stand up for them than to risk your own privileges to have a consistent trajectory of behavior. (36-37)

Thus, it is not only the relatives that are prejudiced against gay people that act homophobic. Instead, familial homophobia may be enacted by any relative, given it allows them to acquire a better position in the family structure.

This is a dominant theme in Schulman's eighth novel, *The Child*, which tells the story of Stew, a gay teenager who has an affair with a middle-aged gay couple, and who is arrested for trying to pick up a policeman at a public restroom. Stew's parents consider their son a pervert and send him to a therapist to "heal" him of homosexuality. His sister, Carole, who has a husband and a child, uses this situation to secure her superior status within the family. In one scene, Carole's son talks to his gay uncle and Stew says things that, he realizes, his family would not want him to share with the little boy. The nephew obediently does not disclose the subject of their conversation, but he does tell his mother and grandmother that uncle Stew wants him to keep a secret something that happened between them. At that point it is up to Carole how to interpret and resolve the situation:

> Carole looked at him with confusion. She was making a decision. She could have just understood that nothing bad had happened and been okay with that. Been his friend. But then she would have lost all that special ground she'd gotten with her mom. All the conspiracy. She'd have lost all the points she'd gotten for getting pregnant, just like her mother, and then getting Sam to marry her, just like Brigid had with Dad. She could have that special status if Stew was twisted, a pervert. If he was okay, she'd lose everything.
>
> 'Mommy,' she screamed. 'Mom.' (157)

Carole chooses to imply that Stew has done something wrong. She uses the homophobic metonymical switch from homosexuality to pedophilia to pathologize her brother. As a result, she secures her position as the favorite child. Stew, on the other hand, is thrown out of the house, but Carole cares little about that development. Her motivation has nothing to do with her homophobic prejudice, as her actions are driven by an attempt to win her mother's approval.

Another instance of similar dynamics is represented in the sibling relationship in *Shimmer*, Schulman's seventh novel. Its protagonist, Sylvia, works as a secretary for a newspaper, and her ambition is to become a reporter and have a successful career in journalism. As previously mentioned, the story takes place in the 1940s, after the war, so her plan moves beyond the expected narrative of a woman's life. In the course of the novel, Sylvia is repeatedly castigated by her parents but enjoys a good rapport with her brother, Lou. He is the favorite of their parents, but her savvy and ability make her successful at work and keep them equal; Lou sometimes protects his sister from their parents' disapproval, or at least is empathic to her, and Sylvia, in turn, helps him deal with problems of entering into adulthood.

Interestingly, the alliance between the two seems to be an evolution of the sibling relationship in *The Sophie Horowitz Story.* Sophie's brother is also named Lou, and they also have a good, mutually supportive relationship. However, while in Schulman's debut novel the relationship never goes awry, in *Shimmer* the shift in power dynamics diffuses their solidarity. At one point, Sylvia secures a job for Lou at her workplace. Quite quickly, and not based on his achievements, Lou is offered the position that Sylvia has been seeking for years. At first, Lou refuses out of loyalty and recommends Sylvia for the job. Soon, however, he is persuaded by his boss to give in to his wish to become Sylvia's superior:

> 'Lou, have you ever been the best at anything?'
>
> 'No, sir, I have not.'
>
> 'Well, now you are. Now you can call up your father and tell him that for once in your life you are the best qualified. Think of how proud he will be of you. Sylvia's been the best many times I'm sure…'
>
> 'But...' he stammered in that dislocating transitional phase when a person suddenly realizes that they have no support. That whatever position they're taking is not the favored position and cannot ultimately win. When they start to see this inevitability, often they simultaneously start to calculate exactly how much loss will be involved in sticking with that increasingly improbable position, and how they are going to shake the responsibility of it. (149)

For Lou, remaining loyal to his sister would mean rejection of the opportunities granted to him by his male privilege. The way in which Schulman depicts mechanics of sexism enacted by a man who is not overtly sexist mirrors her ideas on the use of homophobia by the non-homophobic relatives.

False Accusations and Avoiding Discomfort

Schulman often uses the theme of sibling rivalry to represent the mechanism of betrayal. As Kath Weston's study of chosen families found, "siblings in general were

presumed to be more accepting than either fathers or mothers" (54). This may be related to the fact that the siblings are one generation younger than the parents, which fits the narrative of progressive spread of tolerance and eventual acceptance of gay people. Schulman argues, however, that with each generation the homophobia does not disappear, but it is only the tactics that change:

> Whereas your grandparents may have thought you would burn in hell, your parents may have called you once a month but refused to allow your lover in their home. Your sister may let you and your lover come over for Thanksgiving but not let you be alone with her children.... A forty-year-old woman living in New York City today probably cannot tell her friends, or herself, that she hates her brother because he's gay.... Instead, she'll just find another reason that is more generationally suitable. As one straight colleague on a job told me, 'It's not your homosexuality that I hate. It's your clothes.' (*Ties That Bind* 59-60)

Instances of finding a more suitable reason, usually through false accusations, are a result of the discourse of tolerance. Since gay people have articulated the ways in which they are being excluded in a way persuasive enough to break to the mainstream media, the more overt displays of homophobia may result in some sort of accountability. This causes readjustment of the homophobic position so that the accountability can be avoided, yet the heterosexual supremacy may remain intact. As younger people, in general, are often assumed to be more progressive, and as the competition for parental approval has always been a part of relationships between brothers and sisters, sibling rivalry is a fertile ground for exploration of this idea.

The particular mechanics of false accusations among the siblings are explored in *The Child*. One of its many plots follows the story of Eva, a lesbian lawyer shunned from her family. Eva finds out that her sister had a child, but the pregnancy was kept secret from her, and the family does not want her to know the child. This is another in the long line of insults and dehumanizing gestures she is subjected to. Eva is willing to forgive them all, but the family remains abusive:

> First they humiliated her for being gay, so she became alienated. Sequence, consequence.
>
> But because the family viewed the initial humiliation as fine, Eva being upset about it was only further proof of how bad and wrong she was.... That was the familial 'modus o' from 1975 to 1992. At that point, because of AIDS there was a social shift, and the kind of vulgar homophobia the Krasner family dutifully practised went out of fashion.... Now they no longer cited the homosexuality as the justification for their cruelty. They now pointed to the consequences of their cruelty as its own justification. Eva being alienated was now reason enough to keep her that way. What had caused it became unmentionable. (110-111)

Eva's family's choice to exclude her through overt homophobia requires only slight readjustment in order to not appear homophobic. Rather than shunning her for being gay, she is being shunned because she is making the family uncomfortable. What actually causes the discomfort is being accountable for the hurt they previously caused. Since they stand nothing to gain by reconciliation, and it would make them

uncomfortable, they remain loyal to their initial shunning and react to the shift in social acceptability of exclusion by changing the explicit reason.

The tactics discussed by Schulman in the above example are quite often intuitive and invisible to the heterosexual majority. As she claims in *Ties That Bind*, "throughout the history of cruelty to gay people, exclusion has consistently been theorized as a natural unquestioned option" (35). Its being "natural" and "unquestioned" is extremely important to the comfort of those who benefit from the heterosexual supremacy. In "Queer Feelings," Sara Ahmed discusses the relationship between the comfort of dominance and invisibility of its boundaries:

> Normativity is comfortable for those who can inhabit it.... We don't tend to notice what is comfortable, even when we think we do.... To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. (425)

It is precisely in the invisibility of boundaries where the quality of comfort lies. As one fits a dominant cultural script, its demands and restrictions seem so natural and intuitive as to be no more exclusive than the laws of gravity are. Hence, dissent to exclusion may be easily dismissed from the position of dominance, while enactments of homophobia may remain ubiquitous despite the discourse of tolerance. Invisibility makes the heterosexual supremacy both advantageous for its beneficiaries, thus securing their loyalty to the system of power, and comfortable, so that maintenance of these power relations is easy and intuitive, while resistance to them is difficult and distressing.

Schulman's novels often include representation of such resistance and the punishment in which it results. The characters who benefit from unequal power relations tend to protest claims of those who try to make visible the boundaries of these power relations. In *Shimmer,* after Lou accepts the promotion, Sylvia wants him to return to his initial, loyal position, which was a refusal to take the job and recommendation of his sister as a better fit. Both are fully aware that she has actually earned the promotion, and Lou has not. However, having accepted the offer, Lou begins to explain calmly to his sister his right to use his privilege: "Maybe some things aren't as fair as you would like, but the world isn't fair.... You go blaming everything on being a girl, but you're never going to be a man no matter how hard you try. And that's what Mr. O'Dwyer wants" (153). This explanation works for Lou: the male supremacy is natural, and therefore there is no point in challenging it. Since there is no point in challenging it, he might as well benefit from it and take the job. Faced with betrayal from her beloved brother, Sylvia screams and loses control, insulting him. Lou's defense, in turn, becomes harsher: "According to your screwed-up logic, anything I get in this world is because I'm not a girl. And anything you don't get is because you are. Jesus" (153). At this point, Lou begins to blur the boundaries between his privilege and his merit, distorting Sylvia's argument. His anger at his sister's relentless attempts to keep him accountable, rather than accept the result secured by the male supremacy, catalyzes the growth of his burgeoning sense of superiority. After Sylvia implores him to turn down the job a few more times, he ends up repeatedly dehumanizing her:

> 'Pop was right,' he said, filled with the absolution from responsibility that condescension always implies. 'You're an animal. You tried to get me in trouble with Pop, and now you want to take my job away.... I've made it now.... I've got all the connections. And I'm going straight to the top where bitches like you can't come near me.' (154)

Lou's behavior is in accordance with the patriarchal power relationships. Sylvia's requests to act differently repeatedly show him the agency he has in the situation, even though the system of power attempts to mask itself and make him its natural beneficiary. Her actions make Lou uncomfortable, enrage him and make him enact his dominance, even though up until this moment he has looked up to his sister.

As Lou betrays his sister, he begins to use every advantage he has over her in social and family structure to keep her in the inferior position. This is first marked by his shift of loyalties, the move away from Sylvia and towards their sexist father. It manifests quickly by false accusations of "trying to get his job away," which becomes his official line of defense in this conflict. Later, Sylvia seeks resolution through a mediation by their parents. She has been, however, outrun by Lou, who has already convinced the rest of the family to his version of the story:

> 'He told us what you did to him... you told Lou he had no talent? You said such a horrible thing to your brother? I shouldn't even let you in the house.'
>
> 'That is not what happened,' I yelled. Yelling confirmed, of course, my monstrosity. That I could be annihilated by their hate proved that it was true…. 'Lou violated our relationship just to get ahead in the job. And it's not going to get him anywhere anyway because he's not even qualified and can't pull it off. Then he went running to you to cover it up.'
>
> ….
>
> 'He needs money because he's gonna have a family.'
>
> 'Anything your brother does,' Mama said flatly, 'is all right with us.' (184)

While earlier Lou used to resist his family to protect Sylvia, there never was anything at stake for him personally. Actually, he was rewarded for such behavior, as his superior position in the family was secure, and Sylvia responded to protection with trust and help. Once she becomes an obstacle, however, Lou immediately uses the power he has as a man and his position in the family to stop her. The parents, who could become mediators, are partial to Lou as the one in whom they see the potential of following the heterosexual script of marriage and children. This, by itself, becomes an argument that justifies his betrayal. Sylvia's resistance is constructed as an act of abuse, while the actual violation is kept invisible by the family.

In *Rat Bohemia*, which is Schulman's sixth novel, David, a Person With AIDS, repeatedly tries to make his family acknowledge the epidemic by telling them incessantly about his dying friends. They usually do not respond in any way, since their homophobia makes acknowledgment of relationships David has with other gay men uncomfortable for them. However, in one scene his sister grieves the death of her elderly graduate school professor. The mother reacts to this loss empathically, saying: "You've had more people die in your life than anyone I know" (87). This strikes David as blatantly untrue, but he does not even manage to respond before he is faced with

his mother's accusation: "You mean the AIDS thing.... You're always looking for ammunition against us" (87). David's sister's loss is a part of the heterosexual world, as professor-student relationships are familiar to it. David's countless losses of other People With AIDS, however, are outside of the heterosexual script, because they were the relationships he had built in the gay community. His intervention would render this discrepancy visible, which is why the mother anticipates and undercuts his possible response and immediately blames him for making the rest of the family uncomfortable. This way, David becomes responsible for the tension, and the homophobia within the family is protected.

Internalized Homophobia and Alignment with Power

Deflecting through accusation in response to demand for accountability is not practiced by straight people exclusively. As Schulman writes:

> The perpetuation of homophobic practice is repeatedly blamed on gay people themselves. We are depicted as being inherently deserving of punishment, even though, in actuality, we have not done anything wrong.... Sadly, this paradigm confuses gay people ourselves. Conversely, when we insist on inclusion, full recognition, and access to process, we can get internally pathologized as 'militants,' 'activists,' and 'stalkers,' even by each other. (*Ties That Bind* 33)

Just like Lou aligned with power when such action was beneficial for him, gay people often act in a way that reinforces the heterosexual supremacy when their own vested interests in its power relations are endangered. These interests may be fueled by their resistance to challenging homophobia in their own family or their sense of superiority over politically active gay people enacted through disowning of gay identity politics. In such cases, the accusation is also used as a defensive mechanism.

This is, at least partly, the case of Muriel Kay Starr, a lesbian novelist in *Rat Bohemia*. Muriel writes popular fiction that does not touch upon the theme of homosexuality in any way, and her own sexuality is carefully erased from her writing or even blurbs of her books. Muriel had a feud with David, the previously mentioned gay man with AIDS, who was also a writer, albeit an unknown one. After his death, she tells the story of their friendship, giving a detailed and convincing account of his jealousy due to her success and his failure, ascribing the negative emotion to David's sexism. However, when the character who listens to this story recalls the actual contents of David's complaints, which was that Muriel's work was closeted, the author becomes defensive:

> 'I am so out. It says there that I've written for *Genre* magazine.'
> 'But what straight person is going to have ever heard of *Genre* magazine?'
> 'Don't tell me what to do . . . David was jealous. You read my book before you complain. It's not about that. My books are not about homosexuality. They're about family. I wasn't even that famous yet and he was terribly jealous.' (170)

Muriel's defense is proven untruthful by the end of the book, as its appendix comprises four chapters of her novel, which tells the stories of gay characters in *Rat Bohemia*,

only turned into straight people. Thus, her fiction is based on the lives of gay people but carefully adjusted to cater to the heteronormative public. When faced with a challenge, Muriel deflects the criticism by scapegoating David as sexist.

Such a gesture performed by one gay person on another is not uncommon in Schulman's works. In fact, her argument in *Ties That Bind* is that since "the family is the place where most gay people are first instructed in homophobia" (32), gay people learn there that they can dehumanize one another. This early experience teaches them that they are inferior, but also that all gay people may be treated as inferior and cannot demand accountability. This translates into the way in which people treat each other in same-sex couples:

> All homosexual lovers have watched the person who has given them pleasure, friendship, caring, love and kindness be repeatedly humiliated by their family, by cultural representation, and/or by the state. So, when the time came when it was convenient to pretend away any responsibility to that person, the simplest thing to do was to imitate the cruelty they had already always endured. (82-83)

The systematic oppression is invisible and often accepted to some extent by gay people themselves. While the heterosexual supremacy often punishes and excludes them, sometimes it may also benefit them, at least in short term. In such cases, they too tend to act as if the same-sex relationships they have been building, and their partners, did not matter. Since there used to be no structures, legal or familial, to obstruct the dehumanization of a lover, partners in couples were extremely vulnerable to each other.

Such is the story of Anna, the protagonist of Schulman's fifth novel, *Empathy*. In one of her psychoanalytic sessions, Anna discloses to her therapist: "I never had a lover who would let me meet her parents." The reasons for such situation varied from partner to partner, including orphanhood and being disowned, but internalized homophobia of her lovers appears among them: "But there were also times, Doc, when the women were… ashamed of me. It was because they were ashamed of me. Because they thought I was less. Because they didn't want to make their families uncomfortable, so they made me uncomfortable instead" (74). Then she goes on to describe the time when she set out on the journey through the United States with her lover, Sarah. During the journey, Sarah cheated on her sleeping with men. By the time the two got closer to Sarah's family home, she "had gone straight conveniently" (75) and they were no longer lovers. Sarah was too scared to come out to her homophobic family, and she acted it out on her girlfriend.

Another vivid example of such mistreatment between gay lovers is presented in Schulman's eleventh novel, *Maggie Terry*. Its eponymous protagonist is a lesbian who has been institutionalized for her alcohol and drug addiction. She used to be in a long-time relationship with a woman named Frances and they decided to have a child. Frances is the biological mother of their daughter, Alina, but the couple raised her together. After Maggie has been institutionalized, Frances won full custody of their child. Since Maggie sought necessary help after Frances's intervention, she believes that if she fights her addiction, she could still be present in Alina's life. However, by the time she is out, Frances has moved in with another woman and has no intention of letting Maggie anywhere near their child. The women were not married, so there are

no legal grounds on which the protagonist could fight for visitation rights. No one in Frances's family is willing to intervene on Maggie's behalf, either, because families do not consider the partners of gay kin to be relatives. In *Maggie Terry*, Schulman represents how partners can use both social and legal norms of mistreating gay people against each other.

This particular dynamics is, in Schulman's opinion, the actual reason for advocating gay marriage. Since gay activism began to focus on marriage equality, it tended to depict the oppressive results of state ignoring same-sex relationships, such as the inability to visit hospitals or inherit property. However, Schulman argues that the demand for gay marriage stems from a fear of being mistreated by other gay people. "Gay marriage does not so much protect the couple from the state, as it protects the couple from each other. It is a third party acknowledgment and recognition that people who have shared love have basic responsibilities toward each other" (118). That idea is represented in the author's ninth novel, *The Mere Future*, which is set in the unspecified future where same-sex marriage is allowed. Its narrator has been in a relationship for a long time, and she proposes to her girlfriend, Nadine, who responds by saying: "I'm old school... I'd rather live in sin." (162) However, her refusal is not a mere whim; rather, it is a way of keeping her options open. In the course of the novel, Nadine moves away from initial loyal and close relationship and establishes a distance that seems to lead towards the couple's breakup. She becomes increasingly disinterested with the narrator and briefly falls in love with another woman. Nadine's refusal to marry the narrator is a sign of her preference to remain unaccountable for the way she behaves towards her partner.

Chosen Families and Uncomfortable Love

At times, however, Schulman employs more optimistic depictions of her queer characters' relationships. Even though gay people are often being mistreated by each other and by their families, there is a space for negotiation and resistance to the homophobic paradigm. This is linked to the idea of gay families, or chosen families, which emerged in the gay community in the 1980s. Kath Weston defines them in *Families We Choose* this way: "Gay or chosen families might incorporate friends, lovers, or children, in any combination. Organized through ideologies of love, choice, and creation, gay families have been defined through a contrast with what many gay men and lesbians in the Bay Area called 'straight,' 'biological,' or 'blood' family" (27). While biological families are organized by the principle of consanguinity, gay families, understood as networks of close relationships, are organized by a principle of choice. Weston links this development to the emergence of the practice of coming out to the families after the Stonewall Inn riots. Relatives' response to such revelations was often unpredictable and gay people were anxious that their families would disown them. Interestingly, the very idea that one can lose one's family made the way kinship is constructed more visible. An act of disowning became a real possibility in the lives of many gay people. Since such action can sever the ties of kinship, it follows that not only blood ties make a family. Conversely, one can also consider people with whom there is no blood tie to be their family. This caused gay people to notice the role the idea of volition plays in the notion of kinship.

This kind of voluntary kinship is the space in which Schulman has repeatedly represented possible resistance to familial homophobia and its consequences. *The Child* shows the positions of loyalty and scapegoating in stark contrast as Stew's story comes to an end. The legal team defending David, Stew's adult lover, comprises two gay lawyers: Hockey and Eva. The former is a Person With AIDS, who desperately tries to cling to his status and needs to win a case for his own comfort. The latter takes the case because she feels a bond of kinship with David, whom she considers a victim of the unjust system, as his punishment for an affair with a minor might be severely aggravated because he is gay. In the course of the plot Stew, driven mad by his family, kills his nephew. Hockey's plan is to scapegoat the boy with a line of defense that would exonerate David, but worsen Stew's position in the murder trial. Eva disagrees with this tactic on ethical grounds: "Hockey wanted to argue in court that Stew was responsible for his actions, in order to get David off the hook. But that was not the truth. Stew was driven to murder. But not by Dave. He was driven to it by people who would never be put on trial. Eva couldn't pretend it was any other way" (255). Both lawyers know well that it is the homophobic family who is really responsible for the tragedy. However, Hockey is completely aware that enactment of familial homophobia is considered natural in the system of heterosexual supremacy, and thus the family cannot be held responsible. His focus is winning the case, and so he is willing to help with scapegoating for the benefit of his own agenda. Eva, on the other hand, stands her moral ground and develops a sense of kinship with the boy: "His family didn't want him. He's gay. Other gay people are his family. Stew is our child" (229). Since he does not have the protection of his family because he is gay, Eva considers it her and other queer people's moral responsibility to protect him and include him in an imagined gay family. This gesture of inclusion is resistant to the ideology of familial homophobia. Eva chooses to keep perceiving Stew as human, and she considers his fate just as important as anyone else's, even though she stands to gain nothing from that, and might lose a lot.

Perhaps the most explicit example of a chosen family as a site for unconditional love is the conclusion of Schulman's tenth novel, *The Cosmopolitans*. As previously described, it is set in the 1950s and its plot covers the spinsterhood of Bette, who has been scapegoated and disowned by her family. She shares a profound friendship with her door-to-door neighbor, Earl, who is a single black gay man. In the course of the novel Earl manages to gain some currency by pretending he is heterosexual and shuns Bette when she wants to discuss the subject. After the situation enabling Earl's lie ends, he comes to his friend and apologizes. Healing is enabled by Earl's willingness to admit his fault and complicity in the heterosexual supremacy, and Bette's openness to listen. This idea is articulated in a manifesto-like passage in the middle of the conflict that represents Bette's thoughts as she grapples with Earl's shunning:

> There are many different kinds of love. True, novels and cinema, the work of culture and commerce, have prepared all to believe that only two really matter: the romantic pairing of a man and woman and the love between parent and child. Every message trumpets these as everlasting, of central importance, and beyond evaluation or reproach. But in Bette's experience, neither claim was true….
>
> 'Love,' in these examples, was an enactment of value. It was an assertion of place in the social order. It meant everything on the outside and little within.

> Bette looked inside herself and knew for a fact that the love she had for Earl and he for her—the years of loyalty, the time, the confiding, the rooting for, the thinking of, and now her unfaltering faith that he could ultimately do the right thing, the acceptance of conflict, and the refusal to shun him—that all this was more powerful than the twisting and discarding that took place between blood relations. Than the deceptions that transpired between lovers. She knew that this love should be the center of novels and poems and plays, operas and such, but it couldn't be. Because then all the falsity would be exposed in comparison—to love when you are not supposed to is so much deeper than to love as instructed to do. (239-241)

While cultural representations of love center on familial ties of parenthood and heterosexual marriage, Bette considers them to be too implicated in relations of status, custom, propriety and social currency to offer unconditional love. In contrast, voluntary kinship ties are not supported by any external incentives, and there is a possibility they may rely predominantly on mutual affection. This is why Bette's family can shun her throughout her life since admitting wrongdoing would cost them currency, make them uncomfortable, and question their superiority; and this is why Earl, on the other hand, can apologize and be forgiven once he realizes he does not need to be superior.

Conclusion

In *Ties That Bind*, Sarah Schulman analyzes the mechanisms of familial homophobia. She claims that the experience of being mistreated by a family is common to almost all gay people, which is reflected in the ubiquity of this experience among characters in her novels. Schulman pays particular attention to the exchange that occurs when people who are not prejudiced themselves, sacrifice the relationship with their gay relatives in favor of social currency. She represents this mechanism and shows how questioning of such behavior, as well as any other mechanism of familial homophobia, causes scapegoating and shunning. Because homosexual people learn in their families that they are inferior, and they can be mistreated, it is often the case that her queer characters use supremacist assumptions to their own advantage, at the expense of other gay people. However, chosen families that queer people form are less invested in the systems of power, and thus Schulman represents them as a potential site for unconditional love that may be a space of dissent from the familial homophobia and its consequences. The author suggests that it is such unwavering loyalty that may fuel resistance to the lure of rewards offered by the heterosexual supremacy and transform the unequal power relations.

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Marta Rzepecka

The Rhetorical Construction of the American Intervention in Libya: A Pentadic Analysis of President Barack Obama's Address to the Nation on March 28, 2011

Abstract: The article focuses on the rhetoric of President Barack Obama regarding the US intervention in Libya in 2011. It challenges the view that Obama was changing the course of US foreign relations and shows that his words worked to represent actions that made it impossible to shift the direction of US foreign policy. Analysis reveals that the president spoke of alternatives to military action but his language served to justify the use of force in the region. He called for action through an integrated international framework but his message was designed to diminish the US profile in public opinion and not deem the US as a controlling power. Consequently, the article suggests that mysticism provides the structural basis for Obama's perception of reality and presents options for reactions to an international crisis.

Keywords: Barack Obama, Libyan crisis, US foreign policy, crisis rhetoric, pentadic analysis

Introduction

What was involved when President Barack Obama said that he had used force in Libya and when he explained the reasons for the use of America's military power in a foreign crisis? Paraphrasing the opening question of Kenneth Burke's seminal work, *A Grammar of Motives,* this article asks how President Obama used language to carry out his military agenda in Libya in 2011. It seeks to present a Burkean methodology of approaching the president's words and the consequent actions during the Libyan crisis.

Previous studies have examined how presidents speak about using force in a foreign crisis and whether they make a compelling case for military action. It is a much-debated question whether crisis is a rhetorical creation or situational construction and whether presidential rhetoric constructs crisis or is constructed as a response to an event already seen as a crisis. According to Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., crisis that "does not involve an external military attack on the United States is a political event rhetorically created by the President" (8). Similarly, for Amos Kiewe, crisis occurs "when the president chooses to speak on an issue of critical dimensions, whether to promote or to minimize the perception of a crisis" (xxiii). Consequently, crisis rhetoric is "the discourse initiated by decision makers in an attempt to communicate to various constituents that a certain development is critical and to suggest a certain course of action to remedy the critical situation" (Kiewe xvii). By contrast, Jim A. Kuypers argues for "understanding crises as situationally bound and as such delimited by context (the discursive and material surroundings) acting upon text, and text upon context, within a limited period of time" (18).

Significant discussion has also occurred over the typology of crisis rhetoric. Richard A. Cherwitz and Kenneth S. Zagacki draw a distinction between consummatory rhetoric "constituting the sole response of [the US] government to states of emergency" and justificatory rhetoric "accompanying, justifying and rationalizing specific overt military moves undertaken in response to crises" (307). Likewise, Bonnie J. Dow differentiates between epideictic rhetoric which serves to "promote continuity, restore communal feeling, and... reconcile the audience to a new situation" and deliberative rhetoric which is designed to show that policies enacted to handle them are "expedient, reasoned and prudent" (301-303). By contrast, James W. Pratt (202) and Windt (9-12) argue for a conception of crisis rhetoric as a homogenous type and identify its characteristic features. Robert Ivie's rhetorical investigations extend the argument to presidential war language. Studying presidential war messages, the author argues that American war rhetoric reflects continuity of "an enduring, relatively uniform vocabulary of motives for war" ("Presidential Motives for War" 340). He maintains that essential characteristics and contrasts "permeate the substance and style of the call-to-arms" ("Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War" 279). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's analysis supports the position, indicating that presidential war rhetoric manifests "recurring elements" (104-105). Edward J. Lordan concurs and finds in his exploration that presidential war messages "employ a number of traditional themes and rhetorical forms" (10).

A common denominator in the above scholarly conversations about the nature and classification of presidential crisis/war rhetoric is the issue of rationale for the use of force. Some writers locate presidential justification in a large frame of rhetorical action; others prioritize the role of presidential substantiation in a process leading to an armed conflict. For example, Campbell and Jamieson see the rationale for war as one of five elements shaping a specific rhetorical type (105-112), while Ivie considers the pattern of justification to be the determining factor of a rhetorical act ("Presidential Motives for War" 337-345). When addressing presidential crisis rhetoric specifically, researchers, too, analyze presidential substantiation as either a line of argumentation developed in a large context of reasoning or a strategic task dictating language choices. Windt, for instance, views presidential explanation of military decisions as one of three constituents of a rhetorical form invoked in situations declared to be critical (9-12), while Dan F. Hahn (15-22) and Pratt (195-202) approach presidential reasons for the use of force as the organizing principle of the presidential rhetorical performance.

This article falls within the strand of research that focuses on presidential rhetoric of justification. It argues that although President Obama said that he was changing the course of US foreign relations, his words worked to represent actions that made it impossible to shift the direction of US foreign policy. He stressed that there were alternatives to the use of force but his language served to justify the choice of military action. Consequently, the article contests the claim that Obama's position on Libya was realistic and suggests, instead, that his way of thinking and acting in the crisis reveals a mystical approach to the challenges posed by critical situations.

Research conducted on what presidents say to substantiate their use-of-force agenda and how they say it is revealing of their political approach to foreign policy making. Ivie points to presidential war vocabulary as a source of knowledge about

presidential war motives (345). The present analysis relates to this point and claims that studying presidential crisis speeches while paying special attention to examining justifiable causes for the use of force facilitates our understanding of factors behind presidential performance in critical situations. Research along these lines gives insight into both the political self of the president and the structure and function of the rhetorical forms which expresses them. Rhetorical analyses of this nature also provide a lens to understand the American national ethos and perspective on foreign policy as it is shaped by a US sitting president and its long-term consequences.

Kenneth Burke's pentad has long been used to analyze language's function in understanding political action, and thus motivation. It has helped to explain and reveal Senator Edward Kennedy's behavior regarding the events surrounding the death of Miss Mary Jo Kopechne (Ling), Ronald Reagan's performance during the Republican primary debates (Blankenship, Fine and Davis), President Reagan's reaction to the events in Lebanon and Grenade (Birdsell), Congressman George Hansen's attempt for reelection (Kelley), Quintus Fabius Maximus's challenge of Publius Cornelius Scipio's proposal to invade Africa (Rountree), President Barack Obama's 2008 speech on race (Xiaoyan and Street), and President Donald Trump's narrative on Flickr (Chun). Applying Burke's pentad to Obama's response to the Libyan crisis, this analysis joins the scholarly conversation about presidential political performance. The findings advance the understanding of the president's decision- and action-taking regarding Libya, exposing the link between his words and actions and the motives behind them.

As defined by Burke, the pentad is a set of five terms used to describe human action and motivation: "the *act*" "names what took place, in thought or deed," "the *scene*" provides "the background of the act" and is "the situation in which it occurred," "the *agent*" is "the person or kind of person" who "performed the act," "the *agency*" is "the means or instruments [the person] used," and "the *purpose*" is the reason for the act (xv). According to Burke, the pentad functions to "inquire into the purely internal relationships which the five terms bear to one another, considering their possibilities of transformation, their range of permutations and combinations – and then to see how these various resources figure in actual statements about human motives" (xvi).

This analysis follows a three-step process. First, it identifies the terms of the pentad to identify Obama's perspective on the situation in Libya. Second, it examines the relationships among the terms to suggest the dominant term and learn which aspect of the situation the president saw as the most important and to which philosophical system it corresponded. Third, it speculates what the driving force was for Obama to act in response to the situation. The speech selected for critical analysis is the Address to the Nation on the Situation in Libya delivered on 28 March 2011 at the National Defense University at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C.

Analysis

Act. As explained by Sonja K. Foss, the act is "the rhetor's presentation of the major action taken by the protagonist or agent" (458). Broadening the term, Pat Arneson adds that it is any conscious or purposive action (8). In the case of this analysis, the act is the US military intervention in Libya. As presented in the speech, the act is legal

and limited. It is authorized by the United Nations Security Council, it is mandated by the international community of NATO allies, the Libyan opposition, and the Arab League, and it is proportional in duration and scope to the imminence and scale of the situation in which it takes place. The act organizes the speech. Discussion of past and planned actions guides and orders the speech's ideas. Introduced in relation to pragmatic politics, the act is reformulated to suggest concern with political idealism.

Scene. According to Foss, the scene is "the ground, location, or situation in which the rhetor says the act takes place" (459). According to Andrew King, the scene includes "the context," "the surrounding environment," "the circumstances" (169). "How the scene is designated," as Arneson explains, "indicates the scope of the analysis" and "influences the way in which the other terms in the pentad are defined" (8). In the present analysis, the scene is Libya. It is described as a regime ruled by a head of state who condones exploitation, murder, terror, assault, destruction, brutality, and repression. Descriptions of the regime's methods are reinforced with a comment of an unidentified Libyan who compares living in Libya to a 40-year nightmare. In the descriptions, the scene works to contextualize and facilitate the decision to intervene and is maintained by perpetuating the idea that military action is part of America's responsibility as a world leader. Emphasizing US leadership serves to divert the attention of public opinion away from the risks and costs of the use of force and toward the need for such action.

Agent. For King, the agent is "the person or persons who perform the actions" (170). For Foss, it involves the "main character of the situation." It is "the primary subject of the speech" (458). In the case of this speech, the agent is the United States under the presidency of Barack Obama. The distinction between the United States and Barack Obama is blurred where the issue of leadership is concerned and it is made clearer when matters of personal beliefs and attitude are discussed. From the start, the agent is referred to as simultaneously mindful of the risks and costs of intervention and of the need for action. The agent attends to the questions about action in Libya and the role of the US in policing the world wherever violence occurs. Obama positions himself as the agent who holds responsibility to act, power to authorize military action, and an obligation to account for the decision to use force. He portrays the United States as the agent driven by a sense of mission, guided by a sense of right and wrong, and convinced of its ability and indispensability to stop world violence and ensure global security. It should be noted, though, that Obama specifically mentions in the speech that he chooses to use force only when there is violence that threatens US values, when military action is demanded by the people, and when US interests are at a crossroads with those of the regime. This ternary is important in informing public opinion of the agent's motivation. The three conditions must be met for the president to use military interventions.

Agency. As King explains, the agency is "the means the agent [uses] to do the deed.... It is the method, the technique, the apparatus, or the institution we use to get the thing done" (170). In this analysis, the agency for the US intervention in Libya is force. It is portrayed as a means used only when all nonmilitary measures have been exhausted and when credibility of international institutions has been questioned. These portrayals are reinforced by assurances of the US reluctance to take military

action. Emphasis is placed on the conduciveness of contextual factors, international consensus to act, and probability of a successful outcome. Sub-agencies also function in the speech. These include the US presidency, which gives the president the power to act and implies the support of American public opinion for the action, the UN Security Council Resolution, which provides the legal basis for the intervention, NATO-based coalition, which carries out the operation, and the Arab countries, which take direct part in the operation.

Purpose. Foss explains that the purpose is "what the rhetor suggests the agent intends to accomplish by performing the act. It is the rhetor's account of the protagonist's intentions, feelings, and values.... [I]t is the reason for action that is specified by the rhetor for the agent" (459). Arneson extends the explanation to include "the agent's private reason for performing the act. Although it may be overt, it is more often unknown to an outside observer" (8). In the case of this analysis, end of violence in Libya is given as a reason for action. A point about the US mission in Iraq is made to ensure that that the objective of US-intervention in a regime change in Libya is not considered. The goal of ending violence and crimes against civilians serves US strategic interests and justifies the president's selectivity in the use of force when arguments for military action in cases of similar crises are presented. Moreover, a higher purpose is present. It is implied that the Libyan crisis posits as a key example of the president retaining his credibility and upholding his pledge to keep the US foreign military missions limited. Moreover, it secures the position of the US as a global leader as Obama repeatedly emphasizes the success of the US capability of carrying out the operation in Libya.

Ratios. As explained by Foss, "a ratio is a pairing of two of the elements in the pentad in order to discover the relationship between them and the effect that each has on the other." Pairing terms in ratios allows to find the term that controls and defines the other terms in the pentad and thus "provides insight into what dimension of the situation the rhetor privileges or sees as most important" (460-461). In this examination, the suggested dominant term is the purpose.

Obama's description of the US mission in Libya is grounded in its purpose. From the start, the president links the act to the purpose, arguing that "when [US] interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act. That's what happened in Libya over the course of these last 6 weeks." He presents his reasoning that "America has an important strategic interest in preventing Qadhafi from overrunning those who oppose him" and that "a failure to act in Libya would have carried a far greater price for America." Although Obama states that US actions in Libya tangibly helped to stop violence, avert a massacre, and prevent a humanitarian crisis, in his description, US efforts, in essence, serve US interests. The president's perspective functions rhetorically to favor national over foreign cause, domestic over foreign benefits.

In the description of the scene, there is also the implicit assumption that the act serves the purpose. According to Clarke Rountree and John Rountree, the scene controls the act and is constructed as requiring action (358). This analysis takes advantage of what the pentadic analysis offers and suggests an understanding of the terms and the relationships between them with attention focused on the purpose. From this perspective, the description of the Libyan regime drives the purpose. In Obama's

narrative, he reports that "Innocent people were targeted for killing.... Journalists were arrested, sexually assaulted, and killed.... Military jets and helicopter gunships were unleashed upon people who had no means to defend themselves against assaults from the air." Next, the president warns that "Qadhafi declared he would show no mercy to his own people. He compared them to rats and threatened to go door to door to inflict punishment" and reminds that in the past, Qadhafi had "[hanged] civilians in the streets and [killed] over a thousand people in a single day." Finally, Obama declares that "as President, [he] refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action" and responds to "those who doubted [US] capacity to carry out this operation" that "The United States of America has done what we said we would do." The president juxtaposes public opinion with the regime's tactics to generate support for his proposed counteraction. He predicts terrible consequences to rally people to the cause. The scene's description shapes public opinion's approach to and perspective on military action. It becomes a means to an end. It excuses the action, justifies the agency, and motivates with a clear purpose.

The agent described is one subdued by that purpose. The act is presented as a means of the purpose. The decision to take action involves little choice. For Obama, defending "[US] people, [US] homeland, [US] allies, and [US] core interests" means, in essence, fulfilling the duties of office of the US president. "As Commander in Chief," Obama declares, "I have no greater responsibility than keeping this country safe." "As President," he states, "my immediate concern [is] the safety of our citizens[.]" Obama's sense of duty necessitates action. The president positions himself in obligation to act. The purpose to serve the country controls him. Moreover, it mitigates his responsibility for action and, by extension, for the means taken to carry it out. Added to this are matters of America's leadership. Obama reminds that "For generations, the United States of America has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom," "for generations, we have done the hard work of protecting our own people, as well as millions around the globe." He adds, however, that "We have done so because we know that our own future is safer, our own future is brighter, if more of mankind can live with the bright light of freedom and dignity." If public opinion accepts this perspective, it cannot question either the reasons for US actions in Libya or means used to carry the operation out. Instead, public opinion has to conclude that the US intervention is needed and justified. Defying the action would mean defying what America stands for and benefits from. This indicates that the purpose ensures that US ideals and values prevail and that the US cause wins in public opinion.

If the higher purpose is the guiding principle behind US actions, the agency is of secondary importance. Obama declares that the US is "reluctant to use force to solve the world's many challenges" but holds that "To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader" in Libya "would have been a betrayal of who we are." He emphasizes that the US will transfer responsibility and command in Libya to NATO but fails to mention that NATO is an organization politically and militarily dominated by the US, financed and commanded largely by the US. He insists that the US mission in Libya is "limited" and "narrowly focused on saving lives" but speaks of continuing "to pursue the broader goal of a Libya that belongs not to a dictator, but to its people." There is a

clear attempt to diminish the role of the agency in the US mission in Libya. Obama tries to shift public opinion's attention away from the risks involved in any military action towards the objectives that such action can achieve. Inconsistencies in assumptions reveal the president's will to reduce reliance on the military, on the one hand, and his strong awareness of indispensability of the US military in resolving world conflicts, on the other.

Motive. For Foss, motive explains the rhetor's action (459). For Arneson, it uncovers an often unconscious reason for performing the action (8). Discovery of motive for a particular rhetorical act helps to understand how the rhetor perceives a given situation and how he wants to react to it (Foss 461). In cases in which the purpose controls the act, mysticism serves as the system that generates suggestions for the rhetor's perception of reality and options available to him for reaction. This philosophy, as Foss explains, emphasizes "the element of unity.... Identification often becomes so strong that the individual is unified with some... universal purpose" (461). Similarly, King clarifies that texts concerned with mysticism "feature ends rather than means." They "speak of acts as small parts of a much larger system," present decisions "in terms of a larger program" (171). Mysticism, as King adds, marks a point of transition in times of confusion and compensates for doubts about direction (173). The proposed assumption that emerges from the present analysis in which the motive of the act is situated in the purpose is that Obama wants public opinion to align with the view of the world in which the US represents a unique spirit and has a special mission in the world. Positioning the obligation argument as the purpose behind his actions allows him to justify US involvement in another conflict in a Muslim country, satisfy the divisions in opinions about this engagement among the American public and within his administration, and embrace the contradictions in his own statements regarding the issue.

As Gallup polls administered on 21 March 2011 demonstrate, in the face of the conflict, majorities of young Libyans believed that they could help their country make substantial progress but they were the least likely to express the belief when compared with other young people living in Arab countries. Similarly, in the polls conducted on 22 March 2011, more Americans were found approving than disapproving of US efforts in Libya but the level of approval was the lowest when compared to support for other US military actions. Americans were divided over the role of the US in this campaign, with a plurality opposing the US taking action as a leader or sharing major responsibilities with its allies in Libya.

Beyond public opinion concerns there is the political debate between members of the Obama administration, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushes for action and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates urges caution and warns of risks involved in the undertaking. Obama himself is at least ambivalent about the goal and scope of the US operation and fails to provide a clear and concrete rationale for the campaign. He assures that "The United States will not be able to dictate the pace and scope of this change [in Libya]. Only the people of the region can do that," but signals that "we can make a difference. I believe that this movement of change cannot be turned back and that we must stand alongside those who believe in the same core principles that have guided us through many storms." He admits that "broadening [US] military mission

to include regime change would be a mistake," but makes statements along the lines of Qadhafi "[needs] to step down from power" which raises doubts about the limits of the task. He agrees that "America cannot use our military wherever repression occurs," but persuades "that cannot be an argument for never acting on behalf of what's right."

Playing to the obligation argument, Obama influences public opinion's interpretation of and its response to the situation in Libya. In his confrontation with an audience divided over the operation and his handling of it—the results of the Gallup polls taken on 29 March 2011 found that Americans were evenly divided in their reactions to the president's response to Libya—he adopts an attitude that means to attract majority public support and increase his approval rating. As this analysis suggests, the choice of approach appears to be rooted in the purpose, one that guides US actions and expresses its values and ideals. In seeking unity in the Libyan mission, it is speculated, however, that the president does not just want the American public to commit itself to this operation, but, more importantly, calculates to win support for future and broader US military campaigns. A variation of pentadic identification in which US interventions in foreign conflicts function as the act, foreign crisis situations as the scene, the US as the agent, US military power as the agency, and end of violence as the purpose indicate the motive of maintaining the superiority of US power and global leadership. If an act suggests the concept of an agent, and the concept of an agent suggests the concept of a scene in which the act takes place (Arneson 9), the implication is that the US will continue to intervene in foreign conflicts. From this perceptive, the US engagement in Libya serves as one operation to shape the interpretation of another military campaign and the Libyan crisis represents a small scene which takes place in a larger international conflict context.

Conclusion

If this variation is correct, then it suggests some implications concerning Obama's foreign policy making and the principles and values that inform the audience about it. First, the president's insistence on restraint in military action and development of alternative measures for managing conflict situations lacks practical value. His assurance to deal with crises through nonmilitary means goes beyond his ability to turn US foreign policy around and articulate a framework that matches the means to the challenges. Efforts to this end are largely limited by a long-standing interpretation of America's global role already constrained by who the US is and what it does. Obama may speak of pursuit of nonmilitary conflict resolution but his words do not align with his belief in the US as the world's most powerful nation with unmatched military capabilities and unshakable responsibility to act when called upon to help. Second, the president's promotion of the importance of international cooperation yields to the imperative to uphold the US supremacy. His calls to act within an integrated international approach do not seem to convey the intention to lower US global activity and importance or give up its controlling power over world developments. Instead, they appear to be part of the communication strategy designed to diminish the US profile. Obama's assertions of relegating America's participation in Libya to a secondary role are made to move US policy closer to where public opinion stands on the issue and not further away from where America resides

on the world stage. If seen from the mystic philosophical perspective, the US always matters most and its actions always make the most difference.

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Izabella Kimak

(Non)Places of Bangalore: Where the East Meets the West in Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*

Abstract: This essay constitutes an attempt at reading Bharati Mukherjee's 2011 novel, *Miss New India*, through the prism of spatial locations depicted in it. Unlike many of the texts in the late South Asian American author's oeuvre, which depict migration from the East to the West, *Miss New India* is located exclusively within South Asia. This notwithstanding, the novel focuses on the impact the West used to and continues to exert on the East. I would like to argue that through her depictions of places and non-places of Bangalore—the novel's primary location—Mukherjee points to the spatial interconnectedness of the East and the West as well as to the temporal interconnectedness of the colonial past and postcolonial, late-capitalist present.

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee, *Miss New India*, Re-Orientalism, non-places, postcolonialism, New India narratives

Bharati Mukherjee, a recently deceased American author of South Asian descent, functioned as a spokesperson for the first generation of South Asian American writers, despite her own negation of hyphenation and a desire to be perceived simply as an American author, sentiments expressed in her essay "Beyond Multiculturalism: Surviving the Nineties." Mukherjee was moving in her literary oeuvre back and forth between America and India, oftentimes juxtaposing the two locations in her narratives of immigration. The binary construction of space—the depiction of the East as the opposite of the West—has in fact been the reason why Mukherjee's texts—and texts by other South Asian American authors, for that matter—have been criticized by scholars for perpetuating the belief in the existence of fossilized, essentialized differences between the East and the West. Such a positioning of the East and the West as binary opposites is nothing new, of course. It was already in the 1970s that in his seminal study *Orientalism* Edward Said critiqued such a binary way of thinking and defined Orientalism as a "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (3). He concluded that "in short Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3), claiming that "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). Even though Said's study concentrated mostly on the unequal relationship between the West and the Middle East, his theorization of the East/West dichotomy seems to apply as well to the relationship between the West and the Indian Subcontinent. Several decades after Said's book was published, already in the twenty-first century, Lisa Lau coined the term "Re-Orientalism" to refer to the phenomenon of stereotyping India characteristic, in her view, of much South Asian diasporic literature that was in essence trying to capitalize on essentalizing cultural differences between the East and the West,

thus, in a way, re-Orientalizing the Orient.[1] The fact that literary representations of immigration from the East to the West perpetuate the dichotomous relation between the East and the West is also corroborated by Inderpal Grewal, who in her analysis of Asian immigrant women's narratives penned at the end of the twentieth century claims that in these texts "the female migrant [is] construed through the process of migration as a movement from incarceration within a patriarchal culture [of the East] to freedom within American liberal civil society" (63). Grewal goes on to claim that said narratives are "framed in the binary oppositions between the United States as first world site of freedom and 'Asia' as third world site of repression" (63), and she presents Mukherjee's famous novel *Jasmine* as an example of such a representation.[2]

Mukherjee's last novel, *Miss New India*, published in 2011, may be considered a corrective to the view presented above, disregarding for the purposes of this paper the question if such a view is correct with regard to Mukherjee's oeuvre in the first place.[3] Although *Miss New India* is set exclusively on the South Asian Subcontinent, first in the town of Gauripur in the north and then in the sprawling southern metropolis of Bangalore, the US is not completely absent in the novel. American influences take the shape of anthropologists or photographers who serve as a source of inspiration for the main character, but also—in a more sinister way—of Bangalore's late-capitalist workplaces outsourced from the US. It is my contention in this paper that through the description of private and (semi)public spaces—the former including residential buildings, the latter coffee shops or offices—Mukherjee shows not only the spatial interconnectedness of the East and the West, which would resist the binary positioning of the two locations in many immigrant texts, but she also indicates the temporal interconnectedness of India's colonial past and the postcolonial, late-capitalist present.

Miss New India may be categorized as an immigrant narrative but of a different kind than that of Mukherjee's well-known novel *Jasmine*. The two texts

1 In her article "Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals," published in 2007, Lau analyzes English-language literary texts authored by South Asian writers, both those based on the Subcontinent and in the diasporas, published between 2002 and 2006. Lau comes to the conclusion that the dominant picture of South Asia is that produced by diasporic writers who are "in a position of power and dominance" (572) vis-à-vis home-based authors and whose diasporic narratives are "insistently setting up South Asia and 'the West' as binaries" (589). The phenomenon of Re-Orientalism is further discussed in a collection of essays that Lisa Lau co-edited with Ana Cristina Mendes, titled *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within*, published in 2011.

2 *Jasmine* has been criticized for the alleged perpetuation of such a binary representation of the East and the West also in, among others: Susan Koshy, "The Geography of Female Subjectivity: Ethnicity, Gender, and Diaspora"; Patricia P. Chu, *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America*; Anu, Aneja "*Jasmine*, the Sweet Scent of Exile"; and Gurleen Grewal, "Born Again American: The Immigrant Consciousness in *Jasmine*."

3 In my view, Mukherjee's narratives offer more complex portrayals of immigration to the West, portrayals that frequently challenge the binary positioning of the East and the West or blame the West for the existence of such polarization; see my book *Bicultural Bodies: South Asian American Women's Literature*, 40-53 and 116-125. My reading of Mukherjee's texts is similar to that of Asha Sen, who in her analysis of the texts by Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri calls for a foregrounding of "the transnational elements within the stories themselves, which complicate their dominant master narratives of assimilation" (57).

may be read vis-à-vis each other as they both feature young attractive women as protagonists, women whose migratory routes may be different but who nevertheless experience migration in corporeal terms. To put it differently, in both cases migration is a process affecting—and affected by—the protagonists' young attractive female bodies. But while Jasmine travels illegally from India to the US, Anjali Bose—the protagonist of *Miss New India*—engages in internal migration from the north to the south of the country, fleeing her natal home, where she fell victim to sexual abuse at the hands of the suitor selected by her father, to make her way to Bangalore, a city promising freedom and economic prosperity, even if Anjali's sole marketable assets are her physical attractiveness and her English language skills. Deborah Philips sees Mukherjee's novel as an example of a new genre of narratives of the so-called New India, the term referring to the post-millennial generation that "is asserting itself as aspirational and entrepreneurial, the generation who grew up in the wake of India's second-generation economic reforms and who are now urged to make the most of the opportunities of globalization" (97). According to Philips, the genre was initiated by a popular Indian writer Chetan Bhagat, with female versions of Bhagat's young male characters soon to surface in women writers' attempts at the genre. Although the inclusion of Mukherjee's text within popular narratives that Philips herself dubs "chick lit" may be problematic, the contextualization of Anjali's story within a larger transformation of Indian economy seems valuable. Like the characters in other "New India" narratives, driven by ambition, Anjali moves from a small town to a metropolis in search of career and lifestyle opportunities.

In Bangalore, Anjali is accepted as a boarder at Bagehot house, a dilapidated Raj-era mansion whose proprietress, a mysterious, senile lady by the name of Minnie, boasts of the mansion's glorious past in the following passage of the novel:

> This is a historically important residence.... In this very room, on these very plates, a very long time ago, His Majesty Edward VII dined, as well as innumerable minor royalty.... We had a retinue of over one hundred, including drivers, gardeners, cooks, butlers, khidmugars, chaprasis, bearers, durwans, and jamadars.... The garage in the back housed twenty motor cars—when I say motor cars, I am referring to Bentleys and Duesenbergs, not the rattletraps Indian people drive. My late husband staged durbars for five hundred guests, nizams and maharajas and the viceroy. (116-117)

Minnie's own background is not clearly determined but rumor has it that she is a mixed-blood, "the product of the old cantonment culture, the untraceable interaction between an anonymous soldier and a local woman, decades or centuries ago. Minnie was Anglo-Indian" (121). Taking advantage of her looks, she passes for a British lady and continues to dwell in the colonial past, refusing to pay heed of the changes that have occurred and are occurring in contemporary India and the world.

For Anjali, though, and presumably for other boarders before her and now, the house seems "a storage barn, more a warehouse for unusable possessions than an active residence" (112). What another boarder calls "a madhouse" (119) and what Deborah Philips sees as "an image of the transition from the colonial to the global" (101) turns out for Anjali to be a museum of horrors. Anjali discovers that function of

the house when she breaks one of the rules and ventures inside the forbidden parts of the residence:

> She was about to sneak out of all the ballroom when a row of photographs along the far wall drew her attention.... As she drew closer, she began to feel sick. Sari-clad bodies lay strewn along a riverbank. The faces were young, no older than she was. Bodies of Sikhs... lay stacked by firewood, and walking among the bodies were uniformed British soldiers, grinning broadly.... Another painting featured a distant row of hanged men, Sikhs with their hair chopped off, hanging by their turbans, silhouetted against the setting sun. Bagehot House was a museum of horrors. (Mukherjee, *Miss New India* 137)

The house's horrors are not of an imaginary nature, though. They are a very real fact of Indian history; the photos draw Anjali's attention to British complicity in the atrocities of the Indian past. Her visit to the museum of horrors, her witnessing of the dead bodies of young Sikhs, thus turns out to be a painful lesson in Indian history, as a result of which Anjali accepts Indianness as part of her identity, while beforehand she mostly viewed herself in ethnic terms—as a Bengali[4]—rather than in national terms—as an Indian. Anjali's reaction to the peculiar exhibits in this museum of horrors seems to contradict Philips's contention that young Indians are "a generation for whom British colonialism is now an irrelevance" (101). As Mukherjee herself said in an interview, Anjali at that point "comes to an emotional understanding of how her parents' generation has been damaged by colonial injustice and to a stern reassessment of Minnie's British Raj nostalgia. Minnie is no longer foolish and harmless colonial debris; to Anjali, Minnie now becomes the embodiment of colonial evil" ("Globalization and Change" 185). Her snooping around the house leads Anjali to peer beneath the veil of pretense and to formulate very mature conclusions about the nature of historical truth:

> Bagehot House was considered a respectable address, a first stop for young working girls. Bagehot House carried its own recommendation. Minnie was admired for running a no-nonsense boarding house that was good training for the corporate world, but there was nothing admirable about it. Anjali, who'd looked on the British period as a long comic opera, felt a sudden connection to all the Indian dead, and the indignities they suffered. She saw her parents still cowering and still recovering from the scars of colonialism and the dazzling new Bangalore as a city of total amnesia. And it was all a lie. (Mukherjee, *Miss New India* 138-139)

In light of the hideous truth that the Bagehot House hides, it seems only appropriate that the building literally falls apart at the end of the novel as it is plundered and taken to pieces by the dispossessed of postcoloniality and postmodernity, the former untouchables squatting in the mansion's yard, who were incited by ruthless black marketers and who try to salvage whatever can be made profit on. Clearly, the injustices of the past caste system and the injustices of the contemporary late-capitalist world conspire to bring the house to its violent end.[5]

4 As Philips notes, Anjali's surname "Bose indicates that Anjali comes from a Bengali Hindu family and belongs to a caste descended from scribes"; 99, footnote 2.

5 Mukherjee explained in an interview that it is now a frequent procedure for middlemen to "ease

Bagehot House, whose depiction in the novel offers a lesson in the intricacies of India's colonial past and post-colonial present, is juxtaposed in the novel with more modern edifices, residential and commercial buildings that are mirror reflections of the architecture of the West, the West being both a source of Bangalore's economic prosperity and a model to aspire to. As the novel puts it, "Bangalore worked off the American clock. Everything about Bangalore—even its time—was virtual" (114). Bangalore is a locus of call-centers outsourced from the US, jobs are thus plentiful for speakers of English. Minnie and her late husband Maxie's comment on the impeccability of Bangalore's geographical location may be read as an ironic prediction of the city's late-capitalist future: "Bangalore was a splendid place, so long as the natives kept their filthy hands off it. Bangalore's weather, a year-round seventy-five degrees, with no bloody monsoon and no mosquitoes, was the clincher. No finer place in the Empire, they agreed, not that an empire in the expansive sense of the word still existed" (122). The Raj era may have ended but India remains interwoven in a complex web of international relations. The colonial system has been substituted with a postcolonial, late-capitalist one, in which the East as a periphery is still heavily affected by the West as the economic center. The people who have chosen Bangalore to be their home are primarily driven by the desire to prosper financially and to live the way the West does: to have apartments similar to those in the US, to use the same amenities, to even drink latte in coffee shop chains modeled on Starbucks. As a result, Bangalore loses its Indian specificity and appears a metropolis that could be situated anywhere in the world.

Mukherjee herself identifies three different kinds of Bangalore's cityscape presented in the novel: what she calls "cantonment" Bangalore, that is the remnants of the city's colonial past, like the Bagehot House analyzed above; the "ultra-modern high-rises" emulating Western architectural styles, luxurious hotels, and educational and medical facilities; and, finally, "Bangalore as a thriving IT-hub" with its industrial parks, shopping malls and eating-out places ("Globalization and Change" 183). The newly-erected residential areas, corresponding to the second type of urban spaces mentioned by Mukherjee, bear in the novel telling names such as Dollar Colony or Reach Colony and seem to be transplants from the architecture of the West:

> Reach for the Galaxy, a four-story building with aspirations to luxury, stood between two identical blocks, Reach for the Stars and Reach for the Universe. So that explained the colony's name.... The top floors of all three were still under construction.... The billboard map indicated a yet-to-be-built shopping center and Montessori school: the Bangalore dream, a self-contained, self-sufficient city for the affluent. (179-180)

The bland architecture of the new buildings, not rooted in local specificity, may be read as an attempt at homogenizing cultural differences between the East and the West.

The novel also abounds in descriptions of the third type of cityscape mentioned by Mukherjee, parts of which correspond to Marc Augé's definition of non-places. For Augé, non-places function as "the real measure of our time... that could be quantified... by totaling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of

aged owners... out of underused, derelict colonial-era estates, like Bagehot House, and sell to real estate developers of high-end investment properties" ("Globalization and Change" 184).

transport' (aircraft, trains and road vehicles), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets" (79). Following her perilous journey through a large part of the Indian Subcontinent, Anjali finds herself in a perplexing city, a city whose dialects she fails to understand and whose pace of life mesmerizes her; faced with the havoc of the city, she seeks respite in a Western-style coffee shop:

> From the sidewalk she [Anjali] could make out an outdoor coffee bar with patio umbrellas on an elevated plaza between two skyscrapers. A gaggle of voices floated down to her, tinkly voices of hyperconfident breakfasters, chattering in American English. Finally, a language with familiar cadences! She climbed the stairs to the plaza and found herself in a crowded coffee shop. Not just any coffee shop, not another Alps Palace [in Gauripur] with mold blooming on the water-stained walls: this was a Barista. Most of the small round tables were occupied by large groups of noisy patrons her age, dressed, like her, in jeans and T-shirts. Many of the girls were smoking, gesturing wildly, and giggling like schoolgirls. (86-87)

Having never been to a coffee shop like that before, Anjali nevertheless feels more at home there than in the streets of Bangalore, and the American English spoken by the employees of the call canters offers a respite from the unfamiliar Southern dialects she hears spoken in the streets. That confirms the coffee shop's status as Augé's non-place, its paradox lying in the fact that "a foreigner lost in a country he does not know (a 'passing stranger') can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains" (Augé 106).

The description of the coffee shop also serves as an illustration of the fluid subjectivity exhibited by Bangalore's inhabitants working in the call centers who "perform an American identity during their work hours, and then, in their off hours,... discover and act out their individual concepts of self-identity in a rapidly changing India" (Mukherjee, "Globalization and Change" 182). Dressed in Western-style clothes and introducing themselves with Americanized names, these young people epitomize the generation of New India with what Natasha Lavigilante terms in the introduction to her interview with Mukherjee an "'Indo-Western' metropolitan subjectivity" ("Globalization and Change" 178). Working in call centers, which Philips sees as "symbolic of [the current] transition in the Indian economy and workforce—an emblem of an urban and global workforce staffed by educated and ambitious young people" (98), they also experience another facet of supermodernity's non-places, namely "the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself or herself" (Augé 79). In this case, the image that these young people transmit is an artificial one: working off the American clock, they pretend to their interlocutors to be Americans based somewhere in the US. In a way, just like the city they inhabit, tellingly called Bang-A-Buck by a newspaper columnist and a character in the novel, they may be said to embody virtual or pretense identities.

The complex web of interconnections of the East and the West depicted in *Miss New India* raises a question of what effect the change of setting has for Mukherjee's narratives. Many of the novels in Mukherjee's oeuvre are accounts of migration that occurs in the direction from the East to the West, and it is precisely these narratives

that have been criticized for glorifying the West at the expense of the East. When the direction of migration is changed, as is the case in Mukherjee's astounding novel *The Holder of the World*—a sort of an alternative version of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and thus an instance of what in the title of their collection Bill Ashcroft et al. termed the empire writing back—the picture gets more complicated and space becomes more resistant to easy polarization. The setting of *Miss New India*, especially the spatial juxtaposition of the crumbling Raj-era mansion and the sprouting Western-style buildings, which is interwoven with the temporal juxtaposition of the colonial period of the Commonwealth and the post-modern flow of capital and ideas, enables Mukherjee to address the pernicious influence that the West continues to exert on the East, which is still constituted as the West's lesser Other.

However, there are some weaknesses or inconsistencies in Mukherjee's portrayal of the interaction between the East and the West. Even if the author is more straightforwardly critical in *Miss New India* than in her other texts of Western cultural, political and economic hegemony, she still deploys the figures of American or America-returned men who explain India to the protagonist. One of them is Peter Champion, Anjali's teacher and an anthropologist who chronicles disappearing Indian architecture and languages, while the other is a second-generation South Asian American photographer who documents what I would call queer India. The presence of these male, Western/ized figures may be read not only as an instance of mansplaining but also that of whitesplaining, if I may use such an appellation. It is as though the East could not exist without the Western male gaze, which of course harks back to the prevalent conceptualization of Eastern lands in terms of a female body penetrated and conquered by a Western male explorer. The fact that Mukherjee introduces these male, Western/ized characters with almost a sleigh of hand, never problematizing their status in the novel is probably the major weakness of an otherwise complex portrayal of the contact zone—to use Mary Louise Pratt's term—where the East and the West meet, clash, and interact. Mary Louise Pratt defined contact zone as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4) and "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). In the new millennium this contact does not need to occur face to face; rather, it is enabled by state-of-the-art communications technology, which—egalitarian as it may seem—does not, in fact, challenge the existing inequality of the subjects that come into contact with one another in the virtual contact zone. Mukherjee's narrative seems to show that several decades after Edward Said published his seminal work, Orientalism still holds fast to the extent that even Orientals themselves cannot be completely freed from its hold.

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Ewa Antoszek

When Personal Becomes Political: M. Jenea Sanchez Documenting Migration from Mexico

Abstract: Even though "migration, immigration, and relocation is normative human behavior" (Blommaert and Verschueren in Byczkiewicz 5), migration across the U.S.-Mexico border has always been a controversial issue, raising incessant debates that have become even more acrimonious in the aftermath of the recent political debate on the immigration in the U.S. Owing to that, the stories of Latinx in the U.S. that should be read through both indigenous and immigrant paradigms have been reinterpreted through the latter one solely. The resulting borderlands tales illustrate "similar sentiments of nationalism, racism and nativism" (Byczkiewicz 5), while attempting at the more complex depiction of this conflicted and striated space. The purpose of this article is to analyze border stories depicted in *Historias en la Camioneta* and examine how M. Jenea Sanchez documents the journeys of those who want to get *al otro lado*, combining personal accounts and documentary footage, thus contributing to the ongoing discussion on the U.S.-Mexico border and borderlands.

Keywords: U.S.-Mexico border, borderlands, migration, documentary film, M. Jenea Sanchez

The organizers of the 2019 conference on migration, *Flickering Landscapes—The Image of Migration: Landscapes and People*, provide a broad definition of migration that "encompasses any movement of peoples, including migration within nations or across national boundaries" (flickeringlandscapes.com) and involving "the variety of the spaces migrants move across... land, and sea, and the built environment" (flickeringlandscapes.com). Their purpose is to further the ideas of omnipresence and naturalness of those movements that have been systematically and systemically challenged and questioned, particularly in recent years in the aftermath of subsequent "migrant crises" all over the world. These ideas are also reinforced by Viktoria Byczkiewicz who does research on the immigration in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands cinema. Quoting Blommaert and Verschueren, Byczkiewicz argues that "migration, immigration, and relocation is normative human behavior" (5); nevertheless "[b]orderlands tales the world round echo similar sentiments of nationalism, racism, and nativism" (Wodak in Byczkiewicz 5). This statement is particularly valid with regards to migration across the Mexican-American border that has always been a controversial issue, raising incessant debates, which have become even more acrimonious in the aftermath of the recent political debate on the immigration in the U.S. and the construction of the border wall. Consequently, the U.S.-Mexican border has appeared in numerous mainstream films and TV series. Those representations of the border and the issues related to Mexican-American borderlands not infrequently deploy sensational tone and perpetuate stereotypes in order to draw larger audiences. As a result, they do not leverage the power of the medium which, as Chris Lippard argues, "[i]n the face of increasingly dangerous paths of migration in today's transnational world" (www.flickeringlandscapes.com) is extremely important, as in such circumstances "the film has frequently been seen as having the potential to break

down borders, eliciting sympathy and understanding for migrants—an extension of traditional views of the humanizing capacities and functions of the Arts and Humanities more generally" (flickeringlandscapes.com). The resulting one-sidedness of the aforementioned productions has been countered by documentaries attempting at a more complex depiction of the question of migration and the conflicted and striated space of the U.S.-Mexico border. The purpose of this article is to analyze border stories of migration represented in the short documentary *Historias en la Camioneta* (2010), and examine how its director M. Jenea Sanchez documents the journeys of those who want to get *al otro lado*, combining personal accounts and documentary footage and thus contributing to the ongoing discussion on the U.S.-Mexico border and borderlands.

M. Jenea Sanchez is an artist living between the two sides of the Mexican-American border, "born and raised in Douglas, AZ / Agua Prieta, SON" (mjeneasanchez.com). In the artist's statement she acknowledges the importance of her *nepantlism*, her life in-between the two states, her sense of unbelonging and negotiations between the two sides of the border. She also reveals how the situation on the U.S.-Mexico border influences her creative process. M. Jenea Sanchez admits:

> My artistic endeavors reside in this threshold of liminality. My work has an inherent attribute of perceiving the world from a threshold, a physiological and psychological response to the mutation of cultural ideologies, engendered by my lifetime's interaction with the US Mexico border. As our society is aware of the political negotiations occurring on both sides of the US Mexico border fence, it is my interest to further expose the beauty of duality experienced by border citizens. (mjeneasanchez.com)

She continues her statement with the explanation about her approach to nomadic identities and the conflicted space of the borderlands:

> As an artist, I strive to utilize this nomadic sensibility, by inserting myself between, among, and outside of the status quo of American and Mexican culture. As the sociopolitical climate of the border region remains controversial, I continue the conversation of permeability and how the perception of the actual line of the border can be reimagined. It is important to address that I believe borders are essential; borders in nature and the physical body (skin, blood), exemplify the importance of the marginalized bodies, as well as the importance of reciprocity between two entities. Barriers are what drive my artwork to respond to the dangers they implicate, for the peoples and environments involved, and bring forward the natural ways in which borders do and most importantly, could exist. (mjeneasanchez.com)

The artist's involvement with border-related issues is reflected consistently in her artwork of "drawing, video, installation, performance and photography" (mjeneasanchez.com), including *Border Boneyard* (2010), *Tapiz de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (2009/2011), or a series of border tapestry. In 2016 the artist also contributed to *Borrando la Frontera/ Erasing the Border* community project, coordinating the painting of the U.S.-Mexico border in Agua Prieta, with Ana Teresa Fernandez conducting the project in Ciudad Juárez and Maria Teresa Fernandez in Mexicali (bacaz.org). In 2017 M. Jenea

Sanchez cooperated with ecological artist Lauren Strohacker on the Un-Fragmenting/ Des-Fragmentando project that "confront[ed] the multifaceted ecological effects of the border wall and envision[ed] removing barriers to ensure the survival of a wide diversity of species, including the iconic jaguar" (bacaz.org). Border-related issues she discusses through her works are multifaceted—from ecology and sustainable lifestyles in the borderlands through hybrid identities, religiosity, feminism and the effects of migration. Nevertheless, what is important is the fact that in her works the artist represents those who suffer most in the shadow of the border and includes human stories in those images. It is particularly significant, as the human factor is often either forgotten in discussions on migration or presented through distorted images: people become dehumanized through numbers, figures, and statistics that allow to disregard migrants' lives more easily. The artist's inclusive approach is reflected in the way she represents border journeys in her early documentary production, *Historias en la Camioneta* (2010).

Historias en la Camioneta (2010) is inspired by M. Jenea Sanchez's childhood in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and her personal experience of crossing multiple borders. Discussing what motivated her to produce this 20-minute documentary, the artist reveals:

> I grew up on the U.S. Mexico border, and my family and I have used a shuttle service since I was as child to migrate through the landscape to and from larger metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles and Phoenix. When I think about my earliest memories on the shuttle bus, I see my mother immersed in conversations with passengers for hours at a time. ("Historias en la camioneta")

Following in the footsteps of her mother, M. Jenea Sanchez records her and her fellow passengers' conversations on the shuttle bus "to and from Agua Prieta, Sonora Mexico and Phoenix, Arizona" ("Historias en la camioneta"). The journeys across the border and within Mexico and the U.S. respectively become a pretext to undertake a discussion on various border-related issues.

The film begins with a short, almost transient, shot from the waiting room at the bus station in Agua Prieta, Mexico which darkens to show the title—*Historias en la camioneta* (which can be translated as *Stories from the Shuttle Bus*), and then the camera closes up on a shuttle bus schedule at the station. The timetable subsequently reappears overwritten on a side window of the van. The driver closes the door and the passengers get seated. All this takes place against the background of voices conversing in Spanish that give way to Mexican music—the scene illustrates aptly the well-known routine of the journey. However, this first scene already suggests it is going to be a special journey. Agua Prieta is one of the "twin cities" alongside the U.S.-Mexico border, with Douglas, AZ to the north. Therefore, the schedule displays cities in the U.S., including the twin city of Agua Prieta—Douglas, AZ or Phoenix, AZ. Such a beginning suggests that the journey will involve a border crossing, which implies an extraordinary character of the trip: crossing any border may be a stressful experience, as it involves specific procedures that control the flow of the border crossers; crossing the border from Mexico to the U.S. can be particularly difficult, due to the additional restrictions and control practices implemented there that make the border less crossable (it needs to be remembered that

the film was shot in 2010 when the militarization of the border was not developed to such an extent as it is in 2019). Potential obstacles awaiting the passengers of the shuttle are also suggested by physical barriers that separate them from the outside – first, it is the fenced off space of the waiting room at the very beginning of the scene, filmed against the sun, which leaves the space of the station in the dark and makes the fence rods more prominent, as if emphasizing their separating and dividing role. Then it is the shuttle bus itself—the side windows, the windshield, the closing door constitute a physical border between those inside and the outside world. On the one hand, this separation creates a safe and intimate space inside the van, which is important, as it will encourage the subsequent conversations between passengers—they are all enclosed in one place and thus becoming companions for the duration of the trip. On the other hand, those barriers imply further obstacles awaiting them ahead.

This is confirmed in the next scene taking place on the U.S.-Mexico border near the port of entry in Douglas, AZ. It is in this scene that the viewer sees the infamous border fence for the first time—when the van slows down in the line to the port of entry, the fence appears through the side window of the shuttle. It is carefully observed by a little girl who watches the passing road throughout the trip. However, it is only a glimpse and the camera moves back to the inside of the van where the "primer" on the border crossing takes place. It is enough though, to get the idea about the impassability of the border—even if it is still a fence, not a wall, and there is no barbed wire on top of it, it is too tall and too sturdy to go through. Therefore, the border may seem to be permeable on the one hand—one can see through the fence to the other side, but on the other it cannot be crossed freely. Crossing, if permitted, is regulated by numerous procedures and thus becomes a nerve-racking experience in itself. This power of the political line becomes reinforced through the anxious whisper of the child-observer, who, looking through the window notices and whispers "*los soldados*" (the soldiers). The anxiety aggravates when the driver instructs passengers how to behave when the soldiers enter the van. All this leads to the atmosphere of expectation and tension among the passengers filmed from behind of the bus. Owing to such an angle, the viewer cannot see the faces of the people that would probably reveal more about their feelings, but in this way M. Jenea Sanchez avoids oversimplification in the representation of preparations for the border crossing. The questioning at the border proceeds in a relatively acceptable atmosphere—the questions posed by the officer are very detailed but formal. They are asked in Spanish so that people on the bus do not need translation. Some answers evoke doubts, concerning, for example overstay in the U.S. At the same time some questions also raise confusion, like mispronouncing of names or questions about relations between passengers on a van. Nevertheless, all in all the procedure is quite smooth and apart from the cross-questioning which is stressful in its nature itself, the only implication of tension and anxiety is reflected in the way the scene is filmed. The recording resembles that from a hidden camera, the whole procedure is filmed from the back of the van, but instead of people being questioned or the officer asking those questions, the camera shows the girl-observer, who no longer looks through the window, but instead carefully listens and sometimes responds to the situation around her. This time M. Jenea Sanchez focuses on the face of the girl and it is through her vivid reactions that the viewer gets the idea of the process

of border crossing. Even though by an analogy to the naïve narrator the girl can be compared to a naïve observer, there are some hints that the girl does understand some implications of the border crossing: there is seriousness in her eyes, she gets anxious when tension or doubts arise about passengers' answers or the officer's questions. It seems it is not the first time she crosses the border and her behavior makes her look mature for her age. This image is particularly powerful, as so far the artist has not shown too many faces of the travelers, let alone focused on them. Filming the reactions of the small girl to the border crossing, M. Jenea Sanchez personalizes the process that is often dehumanized in the media and by the authorities. Consequently, the artist challenges the stereotypical portrayal of the border crossers as the Other or a potential threat to the integrity of the nation-state and instead she replaces it with an image of a small girl, excited and at the same time a bit uneasy about the trip, thus displaying vulnerability of those who travel *al otro lado*.

The artist defies stereotypes about border crossers also in the following scenes, giving voice to those who are usually silent or silenced, as once the bus crosses the border, the tension is released and the titular stories begin. Altogether there are eleven people relating their stories—seven women and four men. Their accounts are filmed in a specific way—the screen is divided into two parts and on one side the viewer sees the images of the landscape being passed, while to the right the camera focuses on the interlocutor who tells his/her story. The viewer may assume that the story is a developed version of the answer to the question about the reason for travelling and crossing the border—the questions are not recorded and in this way the stories sound more like *testimonios* than the answers in an interview, which makes it more natural. Moreover, the passing landscapes serve as a backdrop to the stories and contextualize them in space, as the stories are related to the borderlands. As M. Jenea Sanchez admits, "The combination of the passengers' dialogue and changing scenery intimately reveals the interrelationship of personal histories to the particular places passed during the journey" ("Historias en la camioneta."). The stories are interspersed and they vary depending on a person, as the reasons for travel are diverse. Most of the interviewees take this journey because of some family-related purpose which usually involves a visit at the relatives. There are also people who have to solve some legal issues on the other side of the border or those who look for work in the U.S. These conversations remind of a fragment of Elizabeth Bishop's, poem, "The Moose" where "an old conversation/— not concerning us,/ but recognizable, somewhere,/ back in the bus" (354) takes place, addressing trivial as well as more serious topics. The same is true of the conversations on the shuttle bus when they begin to diverge from personal issues of the passengers' lives, as the stories about the motivation for the journey become a pretext to discuss the question of the U.S.-Mexico border and migration across the line. Then the tone of the stories becomes more serious, as the problems of unemployment, gang violence, or family separations appear in the discussion.

Some passengers refer directly to the issue of migration and migrants' rights, including Woman 3[1] who acknowledges the increasing problems with moving back

1 The names of the interviewees are not given in the film, most probably to make the story more universal. Therefore, for the purpose of identification of subsequent speakers, I introduce the names that allow to determine when each person tells his/her story.

and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, which prevents her from visiting Mexico more often, as there is always a potential threat she may not be allowed back into the U.S. She emphasizes the aggravation of migration-related problems, focusing on recent separation of families through deportations, particularly of those who "lived their whole lives in the U.S. and are deported" (10:58). Using code-switching she voices her concerns about those deportees who were born in the U.S. and in fact do not know anything about Mexico, often have no relatives there and are suddenly forced to start their lives anew south of the border. She is also the only person who evokes the name of a politician and officer she renders responsible for unlawful, illegal, and racist actions—Joe Arpaio, a former sheriff from Arizona, known for his anti-immigrant attitudes and actions. None of the other passengers ever blame a particular politician, but they usually speak in general terms about border problems. Woman 3, departing from her personal story switches to the political discussion, similarly to the way she oscillates between two languages, Spanish and English, that she uses in her monologue.

The interweaving of personal and political can be also observed in Man 3's account. He undertakes the motif first voiced by Woman 3 and complements her story with an account of his own experience as a migrant who moved to the U.S. as a 12-year-old and has spent most of his life in the U.S. For him, like for the previously mentioned deportees, "coming back" to Mexico resembles more a visit to a foreign country than a nostalgic trip to his homeland. Talking about the U.S., he reveals: "I was raised here, I went to school here, all my friends are here" (14:50) so when he went to Mexico, he did not know his way around, like many other Latinx who have been deported in recent months to Mexico and "find it near impossible to accept [it]... as home" (Duane). His image of the south of the border is that of crime and violence and in his opinion "a lot of bad things go on there" (15:09) because "It's the border, like they say, right?" (15:12). In this way he evokes the issue of the influence of the border on the lives of borderlanders and also those living further away in terms of distance, but still in the shadow of the border both in the U.S. and in Mexico, as its power is far-reaching and often destructive.

It has to be noted that after those two stories, to balance their negative undertone, M. Jenea Sanchez interviews also other passengers who prefer Mexico over the U.S. Some, like the last person interviewed—Woman 7—come up with yet another alternative to the divisiveness of the border. The last interlocutor travels back and forth between Agua Prieta and Arizona, as her husband is waiting for his residency in the U.S. to be approved. However, she admits, that once the legal issues are solved, they are planning to live literally between two states. She wants her children to attend private school in Mexico and she will continue working in Arizona, thus becoming a nomad travelling between those two places. It is by no means an accident that the artist concludes the storytelling and the film with that account, as it balances arguments for and against migration. At the end of the film M. Jenea Sanchez provides an alternative that connects both sides of the border, and owing to that, the border's presupposed role to divide two individual nation-states is challenged to transform this space into a "contact zone" (Pratt in Benito and Manzanas 4) or "crossroads" (Anzaldúa 12) that allow for a dialogue between two sides of the line as well. Consequently, those who choose such an alternative formulate nomadic identities, which implies carrying their

homes on their back like Anzaldúa's turtle—the image she evokes in *Borderlands/La Frontera* to describe her fluid identity (43). It needs to be remembered, though, it is not a new construct, as transborder identities and culture have functioned for a long time in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, when the border was still more passable—the times M. Jenea Sanchez remembers from her childhood memories of journeys on the shuttle bus.

Viktoria Byczkiewicz, quoting Bill Nichols, maintains that "[d]ocumentaries may be informative, yet they must be understood more precisely as argumentative, with the goal of furthering the filmmaker's favored worldview" (2) and it can be argued that *Historias en la Camioneta* is not only a collection of personal stories of border crossers and a celebration of M. Jenea Sanchez's childhood memories, but it also contributes to the discussion on the migration from Mexico—in this way personal becomes political as well. Many of the arguments provided by the artist's fellow travelers echo the problems of migration researchers enumerate in their analyses. Paul Ganster synthesizes the most salient U.S.-Mexico migration-related issues of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in *The U.S.–Mexican Border Today: Conflict and Cooperation in Historical Perspective*. In the chapter devoted to modern migration Ganster argues that migration, as "one of the most enduring and sensitive border issues for Mexico and the United States" (215) became a problem in the twentieth century (215). He maintains that "[f]rom 1848 until the end of the nineteenth century, the border was not patrolled, and migration across it concerned few people" (215). Moreover, "[e]arly U.S. immigration legislation (in 1917 and 1924) generally made exceptions for Mexican migrants" (215). Ganster's arguments are also reiterated in Greg Grandin's examination of the evolution of militarization of *la frontera* and he ties it to the involvement of the U.S. in international interventions. Francisco Cantú summarizes Grandin's conclusions and states that the process commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century—"[a]s America thrust itself into the wider world, it simultaneously began a process of shoring up its domestic borders" (75). Grandin's examination of walling off the borders is aptly combined with the history of racism in the U.S. and how racial tensions have been channeled and diverted from domestic space to the international arena through the abovementioned American interventions all over the world (Cantú 76).[2] Ganster, in turn, conducts the analysis of domestic factors that have

2 Cantú concludes: "Part of Grandin's achievement in "The End of the Myth" is to situate today's calls to fortify our borders in relation to the centuries of racial animus that preceded them. Donald Trump can be distinguished from his predecessors, Grandin argues, because of his willingness to meet conservative and nativist demands at their logical end point—by closing off instead of moving out. By contrast, his predecessors over the past four decades each found ways of channeling aggression outward by identifying new frontiers and promising boundlessness in a shrinking world. Reagan pursued anti-Communist wars in Central America by declaring it "our southern frontier"; George H. W. Bush saw the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and imagined "new markets for American products," proclaiming that "in the frontiers ahead, there are no borders"; Clinton declared, as he signed NAFTA, that "this new global economy is our new frontier"; and George W. Bush launched a global war on terror with the promise to "extend the frontiers of freedom." After America's military failure in Iraq and its economic failure in the Great Recession, the nation's first African-American President arrived in office at the precise moment when hatred was coming home from the fringes" (76).

led to the perception of migration from Mexico as a tenuous issue and places them in the context of Mexican-American relations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Ganster attributes the origins of the "tensions caused by the migration issue, as we now think of" (215) to the Bracero Program and subsequent "emergence of a network throughout Mexico, at the border and in the United States that both stimulated and facilitated migration for seasonal or permanent employment in the United States" (215) and which continued even after the official completion of the program in an unofficial way, as Mexican workers have been in constant demand for the development of the American economy. However, as Ganster argues, with time and with legislative changes that transformed Mexican migrants into illegal immigrants, permanent migration replaced seasonal migration and it became "increasingly characterized by the movement of families rather than individual males" (215). At the same time, the shift in the debate on immigration took place "from a traditional focus on quotas for legal immigrants to concerns about illegal, or unauthorized, immigrants" (216), which led to the introduction of subsequent discriminatory policies and acts of law, including, for example, Operation Hold the Line or Operation Gatekeeper (Ganster 219). In spite of those practices, the flow of people from Mexico continued, since, according to Ganster, it is a popular misconception that migration was based solely on the poverty in Mexico, particularly in the southern regions. He claims that it in fact "correlates much more strongly with U.S. employment needs than with Mexican unemployment" (216). Moreover, its "principal benefit to employers of migrant labor was not its low costs but its flexibility" (217). Looking from the perspective of those who migrated to the U.S. "the simple push-and-pull factors of wage differentials" (Ganster 217) were far less important than "global issues of market consolidation (including North American integration), the process of learning that accrues to migrants... and the network created by migration" (217). In other words, as Ganster argues, "[m]igrants sought not income but investment capital and insurance against risk in their communities of origin" (217). It also has to be noted that Mexican migrants have assimilated much faster into the American society than other groups through different procedures, such as, for example, mixed marriages (Ganster 216-217).

In spite of all these factors, the fear of the Mexican immigrant as the Other, posing a threat to the aforementioned apparent integrity of the nation-state has continued and fueled subsequent legal acts (or lack of legislature as Jeffrey Toobin suggests in "American Limbo") and procedures, including Operation Wetback, Operation Gatekeeper or Operation Hold the Line aimed at stopping immigration from across the U.S.-Mexico border. Those operations pushed those who wanted to cross the border to more dangerous regions of the deserts and mountains, turning border crossing into a lethal undertaking. In addition, as Ganster maintains, those policies have been counterproductive and, instead of driving away migrants, "increased the numbers of permanent undocumented residents, converting a circular movement into a unidirectional flow" (218), as "stepped-up enforcement discouraged migrants from returning to Mexico and encouraged them to remain permanently in the United States" (219). Consequently, as it is often true in the case of the borderlands, decisions made centrally, have not addressed "the realities of the border region with Mexico" (Ganster 220) and disregarded the complex character of migration across the U.S.-

Mexico border (this analysis focuses on migrants from Mexico solely, due to its scope and does not examine recent immigration from Central America in general and the Northern Triangle in particular that would require another analysis). Thus it seems that migration from Mexico will remain an unsolved issue and the focus of the twenty-first century debates in the U.S. and in Mexico, taken up by politicians and used to their advantage with disregard to those who suffer in the process. M. Jenea Sanchez's stories from the shuttle bus constitute a contribution to the debate on the U.S.-Mexico border which in an apparently informal way transform personal accounts into political arguments, thus challenging the stereotypical portrayal of *la frontera* and those who cross the border in both directions.

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Shiri Rosenberg

Is the *Twilight* Saga a Modern-Time Fairy Tale? A Study of Stephenie Meyer's Source Material from Folklore and Canonical Narratives

Abstract: The article presents an analysis of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels as modern literary fairy-tales. To this end, the discussion will refer to structuralist critics, and identify "narrative functions" from folktales (stock images and episodes, stock character functions, characteristic sequences of episodes), used by Meyer in her vampire novels. As it turns out, Meyer modified folklore material to sustain a long and variously themed narrative: by embedding numerous subplots, by rearranging functions between characters, and creating composite and collective characters that combine contradictory functions. The author transformed several folktales into a series of four novels about coming of age in the twenty-first-century United States. A detailed analysis of Meyer's modifications of the folktale partially corroborates the feminist critique of Meyer's representation of the protagonists as reinforced versions of cultural stereotypes and gender roles. However, some transformations, especially Meyer's assignment of the hero-function to the female protagonist Bella, seem to suggest just the opposite, thus leading to the conclusion that the *Twilight* novels reflect the confusion caused by contradictory role-models and aspirations, the confusion that seems to be inherent in a coming-of-age novel.

Keywords: Stephanie Meyer, *Twilight*, fairy tale, folklore, structuralism

"I decided it didn't matter. It doesn't matter to me what you are."
—Bella Swan in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*

In his seminal 1977 monograph on the literary fairy tale (*Kunstmarchen*), Jens Tismar set down the principles for a definition of the genre: firstly, it can be differentiated from the oral folk tale (*Volksmarchen*) because it is written by an author, rather than developed as folk tradition. Consequently, it is "synthetic, artificial, and elaborate in comparison to the indigenous formation of the folk tale that emanates from communities and tends to be simple and anonymous" (Zipes, "Introduction" xvi). However, the literary fairy tale is not an independent genre but can only be understood and defined by its relationship to the oral tales that it "uses, adapts, and remodels during the narrative conception of the author" (Zipes, "Introduction" xv).

The present study will discuss Stephenie Meyer's popular novel series as literary fairy tale, focusing on the following questions: what elements of fairy tales can be identified in Meyer's fiction? Did the author modify the elements of the fairy-tale material? If there are modifications introduced by Meyer, what is their meaning? The identification of fairy-tale elements will be based on structural analysis derived from classic studies on the fairy tale in European folklore: the works by Vladimir Propp, Bruno Bettelheim, and Jack Zipes. Modifications and transformations of folklore material will be identified with reference to Meyer's own comments on her work, with reference to scholarly articles on specific images in *Twilight* novels, and through

close reading of selected passages from Meyer's texts. The aim of the interpretative part is to offer a further explanation of the popularity of Meyer's vampire novels, and to demonstrate that Meyer's fiction conveys important values such as female empowerment, the importance of the search for individual identity, and the need to revise or reverse entrenched role models and patterns of individual development.

There is no exhaustive, systematic study of the appropriation of fairy-tales in Meyer's fiction, although most reviews and scholarly articles briefly point out two major skeleton plots used by Meyer (Beauty and the Beast and/or Cinderella), without mentioning specific versions alluded to (e.g. Sommers; Platt). Even Meyer's text, in one sentence, mentions its own cultural models, which for Bella, the central character and narrator, are frames of reference and sources of personal role models: "Edward had always thought he belonged to the world of horror stories. Of course, I'd known he was dead wrong. It was obvious that he belongs here. In the fairy tale" (*Breaking Dawn* 479).

According to Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, a folklore tale can be divided into a relatively small number of analyzable chunks (episodes, characters, situations), which he called functions. The well-known conclusion of Propp's study is that the number of functions is small, and the number of their sequences used in folk-tales is very small, too. Thus, he identified a limited number of narratemes (narrative units or functions) that are present in the structures of the stories he analyzed. Furthermore, all narratemes connect and relate to each other, and thus help build the storyline and create what Peter Brooks called the "masterplot" (Brooks 2).

More specifically, Propp identified 31 elements (functions) of stories and provided their brief symbolic interpretation. In typical narrative sequences identified by Propp, functions generally occur in pairs, such as Departure and Return, or in threes, such as Test (of protagonist's good intentions) repeated three times by various Helpers (another function, a type of character). According to Propp, only a few stories contain all 31 functional elements. When they do, or when the number of functions is close to 31, the functions usually occur in one and the same sequence, the general sequence of a folk tale from the Russian corpus analyzed by Propp. This was the general conclusion drawn in *Morphology* (115-118). Numerous scholars have recently provided a reappraisal of his study, stating that Propp's work is not just a showcase piece of structuralist criticism, but a flexible and useful tool, applicable to non-Russian material, and still useful in analysis of new material. For instance, Rethowati and Ernawati (2017) have combined Propp's narratology with new-historicist interpretation of Javanese folklore, and Gubrium (2005) provided a narratological framework for "narrative environments" that can create and solve social problems. Gaffney and Lahel have even applied Propp's framework to an analysis of British political discourse (2013).

In particular, Propp's approach seems relevant for an analysis of Meyer's fiction, since she appropriated fairy-tale material. Propp's interpretative procedure starts with the listing of the smallest units, which are single images or motifs. Motifs can reoccur, in modified forms, as functional units, performing the same function in various tales; they are then called functions. According to Propp, "[o]ne might note that many functions logically join together into certain spheres" (79), which are defined

thematically, functionally, and correspond to certain elements of the setting. Based on Propp's discussion of narrative functions, especially in chapter nine (92-115) and Appendix III on themes (135-149), the distribution of functions among spheres can be arranged as follows.

The first sphere is introduction, and this sphere corresponds to the home and the immediate social circle, which introduces a conflict or a problem that will trigger events in the second sphere; this sphere sometimes includes first encounters between the protagonist and the antagonist (villain); in Propp's analysis, this sphere includes numerous functions which initiate subsequent action, such as Violation of Interdiction, or Trickery.

The second sphere contains the body of the story, or the initial episodes of a tale. This is a real opening of most fairy tales, when an inopportune action by the protagonist or villain creates a lack or damage that must be undone by the protagonist; this sphere includes the protagonist's departure from home. The third sphere consists of "the donor sequence" (i.e. encounters between the protagonist and one or more helpers), as well as the quest and struggle sequence: this sphere corresponds to a new geographical and social setting, and includes much of the action, and the interaction between the protagonist, the antagonist and the helpers. Propp's catalogue of functions in this sphere includes Test, Challenge, Acquisition, Struggle, Victory, and Branding of the hero.

The fourth sphere consists of the hero's return, and usually includes a secondary struggle at home. This sequence tends to be complicated, including functions such as Pursuit, Arrival, Claim, Task, Recognition, Recognition, Transfiguration, and Wedding. In general, the protagonist asserts his/her new and better social position at home, which amounts to another sequence of the struggle and victory.

While examining the *Twilight* saga it appears that each of the four *Twilight* novels corresponds to a different sphere in Propp's morphology. This means that the four novels actually constitute a single plot, as if they were parts of a single folktale. On the other hand, Propp observed that folktale plots could be embedded one into the another, so a single tale could include one or more sub-tales (Propp 93-94). Thus, *Twilight* consists of a single master-plot, extending over the four spheres defined by Propp, and numerous embedded plots, which could theoretically extend over the four spheres as well, but usually do not follow the pattern completely. Most often, an incomplete folktale could be embedded between narrative "moves" (episodes) of the structurally "higher" tale, as a subplot; Propp called this an interruption by an episodic move. This interruption, however, can be interrupted by another interruption, which leads to complex narrative patterns, with digressions, comic interludes or moral fables embedded into a general plotline (93). The main plotline and the embedded subplot can converge and share the same continuation and ending. In less common examples, an interruption can form a complete parallel folktale (94). An important consequence of embedding is a relative freedom and the flexibility that a folktale offers to the modifications: each teller can add a set of embedded episodes. In a modern context, the use of folklore material enables people (both professional authors and fans) to create prequels and sequels, alternative endings, extensions in fan fiction etc.

Propp also observes that embedded "moves" retain their sequence, so that

embedding does not seem to influence the embedded sequence of episodes. This conclusion anticipates Propp's general conclusion (115) that a general plot of the folktale is based on a single, very stable and repetitive sequence of narrative functions. Variety can be introduced by embedding, multiplication and repetition of functions, but rearrangement of the sequence seems very rare. The same seems to be the case in Meyer's texts about vampires: although the four *Twilight* novels include embedded quest plots, their overall narrative structure follows the sequence of the four spheres delineated above. This can be interpreted in terms of the protagonist's personal development, so that Bella's coming of age becomes the central theme of the tetralogy; this possibility will be elaborated upon below.

As the initial part of this enquiry, Meyer's four of the novels will be discussed with reference to Propp's four narrative spheres. The first sphere, which according to Propp is the expository introduction, is related to the first novel, *Twilight* (2005). This is where Meyer introduces the main characters, Bella the protagonist, her father Charlie, and her love interests: Edward Cullen (the vampire) and Jacob Black (the werewolf). The novel introduces social background (school and family), which will gradually be developed in subsequent novels, but subsequent development is rather scant in comparison with the first novel: the other parts of the tetralogy contain few, infrequent descriptive passages, and several brief comments in dialogues. Although the first novel features several confrontations between the protagonist and villains (rogue vampires, criminals), the confrontations do not form a coherent sequence of a quest plot; instead, they seem to be embedded interludes. The central function of *Twilight*, as it seems, is that it sets the scene of the subsequent adventures. The novel has long descriptions of the setting, including the topography of Forks, a small town in Washington state, the surrounding forests and seaside, as well as the protagonist's home and school. Forks is surrounded by forests and other wild scenery; the woods are especially important to the novel as the setting of initiation scenes and quests (which is common in fairy tales). In terms of the plot, the first novel ends with love declaration between Bella and Edward. This ending, however, does not constitute the ending of a quest sequence, but rather its opening, for both protagonists (and Jacob as well) perceive the declaration of love as a breach of an interdiction, the implicit ban on relations between humans and vampires. The breech of an interdiction, in Propp's discussion of the initial folktale sequence, is the key episode, because it triggers the next sequence of episodes in the second sphere.

The second book in the saga, *New Moon* (2006) corresponds to the second sphere in Propp's morphology. The main story continues here: breach of interdiction from the previous novel brings on a crisis and lack, which necessitates the departure of the heroine to her main quest. In *New Moon*, Edward leaves Bella after his brother (one of the villains, a nomad vampires) attacks her. Bella is left heartbroken and goes on her first quest in this specific book, she develops independence and self-reliance; she strives to define herself without her parents and Edward. After a long period of depression and grief, she is rescued by Jacob Black, a werewolf who helps her fight her pain and the one who tells her about the secret world of vampires (there are different vampire clans in various parts of the world). However, a new quest sequence is embedded at this stage, as Bella starts her second quest to save Edward from taking

his own life. In dialogues and secondary episodes, Jacob reveals his true nature as a werewolf, and Alice (Edward's sister) comes to visit Bella and gives her reassurance; this is the second interaction with a helper character. Bella recognizes what is missing in her life and decides to take positive action. Thus, the second novel initiates the main quest sequence, and includes two embedded secondary ones.

The functions from the third sphere are used in the last two books of the saga. This is where Meyer blends the spheres and creates continuity in the plot of the story: the first two novels, as it were, set the stage and anticipate subsequent developments, whereas the third and fourth novels develop a continuity that allows for numerous embedded subplots and episodic interruptions, mostly confrontations with various antagonists. Consequently, the second and third novels provide most ample opportunities for production of sequels, extensions, and fan fiction. The book with most functions from the third sphere is *Eclipse* (2007). This time Bella faces a whole army of rogue vampires, which relates back to a secondary storyline from the first novel. In *Eclipse*, representatives of various clans of vampires are seeking to kill Bella and her relations as a revenge for the nomad vampire's death in the first book. The Cullens seek and find help with other vampire clans, and Bella's situation (friendship between Bella and Jacob) helps the Cullens and werewolves to join forces for the first time. In this sphere, interactions with donors help Bella gain abilities and attributes represented in her behavior and personal development. She no longer appears to be the fragile character from the first novel, and thus, in modern terms, the fairy-tale quest corresponds to a passage from teenagerhood to adulthood.

The last sphere corresponds to *Breaking Dawn* (2008). The sphere is called The Return of the Hero, and includes a complex array of functions performed after the completion of the quest: Pursuit, Arrival, Claim, Task, Recognition, Recognition, Transfiguration, and Wedding. Completion of the quest, as it turns out, is only an initial victory. Thus, in *Breaking Dawn*, Bella marries Edward, loses her virginity and gets pregnant, returns to Forks, and fights off nomad vampires who want to kill her and her unborn baby. Subsequently, she goes through another final initiation, as Edward transforms her into a vampire. Then, admitted into the vampire clan, she gives birth to her daughter, who in turn is also accepted by the werewolf Jacob as a sort of surrogate child of his. In this novel, Meyers additionally creates more connections between different plots in the earlier novels, closing some loose ends, and resolving the conflicts initiated in the first and second novel.

However, in the third section of *Breaking Dawn*, Meyer interrupts the plot again to complicate the pattern of the tale, and the story shifts back to Bella's perspective, describing Bella's painful transformation and the eventual acceptance of her new identity as a vampire. Another complication arises when her daughter Renesmee is misidentified as an "immortal child," a special and vicious type of vampire. Since "immortal children" are uncontrollable, creating them has been outlawed by the Volturi (a villain-vampire group from the second novel). The Volturi plan to kill Renesmee and the Cullens. With an attempt to survive, the Cullens gather other vampire clans from all around the world to stand as witnesses and to prove to the Volturi that Renesmee is not an immortal child. Now, Jacob the werewolf helps to identify the baby as a "good vampire," and to forge the new family connection, an unbreakable bond and mutual

pact of protection between the Cullens and the werewolves, ending the traditional hatred between the two races. And as in fairy tale, at this stage the heroine reveals her true potential and assumes a new, happier way of life, which in this case will go on forever: "[a]nd then we continued blissfully into this small but perfect piece of our forever" (*Breaking Dawn* 479).

Overall, Meyer's appropriation and modification of folktale material seems to consist in adding a series of embedded subplots to the general quest sequence of narrative functions known from Russian folktales. The themes of the general plot can be identified as coming of age and (in the fourth sphere) social reconciliation. Certain elements of this plot (especially the material from the first novel) suggest that Meyer's source was the Cinderella story, but the author only uses the story as an embedded subplot, discarding most of the material that defines the story in its various versions known from Aarne-Thomson index (cf. Dundes), or from cinematic versions (stepmother, three stepsisters, recognition, sorceress as helper). More importantly, the Beauty-and-the-Beast material is embedded in a truncated and reversed form, as it is Bella, rather than Edward, who is eventually transformed. Here, Meyer's use of folktale material is not superficial, but somehow revisionary, as she reverses and reassigns the functions of characters: Bella, the Beauty, is also a quest heroine, and her quest consists in getting transformed into the Beast, rather than the reverse. Many critics found this reversal controversial in its implied acceptance of violence and exploitation, the generally recognized connotative meanings of the vampire in cultural history (e.g. Gelder 108-123). Finally, most embedded subplots are confrontations with villains who are identified as collective heroes. Paradoxically, while Bella fulfills her quest of personal development (and of becoming a vampire), the vampires try to protect her from external threats, rogues, nomads, and foreigners. This modification, too, can be seen as controversial, perhaps related to American perception of many foreign countries as terrorist threats, axes of evil and such (Punter and Byron 268-272). In what follows, the discussion will attempt to interpret the three major modifications of folktale material in Meyer's *Twilight* novels: reversal of functions between Beauty and Beast, numerous embedded confrontations between Cullens and foreigners, and the adoption of the quest for personal-development as the main plot sequence.

To begin the interpretation, the present discussion will approach the vampire as the motif and the narrateme, a more detailed functional pattern from Propp's analysis. According to Propp's methodology Edward, the vampire who is the love interest, seems to be one of the simplest narrative units, which Propp calls the motif. Motifs in various folktales can have very different descriptions and attributes, but they retain the same function: "the dragon may be replaced by Koscej, a whirlwind, a devil or a falcon. Abduction can be replaced by vampirism or various other acts by which disappearance effected in tales" (Propp 13). This, accidentally, is the only moment when Propp himself mentions the vampire in his analysis. The vampire typically performs the functions of the villain and the antagonist in scenes of test and struggle. Among the many possible appearances for these functions, Meyer chooses the vampire, although she could use more realistic motifs, such as criminals, for the same functions. Why does she choose the vampire? How does it relate to the study of the modern fairy tale? For one thing, the popularity of the vampire in pop culture turned it into a very flexible

and multi-faceted character. "Vampires have dominated print literature since the 18th century, eventually becoming more visible as they crossed mediated boundaries and genre divides" (Ames 37). Thus, while modernizing the tale of Beauty and the Beast, Meyer could easily identify the Beast with the vampire and change his nature to fit the twenty-first-century USA:

> Meyer recuperates the vampire mythos from even the steamy, seedy world of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* where it has been argued that 'the kill is sexual.' She locates her vampires to the cold, perennially damp state of Washington where lust appears to boil both Bella and Edward's blood, but even the most intense passion during a kiss is enough to chill Edward's already cold lips to 'unresponsive stones.' (Sommers and Lume)

Meyer's ambiguous representation of vampire sexuality, as both hot and puritanically cold, can be interpreted in terms of feminist discussions of vampire narratives as metaphors of hostility towards female sexuality (Doane and Hodges; Ruth; Siering). Writing about Anne Rice's vampire novels, Doane and Hodges noticed that women characters, represented as innocent victims of vampire lust, or as corrupted products of vampire lust, are essentially passive objects, with very few attributes of human characters (such as psychological depth or self-determination). Thus, with reference to *Twilight*, the question which arises is whether Bella is a Gothic damsel in distress, pursued by a vampire. Given the reversal of functions between the Beauty and the Beast, discussed above, the answer seems to be paradoxical. According to Mann, "Meyers sorts the paradoxical narratives of female passivity and power, purity and desire, innocence and responsibility, dependence and autonomy, into a story where one leads, finally, to the other" (123). Similar observations on the composite and contradictory nature of gender representation in vampire narratives were made by Auerbach, in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, where the critic compared vampire characters to stereotypical images and paralogical plots generally used to reinforce gender stereotypes among young women, readers of popular fiction. Bella's behavior, her being "fragile," influences all other male characters around her:

> In spite of the bravery and the emotional strength that she exhibits at various points in the series, Bella's dominant characteristics are her physical weakness and the need to be protected from danger all the time. The characterization of Bella as a vulnerable innocent does the ideological work of transforming the overprotective thoughts of the men in her life—particularly Edward's and Jacob's—into perfectly reasonable, and almost endearing impulses. (Platt 148)

Platt's conclusion, that Bella interacts with overprotective and possessive males, helps to interpret the importance of embedded confrontation episodes, where the Cullens and Jacob protect Bella against foreign or rogue vampires.

Meyer's use of folktale material is related to the general critical debate among the feminist scholars who wanted to determine whether folktales support or subvert the patriarchal gender stereotypes (Keithley 5). This is related to the general statement by Bettelheim (45-58) that fairy tales teach children to follow the presuppositions and implicitly accepted behavior patterns of a given culture. However,

with a little irony, they can do the opposite: for instance, Alison Laurie argued that fairy tales taught women (and girls) to develop into powerful, independent individuals in a world dominated by patriarchal order. She describes many fairy tales as feminist works (Laurie). On the other hand, Marcia R. Lieberman presents an opposite view, pointing out the gender stereotypes fostered by many variants of the Cinderella story (385). Another example is Karen Rowe, who wrote that "romantic tales factor into female attitudes towards marriage, love, men, and society and states that fairy tales idealize romantic patterns and cause disappointment later in life" (235).

By combining Propp's formalist apparatus with the feminist approach to the fairy-tale, it is possible to interpret the vampire in Meyers's fiction as a motif that combines three quite different functions: Edward Cullen is initially defined as a villain in the first novel, where he describes himself as a seducer and Bella as a victim. Their mutual attraction leads to breach of interdiction, which in Propp's view is a function usually performed by the protagonist (Bella) at the instigation of the villain (Edward). Soon enough, however, Edward starts to perform the function of the donor, as other vampires do from the Cullen family, especially in the second and the third books. Together, the Cullen vampires support Bella's quest for adulthood and a fulfillment in life. Finally, and perhaps ironically, Edward also performs the function of the princess, or the reward offered to the protagonist (Bella) in the final sections of the fairy tale. In a reversal of the folktale functions, Edward also performs the function of the Beauty, who transforms the protagonist (Bella) into his/her own likeness (the vampire).

This analysis leads to two conclusions: one is that Meyer introduced gender-role reversal in her treatment of the folklore narrative, so that Bella is a hero(ine) performing the quest, and Edward is a prince(ss) offered to Bella when the quest was completed. At the same time, however, Meyer also performed the role reversal in the embedded subplot of the Beauty and the Beast, which leads to the ambiguity of the entire general quest plot, and to critical controversy over Bella's character. The controversy springs, according to the present analysis, from the implicit meanings of Meyer's reversal of functions between the characters. The other conclusion is that the motif of the vampire in Meyer's novels is developed through numerous embedded subplots, as a device that has three contradictory narrative functions: the villain, the donor, and the princess. Thus, the embedding of subplots not only leads to the expansion of folktale narrative into a series of novels, but also to a complicated development of the protagonists into ambiguous, contradictory, and perhaps implicitly disturbing juvenile characters. Their entry into adulthood is marred by ubiquitous and oppressive violence, contradicting role models, and seemingly insurmountable social divisions.

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REVIEWS

David H. Evans, ed. *Understanding James, Understanding Modernism*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017. 272 pages.

Classical American pragmatism, the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey, keeps returning and energizing various areas of contemporary intellectual culture. Pragmatism, both classical and in its "neo" version, has been a vast, flexible movement spanning surprisingly diverse forms of the life of the American mind, and—in a truly American fashion—synthesizing the material and the spiritual aspects of this life. Pragmatism's strength has always resided in the intellectual and spiritual boisterousness displayed by its founding fathers, figures who, among other things, were responsible for the transition that the American culture was undergoing, from the eruptions of its Romantic genius to its codification in respective modernist expert cultures.

One of those key figures is William James—a powerful and rich personality whose influences continue to be many. A few years ago, I obtained a volume of selected poems by Peter Gizzi, a poet I had written on and translated into Polish. The book carries an epigraph from James in which the philosopher postulates a continuity between the realms of matter and of the spirit, the idea coming from his groundbreaking *Principles of Psychology*. I was delighted at this find, and immediately remembered that Gizzi had been a great fan of a study by Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, from 2007, which explores the myriad ways in which various American pragmatisms (those found in figures as different as Jonathan Edwards and Gertrude Stein) nourished the literary thought. I also remembered that Gertrude Stein, one of the poets that Gizzi's formalist linguistic styles are indebted to, was William James's student and one of his most enthusiastic followers among the literary modernists.

Stein's often quoted tribute to James ("Is life worth living?—Yes, a thousand times yes, when the world still holds such spirits as prof. James," qtd. on p. 3 in the reviewed volume), next to remarks such as the one by Frost, who applauds James as "the most valuable teacher" he had at Harvard (160), serve as a useful entry to the central idea behind a volume of essays entitled *Understanding James, Understanding Modernism*, edited by David H. Evans and published by Bloomsbury in 2017. The task that the editor and the authors gathered in the publication had taken upon themselves has been to illustrate the various channels of logical continuity and correspondence that are active between James's philosophy and Western literary modernism, both as a general movement and as the creative output of an impressive array of particular authors, from Henry, William's brother, to Stein, Joyce, Proust, Frost, Stevens, and Pound. As adjacent to these connections, the volume discusses James's international liaisons, particularly the relation with Bergson, his impact on various other philosophers, both in the US and Europe, as well as his relation to modern political thought. The discussions are complemented by a section of shorter articles which serve as glossary entries on selected key terms from the various fields explored by James's restless thought.

Evans has given the volume a lucid and convincing structure. The first part presents a survey of the major areas and directions in which James's philosophical

thinking developed, from his original contributions to psychology, through commentary on religion, to his brand of pragmatism, culminating in his theories of experience and the inherent pluralism of the universe. This conceptual background is then treated, by the authors gathered in the second part, as a platform of departure for a series of discussions illustrating either the direct influences or the more general parallels that are at play between James and the giants of literary modernism. In all, the volume presents a daunting panoply of James's impacts and contributions that are detected in psychology, philosophy, literature, sociology, religious studies, political theory, and sociology.

Part 1 of the volume conceptualizes the fascinating path that James's thought traverses from his theories of consciousness, via his intuitions on religion, to his pragmatist theories of truth and the model of experience that fits what Nietzsche—whom it makes sense to treat as a continental parallel to James's contribution to modernism—would call a world of becoming rather than being. Diversified and picturesque as this path is, it is also amazingly coherent and Evans's volume does a great job in bringing forth its consistency.

James's philosophy begins with his insight into the fluid mechanics of human consciousness. The concept of reality as flux, which, together with his theory of experience, constitutes the core of his philosophy, culminating in his pragmatism and theory of the plastic universe, have their proper root in his psychological studies of the nature of consciousness. James, alongside Bergson in Europe, is responsible for making us aware of the stream-like nature of thought. We have thoughts and meanings in fluid continuities—such is the main thrust of this thesis—not in atomistic portions. On the other hand, the streams of consciousness are portioned out and attended to selectively by humans as individualized organisms. A personality is a particular set of habits which are responsible for the way in which the singular human organism responds to modulations of experience.

One of the paramount consequences of this model is James's insistence on the importance of relations or transitions between the states of consciousness, which on a different level may be considered as transitions between portions of experience or, simply, of reality. As Owen Flanagan and Heather Wallace remind us in the opening chapter, on the level of individual consciousness these transitions are detected as moods and other aspects of the conscious life, and James's brilliant idea is that we should pay attention to the particular emotional, cognitive, but also linguistic modulations of these relations (that is why James turns our attention to "the feelings of *and*, the feeling of *if*…"—the linguistic entries into experience, this thought leading directly to the poetry of Gertrude Stein).

The dynamic and plastic model of consciousness stands behind James's intriguing claims, later in his career, that the crux of our reality is a sort of primordial substance, preceding all sorts of subject/object splits. This substance is an absolute dynamics of flow and changeability which he calls "immediate flux" or "pure experience." The way this foundational level of reality can be approached and explored is called "radical empiricism." Joseph Campbell shows, in his contribution, how this concept returns us to the fluid model of consciousness as, again, "an affair of relations." The world is much more a matter of our negotiating or participating

in alternate sets of relations—whose extensions always exceed any particular here and now—than strict, one-directional, representational reports issued by a clearly delineated subject in reference to an equally clearly delineated and separate object. James's much more dynamic epistemic model—anticipating not only modernist but also post-modernist insights—takes us almost literally out of our skins: to sit in a room and to understand it will be a completely different real experience depending on the different, optional, networks of relations we explore—either those that refer to the biography of the perceiving human subject or those pertaining to the no less fluid "biography" of the physical space coming into being. Thus, the subject and the object will be provisional aspects of the vaster flux-like substance of the "pure experience."

The dynamic models of consciousness and experience are matched and complemented, in the middle part of James's career, by his views on religion, his pragmatist treatment of truth, and, finally, his vision of the plastic universe.

Especially the first two of these areas are affected by the quality of James's thought that is also responsible for the basic difference between his theory of flux and all those other theories that see reality, desire, truth, or subject-object relations as a matter of flow. For example, where contemporary approaches derived from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze see reality as permeated by flows of desires and vitalistic energies unobstructed by any contour of individual self, subjecthood, or personality, James's philosophy confronts flux with the reality of the always discrete, humanized, individualized sets of needs and desires, which, on a different level, constitute whatever is stable about our personality. The James-Deleuze relation is discussed in the volume by Barry Allen who concentrates on *A Pluralistic Universe*. While Allen stresses the affinity between the two thinkers, I would point out the difference: in James, unlike in Deleuze, flux is checked with individual human intervention which is, of course, also a form of complicity with the flux. This reciprocity is first noted in his reflection on religion.

James, as Nietzsche in Europe, shows gods and divinities to be concepts whose efficacy is impossible without the strictly human realms of needs, desires, conflicts and purposes. Micheal Bacon discusses the revolutionary approach to these correlations in James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, a study of the psychology of religion as it features in particularized experience of individuals, to show an unfailing originality of this volume. For James, gods—just as all our other conceptual frameworks—evolve in time, and are inextricably dependent on our inner psychological conflicts. Thus, to uphold the religious view of reality is, predominantly, to display an active stance toward the universe as an evolving whole—a view that James put together in his probably most well-known single piece, the essay "The Will To Believe," which is discussed separately in Evans's volume by John J. Stuhr. The combined reading of the chapters by Bacon and Stuhr helps to show how James managed to signal a paradigmatic shift in our understanding of the religious mind: for him religion is a name for a capacity of maintaining a twofold belief. First, it is a belief in the plasticity of a world as a place whose future is not pre-determined. As I would argue, based on the discussions found in Evans's volume, the very idea of the plastic universe is, on its deepest level, a religious response to the world. Second, it is a belief that it is the human stance toward the world that constitutes a decisive force that pushes reality toward its never pre-determined futures.

A one word name for such modernist translation of religion is *meliorism*; in a sense, this is what James's philosophy submits in the face of what Nietzsche would have called the death of traditional gods. But where Nietzsche dramatically over-reacts to his own diagnosis with the radical idea of the need to breed a post-human species (his anxiety-ridden concept of the übermensch), James proposes a much more viable option of observing our movements within our own plastic universe with which we ceaselessly interreact and communicate on many levels. Meliorism, thus, is a stance fitting a world that—against the ages-old philosophies of the varieties of absolute monism—cannot ever be arrested by any single key-word concept that, as those philosophies hoped, would arrest and freeze our understanding of it in one stable contextual frame. James develops this idea in his lectures on *A Pluralistic Universe*. As it is shown in the contribution by Barry Allen, the main significance of this idea is that James's ontology is deeply and irrevocably pluralist, with the reverberations of this ontology predictable on the level of cultural politics.

All strands of James's philosophy seem to come together in his analysis of the world's indigenous plasticity. As an organic ingredient of this plasticity, we react to its exigencies, and our reactions are forms of commitment. When they obtain a particular form of intensity, they may be considered as forms of religiousness. If we wish a more secular approach, we enter another vast area of James's heritage—his "pragmatism." Truths—as Alan Malachowski reminds us in the volume—are names, according to James, not so much of stable correspondences to reality (the flux view of reality making this Cartesian concept antiquated), but of actively modulated "agreements"—which should be seen as results of our continuous struggles with reality. They are forms of engagement in which we break the flux into particular realities. Thus, as Malachowski reminds us, James's pragmatism is his way of pointing toward the "world-completing powers [of] humans," our "truth-creating powers" (71). Thus, James's theory of truth returns us to the individualistic side of James's thinking. Life, in James, is worth-living as a form of the individualized form of negotiating the flux. We confront the energetic vastness of the plastic universe, its ridiculously disproportionate energetic excess, through personal existence that is always "a genuine struggle and strenuous engagement that demands our creative and transformative energies" (38).

Two conclusions come to mind as commentary to the first section of the volume. The first one is offered early on by the main editor, David H. Evans. Namely, James should be seen as a thinker who is pivotal in a paradigmatic shift: his exuberant, many-fielded writing helps intellectual culture to leave behind the strictures of Cartesianism, and at the same stroke to pave a way for those ideas of the fluidity of our truths and meaning that have been explored by the thinkers of late modernity and post-structuralism. The inclusion among them of figures like Richard Rorty seems obvious (James, next to Dewey, was Rorty's personal hero), but it is worth pointing out that Evans also mentions Wittgenstein, Derrida, and Deleuze.

The second commentary is my own. I would venture the thesis that James's thought offers an alternative to the more up-to-date trends derived from the advocates of the post-human, Deleuzian, new-materialist fluidity. In James, the confrontation of flux reveals the animalistic and evolutionary genealogy of the human, but it does not abolish the contours of a certain individualized, interpretive, and will-oriented entity.

Truth, meaning, in some sense the flow of experience itself, make sense only because there are pragmatically limited, physically embodied, finite, mortal individuals, whose limited biology dictates to them the respective ways in which they simply have to negotiate and configure the flows of desire. These carvings, in turn, help to create the truths and realities out of the flux. The universe, that is, with all of its impressive plasticity, makes sense only because there are those fragile, finite, desiring beings, such as humans, whose finitude also spells the necessary forms of limiting the flow.

Part 2 od the volume concentrates on the influences and parallels between James's thought and literary modernism. The chapters on these literary correspondences are preceded by an elaboration of the rich and fruitful James-Bergson relation, offered by Rosa Slegers, who reminds the reader how both philosophers were united by their staunch animosity toward the "vicious intellectualism," which is the position according to which stable concepts capture the essence of reality. Instead, the task of being closer to what is really going on around us, claim both James and Bergson, is fulfilled better by diving back into the fluid flux of experience. As far as forms of writing are involved, such dive can only be effected through the kind of language that is seeking states of suspension and flexibilities that steer away from cliched and stultifying structures of established concepts. This is precisely the approach to writing that is shared by both of the James brothers and the parallels between their respective endeavors—in William's best and most fluid philosophical prose and in Henry's complex stylistic exercise of his later novels—are examined in the chapter by Jill Kress Karn.

The following chapters pursue further the literary bearings that William James's ideas have had on the giants of European modernism: David H. Evans examines how James's emphasis on the temporal transitiveness of experience is reflected in Gertrude Stein's attempt to render it in her forms of repetition; Mark Richardson looks at Frost's approach to religious experience through the lenses of James's translation of religiousness as an active/creative stance toward the universe; Kristen Case shows how Stevens's technique of observing the mind at play can be viewed as a version of James's linking truth and belief by the concept of a "hypothesis," with Stevens's poems discussed as devices through which we can observe the transformations of the hypotheses by which we test reality; Patricia Rae revisits grounds she has covered in her 1997 book on the pragmatist lineage of imagist poetry (*The Pragmatic Muse*), where she discusses Pound's image and Stevens's "fiction" as forms, again, of James's "hypothesis" viewed as diagnostic, interpretive devices. Rae expands her earlier argument by including in the picture George Orwell's political writing. The two remaining chapters on the literary connections, by Gian Balsamo and Lisi Schoenbach, treat the contribution that James's concepts of consciousness, embodied memory, and personality as collection of habits provide for our understanding of the stylistic and cognitive complexities found in the prose of James Joyce and Marcel Proust. Part 2 closes with two more essays, by Michela Bella and Robert Danish, which touch on, respectively, on the reception of James in Italy and his influence on modern political thought.

The collective thrust of the chapters gathered in this part is found in illuminating the proximity of the philosophical theory and the literary technique. James's prose itself is shown as an attempt, through a kind of philosophical language

that does not shrink from metaphor, to prepare the way for those literary experiments that underline the reality of change and relationality. The authors in this part present how the various particular writerly techniques devised by the leading writers of the modernist aesthetic revolution were attempts to align consciousness with the idea that meaningful experience must constantly negotiate its singular contours with and alongside, not against, the reality of permanent change.

As an afterthought, I would add that the discussions in Part 2 of the volume provide vistas that go beyond High Modernism. They also convincingly, if indirectly, suggest that continuous attention to James's thought makes very good sense in reference to those aesthetics that have grown out of the modernist moment and are part of the contemporary moment.

Kacper Bartczak
University of Łódź

Rüdiger Kunow. *Material Bodies: Biology and Culture in the United States*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018. 483 pages.

Rüdiger Kunow's massive volume offers an intricate analysis of intersections of and interdependencies between biology and culture. In the sections that make up the book, the author demonstrates numerous and complex ways in which biology organizes and challenges disparate life experiences, and, in view of recent biomedical technologies, poses new theoretical questions about life, ethics, and American identity. According to Kunow, biology has become thoroughly culturized, and has transformed into "a discursive anchor in debates about what can count as a good life worth having, what relations humans develop toward their bodies, their offspring, their own old age" (7). Moreover, a significant part of cultural productions is expressed via biological imagery, thus testifying to the way biology expands beyond the sphere of exclusively scientific projects and permeates everyday practices. To bring together all these questions and concerns, the author engages various critical approaches, from materialist cultural critique, Marxism, gender studies, ecocriticism, Foucauldian biopolitics, science and technology studies and posthumanism.

While the relationship between biosciences and the humanities is not a new idea, and Kunow acknowledges influences of such new interdisciplinary fields as medical humanities, literature and medicine (and the journal of the same title), and narrative medicine to name just a few examples, *Material Bodies* calls for a profound analysis of the two-directional engagements between sciences and the humanities. "If the cultural side of biocultures," writes Kunow, "is understood merely as offering cultural counseling to scientists or as providing the ethics component required in federal grant applications in the U.S., then the biocultures project will run the risk of merely 'reinforcing the structural problematic that too often governs disciplinary relations in the academy: the sciences are rich, the humanities poor'" (Clayton et al. qtd. in Kunow 20). What Kunow repeatedly emphasizes and demonstrates with a myriad of examples is the fact that literary and cultural criticism may significantly expand contexts in which biology and biocultures operate.

As promised in the title, Kunow offers an analysis of biological influences on American culture, which, in his view, has recently been marked by the process he calls "biologization of the signifier America" (17). Even though the proliferation of biology-related images and language is observable everywhere, the author claims that the discipline of American Studies has in fact shown little interest in "how biology (of the human body or the natural habitat) has been foundational for the formation and stabilizing of 'America'" (21). This seems to be a problematic statement considering a long history of processes aimed at precisely stabilizing the definition of who counts as American (or more importantly, who does not) using (pseudo)scientific discourses, that of biology included. Similarly, Kunow's take on race and gender is equally problematic. The introduction does offer an extensive summary of how biology is implicated in the production of racialized and gendered bodies, along with analyses of constructivist theories which underpin the critique of these categories as well as the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. The author explains that his emphasis on biology as a "foundational feature in thinking about race and gender" allows him to demonstrate how "the figurative energy of the discursive field of biology has been a powerful medium to render human beings differently present, at times even highly visibly different, and thus vulnerable, in the public sphere" (30). That said, in the following paragraph Kunow provides "a note of caution" that "[t]his is not a book about 'race,' nor, for that manner, about 'gender'" (31). While the author is indeed at liberty to choose his theoretical and thematic framework, ironically, the analyzed contexts and cultural and literary examples clearly demonstrate that, as far as biology and the effort to stabilize the idea of America are concerned, race and gender do come to the forefront.

In the first section, entitled "The Materialism of Biological Encounters," Kunow concentrates on the spaces of interactions between biology and mobility. Drawing from Louis Althusser's work, Kunow refers to these interactions as "biomedical encounters" and demonstrates how these seemingly unambiguous communal events produce serious social geopolitical consequences. In a series of examples, the chapter shows how the context of human mobility creates situations of the mingling of biological materials (bacteria, microbes, and viruses, to name just a few). Thus, human mobility can no longer be perceived solely in terms of individual interactions, productive in their intellectual and cultural potential, but instead becomes subject to policies regarding the prevention and containment of contagious diseases such as SARS, MERS, avian and pig influenzas or HIV-AIDS. The examples selected by Kunow—the case of Mary Mallon better known as Typhoid Mary, the Bubonic Plague of 1899-1990 and the discourse of the "Yellow Peril" used in relation to Chinese immigrants as well as epidemics of Yellow Fever in New York (1668) and Boston (1691), to mention just a few—aptly illustrate various critical debates that biomedical encounters initiate: mobility and (im)migration, the postcolonial context of human mobility, the spread of epidemics in public discourse, and public health and the methods of its protection. The topic of public health and its representation in mass media is emphasized in the second part of the first section. Here, Kunow uses various literary and pop culture examples to illustrate the "culturization" of mass disease. The proliferation of representations of mass diseases is a fascinating phenomenon as well as a somewhat ironic choice of

emphasis: even though cardiovascular diseases and cancer are the main causes of death in the United States, it is rare infectious diseases such as MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) that receive the most attention (Kunow 132-33). Moreover, using a number of contemporary films and literary works, Kunow analyzes the emergent language of mass disease which is characterized by the well-known pervasive application of military metaphors (invasion) as well as the production of new terms and concepts ("biological vulnerability" or "biological containment").

Section two, entitled "Not Normatively Human: Cultural Grammars and the Human Body," begins with an exhaustive analysis of the creation and functions of bodily norms in Western culture. Biology actively participates in the creation and promotion of categories defining normalcy and setting standards of beauty, health, fitness, etc. thus demonstrating its entanglement with cultural ideas about what constitutes the normal. Drawing from the work of Georges Canguilhem, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas, the author reveals the often contradictory nature of logic applied in the creation of norms: norms rely on binaries, they are descriptive and prescriptive, and they are fixed and at the same time flexible to react to changing historical and social conditions. To illustrate this versatility of norms, Kunow analyzes such diverse phenomena as the cultural requirement to comply with body ideals (Audre Lorde's *Cancer Journals*), ageism and disability. Ageism and disability are discussed in separate, lengthy subsections and perspectives are offered from the critical positions of Age Studies and Disability Studies. Again, Kunow provides many interesting cultural and literary examples (Philip Roth's *Everyman*, the autobiographies of disabled war veterans, Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*) to demonstrate how the conditions of being old and disabled depart from what the culture defines as normal. However, these categories "do not have a stable referent in bodily conditions (be they mental or physical) but are instead realized in communicative interaction in the public domain" (321). It is precisely in social interactions where Kunow identifies the space of emerging non-normative categories that reject the confining logic of binaries.

The third section, entitled "Corporeal Semiotics: The Body of the Text/ the Text of the Body," begins with questions about the ways in which genetics and molecular technologies redefine the ways in which the body is given cultural and social presence and how its perceptions are dramatically challenged by a possibility of intervention on the body's smallest possible building blocks. Genetics, which as Kunow rightly observes, has quickly entered popular culture to produce a rich body of technologically-driven imagery, has also created new discourses pertaining to describe new experiences of corporeality. To provide a theoretical and thematic framework for these considerations, Kunow discusses the relationship of soma and seme, body and meaning, materiality and culture, and also the textuality of the body and what such a concept may entail in the era of genetics. Again, the discussion aptly illustrates the author's point and gives a sense of the complexity of the problem. The section addresses topics as diverse as Emmett Till's case, harvesting organs for transplants, genetic screening, and technology-based body enhancement. In the middle subsection, Kunow shifts his gaze to the theme of pain and the question of multiple meanings ascribed to this particular manifestation of embodiment. The last subsection provides a thematic closure to the two previous subsections as it discusses various images of cancer(s).

Drawing on the seminal work of Susan Sontag and Siddhartha Mukherjee's more recent *The Emperors of All Maladies*, Kunow summarizes the most prevalent ideas about cancer and its cultural representations, and moreover, demonstrates how discourses of biotechnologies expand this discussion. An interesting example is Kunow's analysis of a case described in Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, which "invites renewed reflection of the spatial and temporal circumference of the human body and human life in general" (404).

Material Bodies is impressive in its scope, a well-researched and elegantly written book about the intersections of biology and culture, a connection that cannot be ignored in the context of contemporary applications of biomedical technologies. Kunow poses probing questions and provides countless examples from popular culture, literature, film, and biosciences. Moreover, he can boast fluency in an array of theoretical approaches, which demonstrates to what great extent the analyzed phenomena engage a number of disciplines and create new discourses of approaching the human body and the experience of life in the twenty-first century. The book is indeed an interdisciplinary and highly engaging project.

However, there arises the question of whether limiting the scope of inquiry would not have greatly benefited the entire project. In fact, each of the three sections provides ample material for a separate book, which, considering the author's erudition and dedication, would produce excellent results. Moreover, a more limited scope would allow for a more exhaustive analysis of the selected cultural and literary texts, and a concentration on issues that are not in the background of inquiry, for instance race and gender. More emphasis on the interconnection between genetics and race would allow for a demonstration of how biosciences are often employed to recreate well-known racial categories and how they become implications implicates in biocolonialism practices, which in turn would serve as an opportunity to engage in a discussion of the excellent work of Jenny Reardon on the Human Genome Project.

Finally, considering the size of the book, the organization into chapters calls for a better execution. *Material Bodies* consists of three long sections and, as the reader learns from the contents, smaller subsections which in the text are referred to as chapters. However, there is almost no visual separation (line breaks, titles in bold, a larger font) which announces the beginning of a new chapter, which leaves the reader with a sense of dealing with three massive thematic sections. Moreover, the closing chapter does not offer a comprehensive summary of the presented arguments. Instead, the author concentrates on multiplying questions to ponder, whereas the reader would perhaps appreciate an elegant summary. Similarly, the book does not include an index, which, considering the size and scope of the project, is a serious disadvantage and makes navigating the text truly difficult.

All in all, *Material Bodies* is a highly recommended text for all scholars interested in the topic of biocultures, as well as those searching for interesting material for research or class use. Kunow poses penetrating questions and offers illuminating analyses supported by well-selected literary and cultural examples.

Joanna Ziarkowska
University of Warsaw

Justyna Włodarczyk. *Genealogy of Obedience: Reading North American Dog Training Literature, 1850s–2000s*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018. 254 pages.

Diogenes was the first scholar known to (Western) history who was fascinated by the figure of the dog. So much so that he wanted to live like one, whereas his school of thought became known as the cynics (which translates to "canines" from Greek). The thing that Diogenes valued most about dogs was their freedom, as they were able to roam the streets without much regard for conventions "whether of religion, of manners, of dress, of housing, of food, or of decency" (Russell 247). Dogs do not care about one's social status, they treat people on the basis of how they act towards them and who they *really* are. The same sentiment is expressed by Cesar Millan, the (in)famous self-proclaimed dog whisperer, who values dogs for their ability to just let go and live in the moment, as he has expressed it in many of his shows. However, apart from the 25 centuries separating both men—Diogenes was born in 412 BC, Millan is one of the most prominent faces of today's obedience training—it is their approach towards the supposed freedom of dogs that is the main difference between them. How is it possible that over such a span of time dogs have turned from individual and independent beings, as Diogenes saw them, to elements that needed to be tamed and controlled?

As it is often the case, things are not that simple nor (luckily) that bad. In *Genealogy of Obedience: Reading North American Dog Training Literature, 1850s-2000s* Justyna Włodarczyk uses a Foucauldian framework to discuss books devoted to dog training. The ideas of obedience and control, as understood and developed by the French philosopher, have never been applied to the said topic, which makes Włodarczyk's work truly groundbreaking. Still, she stresses herself that her book is not "contributing to Foucauldian scholarship; I see it contributing to animal studies" (3). So while Foucault's discussion of biopolitcs and biopower enriches her argument, from an animal studies perspective it is Włodarczyk's retracing of the history of dog training that makes the book captivating.

The titular genealogy is also understood in a Foucauldian sense as a critical analysis of the emergence of certain beliefs, in this case associated with and applied to dog training. What makes Włodarczyk's work (even more) perverse is that she chooses to discuss American dog training literature, which, at least in theory, should be all about the freedom associated with being an animal/pet. Appreciative and protective of their own freedoms, it becomes clear since the beginning of Włodarczyk's analysis that Americans were not as willing to apply the same logic to their animal compatriots. The narrative that emerges from dog training literature is not comprehensive, nor one-sided, however, there are some patterns which the author masterfully detects. The trends, approaches and observations seem somewhat stuck between two poles of understanding dogs as either parts of the animal or the human world. In a sense, the stories about dogs are also stories about their humans.

The point of departure of this work, the second half of the nineteenth century, marks the emergence of dog training literature. The books were addressed to white, middle-class urban dwellers as only they could afford the luxury of living with a trainable dog. As Włodarczyk reiterates, not all dogs were considered worthy of training. The idea of applying the Victorian ethics of kindness to dog training was of course not as noble or kind as it sounds. The corporal punishment was clearly involved, but it was executed for the

good of the dog, not out of spite or anger. Throughout all of the works analyzed in this book it becomes evident that their authors firmly believed that every form of instruction was supposed to benefit the pet, even though the approaches towards man's best friend varied across time. It is worth pointing out (as Włodarczyk does in her work) that these changes were connected with the changes experienced by humans, which, in turn, affected the dog training discourse.

In the 1850s dog training went beyond the confines of the circus or the show and was presented as an educational activity for humans. While some books on dog training already appeared before that time, they were reserved for hunting and working dogs. Now the companion animal was elevated to the level of trainability, which means it was embraced by the human world, allowed to enter the realm which was out of its reach at the inception of the nineteenth century. Dog training books from that time are devoted to tricks, which stand in strong opposition to the tasks reserved for hunting and working dogs.

These are the topic of Chapter 2, which is the only one abstaining from the issue of trainability. It deals rather with eugenics, which is of course a topic that appeared through the years in various books, yet birth was never proof or reason for a dog's (in)ability to master the discipline measures exhibited by man. The chapter presents the differences between the approaches towards the hunting dogs of slaves and slaveholders. In doing so it highlights the middle-class, white character of dog training literature. Slaves used their dogs to hunt smaller prey and they were most concerned with their usefulness, whereas for slaveholders hunting was a ceremony, and their well-trained dogs were an integral part of it. Killing animals was regarded as a sport in which the malnourished, poorer dogs kept by the slaves clearly could not participate. That is why they were often disposed of whenever the owners considered them a nuisance. Włodarczyk combines the story of slaves' dogs with the present-day representations of the pit bull, considered a typical African American breed, demonized and often exterminated due to the fear they attack white Americans.

This chapter may seem to depart from the general narrative of the book, however, due to its peculiarity it underlines the intertwining notions of training and breed, which at times were considered dependent on each other. More often than not though, trainability was (and is now) seen as an ability inherent to any dog. The tools of discipline were mostly the same: the whip and the collar, but in the second half of the twentieth century dog training experienced a gentler turn, as both were replaced by the lead. The lead was eventually dropped, at least to some extent, as the basis of training is now concerned with body control, positive reinforcements and fun. While some dog trainers, like Millan, serve as paragons of a more manly, anti-intelligent obedience training, it is this feminine, gentler and kinder approach that has dominated today's dog training. Thanks to it the dog is appreciated for its individuality, it once again became a creature which was so valued by Diogenes, not fully wild nor domesticated.

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Łukasz Muniowski
University of Warsaw

Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska. *Dziecko, rodzina i płeć w amerykańskich inicjatywach humanitarnych i filantropijnych w II Rzeczypospolitej* [The Child, the Family, and Gender in the American Humanitarian and Philanthropic Initiatives in Interwar Poland]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2018. 419 pages.

Whether the result of careful planning or a lucky coincidence, the timing of *Dziecko, rodzina i płeć w amerykańskich inicjatywach humanitarnych i filantropijnych w II Rzeczypospolitej* by Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska couldn't have been better. In 2018, when the monograph entered the Polish academic market, the whole world celebrated the centennial of the end of WWI, and Poland commemorated the 100th anniversary of regaining independence after 123 years of political nonexistence on the political map of Europe. Moreover, the year 2019 marks another important centenary: the establishment of U.S.-Polish diplomatic relations. As it happens, it is exactly those events of 1918 and 1919 that constitute the starting point of the engaging history of American humanitarian and philanthropic activities in restored Poland throughout the interwar period 1918-1939 told by the Author in her voluminous monograph. She situates the motivation behind the American humanitarian presence in Poland/Europe after WWI at the intersection of US geo-political interests and the strong ideological impulse of American Progressivism. The book approaches the history of the American aid from the perspective signaled by the title concepts: the child, the family, and gender. The argument is organized around four groups of principal Polish welfare recipients in the considered period identified by the American humanitarians as primarily important in the reconstruction of the war-devastated Polish society: deprived children, dysfunctional families, women in their maternal role, and male youth. Kuźma-Markowska formulates several research questions concerning the four selected areas and, by answering them, attempts a comprehensive historical panorama of American humanitarian operations in interwar Poland, a synthesis much needed when the relevant Polish and American historiography is still fragmentary and dispersed.

The study may be appreciated at two main levels. The enthusiasts of traditional historiographic narratives will value ample factual information about the American political and philosophical motives behind the humanitarian activity in post-war Europe; the main American philanthropic organizations operating in interwar Poland; their Polish institutional partners and successors; biographical references to the main American and Polish activists; careful attention to the chronology of various humanitarian endeavors; geographical sketches of American welfare provisions in Poland, and the inclusion of interesting—often previously unknown—human and financial statistics of the American relief ventures. While some of this factual information is drawn from secondary sources, Polish and American, the Author's remarkable effort to retrieve new evidence from a wide range of primary archival materials must be fully acknowledged.

Although praiseworthy, the conventional methodological apparatus is not the main strength of the monograph, but its combination with the cultural studies critical paradigm of sex-gender/race-ethnicity/class. Due to this methodological

decision, Kuźma-Markowska presented a unique socio-cultural history of prolonged contact between two geographically distant as well as materially, mentally and politically different cultures happening not only among political and intellectual elites but—most importantly—amid the common people of restored Poland. It is a story of a cultural clash between American ethnocentrism, rationalism, progressivism and trust in scientific philanthropy represented by the US relief organizations on the one hand, and the disintegrated, materially devastated and physically undermined Polish nation struggling with poverty, massive illiteracy and major economic difficulties on the other. But it is also a story of ordinary Americans, their generosity, charitable disposition, sense of moral responsibility, and of dozens of volunteers ready to travel overseas and work hard helping a distant unfamiliar nation in its predicament, often in the atmosphere of reluctance and distrust.

Detailed aspects of the culture contact are explored across five main book chapters. Chapter 1 presents and critically discusses three dominant aspects of Poland's post-war situation generated in America by the humanitarian activists via mass-circulation press and eye-witness reports: pervasive rural and urban homelessness, maternal poverty, and the ordeal of child war survivors. Kuźma-Markowska confronts the emotionally charged sensationalized presentations, evocative illustrations, and photographs with historical facts and points to the reasons of their bias and selectivity: diagnosing the plight of Polish peasants and urban underclass by middle-class professional American philanthropists; faulty generalization about the entire country on the basis of the deprived Eastern borderlands, and overextending Poland's post-war humanitarian crisis well into the 1920s. Chapter 2 draws a complex picture of "rescuing" Polish children by American philanthropic organizations characterized by the financial and operational priority of nutrition and physical rehabilitation, the American scientific dietary principles confronted with Polish reality, and the logistics of food preparation and serving, among other factors. An important fact highlighted in this section is ethnic segregation of children's aid adopted by the American Relief Organization based on the recognized Jewish-Christian polarization of Polish society. The ethnic division of American philanthropy was deepened by the parallel operation of the Jewish Distribution Committee, an American organization offering aid to Jewish populations in central and eastern Europe. Although the Author blames the adopted system for intensifying ethnic frictions and assimilation problems in the multiethnic interbellum Poland, she acknowledges its practical effectiveness in reaching the most destitute children of both groups, especially in the immediate post-war period.

The restoration of broken and dysfunctional Polish families as the American philanthropic strategy of helping war orphans makes the content of chapter 3. The discussed solutions such as support for orphanages, propagation of financial and legal adoptions by American citizens, creation of foster families in Poland, facilitating family reunifications and reintegration of children across the Atlantic leaves one in awe at their scope and variety as well as at the personal involvement and goodwill they required. Kuźma-Markowska points to the difficulties of making them more effective, such as the effort of recruiting adoptive parents in the US, the cost of transatlantic transportation, strict American immigration laws, lack of sufficient public and church facilities for orphanages and day-care centers in many areas. She also stresses the

crucial importance of American—philanthropy for Jewish orphans systematically neglected by the regional state administrations in favor of Christian children.

Chapter 4, devoted to the central role of women in the child-centered American humanitarian projects, constitutes a fine example of women's history closely linked with the feminist concerns with women's family role models, particularly maternal, paid employment and domestic labor, and the intersection of the public and private life. Polish women were not primary targets of the American philanthropic institutions; nevertheless, the recognized importance of their maternal and child caring functions got them involved in many rescue programs dedicated to the youngest generation. While the many presented forms and problems of working with destitute Polish pregnant and newly delivered women and young mothers constitute a good read, the chapter's most engaging aspect is the simultaneous elucidation of the profound cultural disparities between the traditional Polish and new medicalized American views on pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, infant care, and hygiene. Many of the American interventions were certainly good and much needed. Yet reading about Polish women's reluctance towards the institutional male-supervised encroachments on their traditional maternal sphere (considered by Kuźma-Markowska as an instance of Foucauldian biopolitics), one cannot avoid a reflection on how many of the once discouraged non-scientific practices of midwife-assisted home childbirth, non-medical pain relief, and breastfeeding on demand have recently been reclaimed by obstetrical and nursing sciences. Another impression left by the section on working women is that, albeit under necessity, many Polish lower-class widowed and abandoned women paradoxically came much closer to today's norm of the working mother and the female family breadwinner than the model American housewives in patriarchal middle-class families.

The final chapter deals with the American attempts at the physical and moral regeneration of Polish male adolescents and young men undertaken by YMCA and its Polish continuator. As in the preceding chapters, Kuźma-Markowska links the chronological account of the implementation of the YMCA programs and construction of facilities with parallel reflection of how they were meant to propagate the contemporary Anglo-American middle-class ideal of the muscular Christian gentleman characterized by manliness, discipline, self-control, and the moral and physical beauty of athleticism. She demonstrates how in many respects the YMCA goals were being transformed by the Polish conditions and priorities. For instance, strong interest of young Polish males in team and combat sports stemmed from remodeling the ideal of the muscular gentleman to that of a muscular soldier. Moreover, the Catholic and single-sex identity of Polish YMCA closed its centers to Jewish males and all young women. YMCA also failed to replicate its mass character in Poland, and became politicized in the Eastern borderlands by its involvement in the resistance to Russian communism and Polonization of culturally "savage" ethnic minorities.

One may have a few minor regrets concerning the monograph. One, applying to most Polish history books, is the lack of a truly useful back-of-the-book index with thematic and geographical entries, not sufficiently compensated for by the provided index of names. Another is the absence of at least one general map of interbellum Poland visualizing the spatial network of the American relief centers. The book could

also have been richer in photographic reproductions, particularly when discussed in the text (341, 352). For an author evidently well acquainted with Polish, Ukrainian, Belarussian, and American archives, Kuźma-Markowska offers a rather modest indication of the needs and possibilities of further research on American philanthropy, suggesting instead a closer look at the penetration of American popular culture in contemporary Poland. Yet these omissions do not diminish the overall high value of this well-conceived monograph based on rich primary sources. Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska paid due tribute to the generous and tireless efforts of many American institutions and individuals who helped the most vulnerable members of Polish society in the time of greatest need. She met the challenge of doing humanitarian history described by Yves Denéchère as the necessity of combining "social history, political history, history of international relations, but also cultural history and history of mentalities" (6). She achieved it by intertwining political, economic, class, ethnic, and gender reasoning. She made a valuable contribution to the dynamically developing studies on modern international humanitarianism. Hers is also a timely and valuable historiographic response to the current interest in the American humanitarian activities as a form of pursuing specific political objectives by the US governments and the heralded decline of principled humanitarianism.

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Irmina Wawrzyczek
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

Nikki Skillman. *The Lyric in the Age of the Brain*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016. 352 pages.

Many know that love, in its early stage, releases neurotransmitters identical with those released by regular addictive drugs. Most others suspect it, without knowing exactly or even roughly how it works. Regular craving for new love will not get us into an addiction recovery center, although, from the biological point of view, it is unclear exactly why it won't. Love is missed in the same way as a shot of opium. The materialism of the mind sciences is inherent in so much of the present discourse. Although it doesn't exactly occupy our mind, it structures our intuitive understanding of our condition and our moods.

Nikki Skillman, currently an Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University Bloomington, had quite a brilliant idea to explore how the biological, physiological, and neuroscientific descriptions of the mind—accounts of the machinery of reason, emotion, grief, memory, love—have impacted the lyrical poetry whose very domain has been traditionally these emotions. While one would expect poets to resist the notion of mind thoroughly embodied, Skillman finds them in fact

"exhibit[ing] a common faith in mechanistic interpretations of mind" (4). They share in the philosophical consensus that the mind is in fact the brain. Postwar American poets, she says, are, on the whole, "deferential witnesses to the explanatory power of science" (4). At the same time, the critic shows postmodern poets to insist on human mystery regardless, and to variously to this biologization of human life.

The critic finds this paradigm dominating, for instance, the work of Robert Lowell. First, Skillman demonstrates how the mechanistic metaphors for the mind are central to Lowell's high confessional mode. Her example is, not surprisingly, "The Neo-Classical Urn" from *For the Union Dead* (1964), a poem which is greatly illustrative of the biologist understanding of the mind; it exemplifies "verse not as an inspirited vehicle of the immaterial soul but as a hollow counterpart to the inanimate parts that somehow anchor human wholes" (51). To quote her quote from Lowell's famous lyric,

> I rub my head and find a turtle shell
> stuck on a pole,
> each hair electrical
> with charges, and the juice alive
> with ferment. Bubbles drive
> the motor, always purposeful... (51)

Paradoxically, seen as classically confessional, this poem puts into question the very epistemological grounds of the confessional mode. But Lowell's most dramatic and radical reaction to the growing domination of the biologist paradigm came a few years afterwards. In 1967 he was put on lithium which suspended the endless circles of mania and depression that led to his annual hospitalizations between 1957 and 1966. Robert Giroux rather famously recalled how Lowell underwent a crisis when told that his constant swaying between mania and depression could be fixed simply with a little bit of lithium carbonate taken in pills. In fact, he and his loved ones would have been spared so much of suffering, had the drug been discovered earlier. "It's terrible," he reportedly told Giroux, "to think that all I've suffered, and all the suffering I've caused, might have arisen from the lack of a little salt in my brain" (60). The lithium led him to radically renew his writing in his experimental volumes *Notebook 1967–68* (1969) and *Notebook* (1970). In Skillman's view, those two volumes advance "a form that depicts the chaos of inner life as an expression of chemical accident" (50). She then offers a dramatic and persuasive account of how, after he had a relapse, he lost confidence both in the cure and in his poetic mission.

Robert Creeley, too, in his own way, quickly moved to poetry that subscribed to the biological materialism dominating our understanding of the mind. In his case, the change came with his recreational use of LSD in the early 1960s. In the 1950s, he still worked under the assumption there is an unbridgeable duality between the body and the mind, something that, as he said in an interview, made poetry writing feel like an "awful" "torque" (89). His volume *For Love: Poems 1950–1960* (1962), Skillman writes, was "cripplingly" self-conscious and systematically denigrating the body. The year 1963, however, marks a significant transition to poetry showing the mind to consist of progressing-through-time motions of consciousness determined by

physiological moods and the contingencies of language. His poem "I Keep to Myself Such Measures..." (1963) still seems to arise from a unified "I" but is no longer a torque of conflict of the mind and the body. It represents a far stabler motion of thought through time. Creeley's poetry, in the wake of William Carlos Williams, sustainedly arose from his modern understanding of the mind; it registers the process of thinking as unfolding in real time, biologically condition and also guided by string of words on the page (101).

Skillman then includes analogous sketches on the neurologist discourse as underlying A. R. Ammons's poetic thought, James Merrill's understanding of memory and its failures, and John Ashbery's account of attention. It seems that none of the different modes of mental life has escaped physiological descriptions or framing in the important American poetry of the last 70 years.

Jorie Graham, too, has been deeply involved in the physiologist paradigm in the understanding of the human mind. Skillman traces this interest to her friendship with Antonio Damasio, the chair of the neurology department at the University of Iowa in 1990s. Still, Graham has been concerned that the biological determinism inherent in the paradigm uselessly undermines our appreciation of social and interpersonal responsibilities (220). In this best chapter of her book, Skillman shows Graham's work as stemming from her conviction that poetry should both avoid the old illusions and yet fulfill its special mission and obligation to balance off biological cognitivism with the reassertion of "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" (207). She both asserts the physiologist mode and opposes it. In the late 1980s and 1990s Graham begins to use underlined blank spaces. Combined with mathematical variables, they reaffirm gaps and mysteries in human vision and understanding. Skillman argues that Graham's poetry identifies blind spots of human empiricism. In her poem "Subjectivity," for instance, from her volume *Materialism* (1996), a dead monarch butterfly, an archetypal symbol of the mind, is a subject of intense inquiry. Closely scrutinized by the speaker, its wholeness eludes description; inserted among the symbolic pages of a book, it would become flat:

> as if it were still too plural, too
> shade-giving, where the mind needs it
> so flat (218)

After five rich chapters discussing individual poets, Skillman's inquiry accelerates toward the end. In "Conclusion," subtitled "Anti-Lyric in the Age of the Brain," she more cursorily but effectively reviews a number of more recent poetic projects—like that by Tan Lin (b. 1957), Juliana Spahr (b. 1966), David Buuck, Haryette Mullen (b. 1953), and Christian Bök (b. 1966)—as seeking to deconstruct human subjectivity, demystify the deep poetic self and to accommodate the "intentionless, emotionless quanta of anatomical being" into their sense being alive (240). Their aims, she argues, are usually contradictory and paradoxical. Charting thoroughly embodied cognition as they do, they also—in Skillman's own words—"assert the perseverance of hobgoblin immaterialities (creativity, originality, emotion, voice)" (241). Her one engaging example is *An Army of Lovers* (2013) by Juliana Spahr and David Buuck, an anti-lyric prose narrative exploring the impasse which two characters, the two

fictionalized authors, Demented Panda and Koki, have found themselves in. The two collaborating poets are disgusted with the egotism of the traditional lyric and yet would like to find a mode which would, within a larger anti-lyric skepticism, allow them to preserve emotional agency (253-54).

Nikki Skillman wrote an important and insightful book. Filled with effective readings, lucidly argued, and exuberantly written, it's now the most important single book-length analysis of this key aspect of contemporary lyric. Importantly, her approach helps bridge a deep divide between confessional poetry and the more language-centered poetic modes.

Grzegorz Kość
University of Warsaw

Kacper Bartczak, ed. *Poeci Szkoły Nowojorskiej* [The Poets of the New York School]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018. 364 pages.

In his editorial introduction to a recent volume in the series *Mistrzowie Literatury Amerykańskiej* (*Masters of American Literature*), Kacper Bartczak ponders what the New York School of poetry was and what it is now, thus placing his critical discussion in a historical context and unveiling recurrent classification problems. Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, James Schuyler, Barbara Guest, and Kenneth Koch—whose work is explored in this book—never identified as members of the New York School, never expressed a desire for artistic affiliation, and never sketched any group manifesto. As Ashbery elucidated, "this label was foisted upon us by a man named John Bernard Myers, who ran the Tibor de Nagy Gallery…. I don't think we were ever a school…. We were a bunch of poets who happened to know each other; we would get together and read our poems to each other and sometimes we would write collaborations" (*The Paris Review Interviews* 182).

The book edited by Kacper Bartczak constitutes an important and nuanced response to those classification dilemmas. Unlike David Lehman, who coined the term "the last avant-garde" to argue that the New York School poets (except Guest whom he excluded from his study) were "the last authentic avant-garde movement that we had in American poetry" (1), the authors of the essays collected in this volume avoid grandiose statements about the role of this casually formed "school" in the history of North American avant-gardes. Instead of atomizing distinctive features of New York School poetics, they highlight the overlapping aesthetic impulses, tendencies, and interests that bring this "bunch of poets who happened to know each other" together. In the present volume, the New York School emerges as an ephemeral "event," propelled by artistic encounters and exchanges between Schuyler, O'Hara, Ashbery, Koch, and Guest. Importantly, Bartczak argues that what consolidates the group is a shared attempt at "integrating the poem with a real, material-psychological and context-based event." This integrative effort also "generates the event itself, in a way both surprising and unpredictable for its participants" (9). Paradoxically, however, such organic welding

can be engendered, as Bartczak clarifies, "only through the artificiality of form."[1] In that regard, the New York School could be considered a "materialization of myriad styles, techniques, and methods, which emerged from a particular spatiotemporal location, generating experimental energy that is still resonating today, both in the US and Poland" (9).

The emphasis on the dynamics of creative process, coupled with a lack of programmatic ideas, is another important point of convergence, as the critic Brian Reed and the contributors to this volume demonstrate (Bartczak 14). Reading the New York School poets *through* one another gives us a better insight into the intricate and shifting life-poetry interrelations, which cannot be easily pinned down and encapsulated in a clear-cut definition. As Geoff Ward suggests in his review of Barbara Guest's *If So, Tell Me*, we should look at the "New York School" as a "provisional exercise in cognitive mapping rather than a fixed, historical or regional reality." The present book gathers essays from scholars, critics, and poets, who embark on such exercise in literary cartography. By bringing O'Hara, Ashbery, Koch, Schuyler, and Guest into a shared conversation, they unfold a map that enables the reader to navigate his/her experience of the New York School as an event rather than ossified and insular category.

This powerful effect has been achieved also thanks to the skillful arrangement of the chapters. The dynamism of the New York School is transposed into the structure of the book, loosely divided into four thematic fields: "Plasticity, Ekphrasis, Intermediality," "The Constructions of Subjectivity," "Technique and Formal Consistency," and "Influence." The chapters grouped in each section enter into a polyphonous and lively dialogue, which is quite rare in multi-authored publications.

In the opening section, the authors situate their discussion of plasticity in the context of the New York School poets' close collaborations with visual artists and their strong interests in painting, which ranged widely across Italian Mannerism, surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, action painting, and Fairfield Porter's soft-focused realism. Marek Wilczyński looks at the genealogies of such intense interdisciplinary interactions, pointing out that O'Hara et al. were not the first New York cohort that established strong ties with painters. In the first half of the nineteenth century influential relationships were also formed between the Knickerbockers, among others groups, and Romantic painters who were part of the Hudson River School. The scholar makes connections between these two cohorts, identifying their shared impulse to shift towards the new—uniquely American—modes of expression. Wilczyński also argues that aesthetic philosophy of O'Hara, Ashbery and Schuyler was partly influenced by Emerson's theorizing on the relation between nature and "the self." In the subsequent chapter, Paulina Ambroży discusses the role of visual arts in Ashbery's work, focusing on a famous ekphrastic poem "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" (1975), inspired by Parmigianino's painting. Through a close reading of the poem, the scholar demonstrates how the genre of self-portrait helps Ashbery problematize elaborate mechanisms of perception, the impossibility of self-representation, and the elusiveness of "the self."Following Jean Luc Nancy, Ambroży argues that Ashbery's self-portrait shows us that we can never approximate any "essence" of subjectivity, only the "relational

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of excerpts from *Poeci Szkoły Nowojorskiej* are my own.

multiplicity of the voices of the Other—the imaginary structure of possibilities, styles, languages, and language events that produce a sort of 'noise' that leads to what can be termed a 'non-recognition'" (48).

Mikołaj Wiśniewski, on the other hand, illustrates how Fairfield Porter's soft-focused realism is reflected in James Schuyler's poetic technique, including his sensuous rendering of the quotidian. Tracing Schuyler's transition from diaristic prose to prose poetry, Wiśniewski asserts that what might seem a stylistic awkwardness or nonchalance on the part of the poet, is, in fact, a deliberately employed strategy. What emerges underneath a seemingly chaotic surface is a well-thought-out pattern, whose painterly consistency is achieved through the recurrence of intricately and subtly connected motives (95-96). Dense sensuousness is also discussed in the last chapter in the section, only this in time with regard to Barbara Guest's experimental verse. Alicja Piechucka's reading of Guest's early poem titled "Parachutes, My Love, Could Carry Us Higher" also includes a commentary on its Polish translation by Tadeusz Rybowski. The translator's counterintuitive use of the gender-related verb forms prompts the scholar to ponder the functions of the gendered "I" in Guest's work in the context of both "poetics of indeterminacy" and surrealism, which—as the poet argued in her interview with Rachel Blau DuPlessis—"meant freedom, especially for a woman" (169-170).

Piechucka also briefly discusses the exclusion of Guest's work from both university textbooks and major anthologies of North American poetry. It is noteworthy that Guest has been also omitted from a number of publications devoted exclusively to the New York School, including the 1970 *Anthology of New York Poets*, edited by Ron Padgett and David Shapiro; and David Lehman's more recent *The Last Avant-Garde. The Making of the New York School of Poets.* In Poland, as Piechucka documents, Guest's oeuvre still remains largely unrecognized. *Poeci Szkoły Nowjorskiej*, which includes one essay on this innovative poet, constitutes an important contribution to the current state of research. It is regrettable, however, that more critical work on Guest's experimental technique, minimalism, or the sonic quality of her verse, has not been included, especially since the volume comprises six articles on Asbhery, whose work has been much better recognized in Poland. Bringing Guest into a shared conversation with fellow New York School poets might have been a yet another asset of this book.

The second section, which masterfully elaborates O'Hara's and Ashbery's complex negotiations of subjectivity, opens with Marjorie Perloff's essay on O'Hara's personism, translated by Dominika Bernacka. Perloff demonstrates how the poet—through his performative straightforwardness—escapes Eliot's impersonal imperative, construing in his verse new forms of intimacy and affectivity, which cannot be reduced to confession. The essay sets the scene for subsequent discussions of "expression," the "I" of the poem, and the poetic self-creation. Jacek Gutorow claims that Ashbery is, "in a fact, a Romantic poet" (141). Nevertheless, such reading requires, as the scholar argues, a much more nuanced definition of Romantic consciousness, which would move beyond its popular understanding as a "more developed form of sentimentalism, characterized by a direct expression of feelings" (142). Gutorow not only reminds us about the importance of irony, parody, denial, and rhetorical distance in Romantic philosophy, but also draws our attention to the Romantic conviction about the

"dialectical, ergo processual and equivocal, dimension of both consciousness and reality," which is also expressed in Ashbery's works (143).

Kacper Bartczak's essay constitutes another intervention into habitual modes of thinking subjectivity and poetic expression. Bartczak argues that Ashbery's poetics overcomes a text/life binary, offering us a new perspective on the elusive interrelations between the text and affective individual experience of its author. Drawing on Alexander Nehamas's idea of aesthetic self-creation, the scholar rethinks the role of the autobiographical in Ashbery's work away from both the confessional aesthetics of self-expression and the idea of "I" as purely textual. The emerging subject-positions in Ashbery's work are not, as Bartczak illustrates, prior to the poem, but emerge simultaneously with the text. This section closes with the chapter on O'Hara authored by Tadeusz Pióro and translated by Jakub Statnik. Unlike many other critical works that emphasize vitality of the subject in O'Hara's poetry, Pióro's essay accentuates the problem of existential boredom and angst. Frenetic movement and intensity manifested in O'Hara's poetry might be read as defense mechanisms against the recurring moments of spleen.

The third section further elaborates poetic technique and form, already problematized in the previous chapters, but from a different vantage point. Both Paweł Marcinkiewicz and Anna Warso ponder the intricacies of Ashbery's evolving poetics, giving the reader an insight into fascinating aesthetic shifts and transpositions. Marcinkiewicz argues that in his 2015 collection *Breezeway*, Ashbery returns to those energy sources that gave impetus to the New York School early poetry—the language play and immersion in the quotidian. Interestingly, the scholar brings the title poem into Polish as "Bryzo, wiej," thus emphasizing the phonetic, visual and associative dimension of the original. This experimental translation is also meant to illustrate that Ashbery's recent collection not only constitutes an *open passage* connecting the past and the present, but also embodies writing as *floating away* from the literary canon (226). An instance of concrete poetry, *Breezeway* can be read as a formal variation on Pound's ideogram-inspired verse, a variation which nevertheless lacks underlying consistency and "slips into a pure play with indeterminacy"—a bricolage of quotes and intertextual references that do not hold together or illuminate one another (232). Anna Warso, in contrast, brings into focus Ashbery's second poetry collection, *The Tennis Court Oath* (1962), which provoked heated debate among critics. While Harold Bloom was outraged by its disjunctiveness, the "Language" poets considered it of great significance, both aesthetically and politically (243). Like the latter, Warso views *The Tennis Court Oath* as a pioneering work, in which Ashbery developed radically experimental techniques that he would employ in his later work. The poems collected in this volume, similarly to those from *Breezeway,* follow the logic of montage, with its elements working as linguistic "objets trouvés," as Marcinkiewicz put it (221). However, while parts of the hypertextual bricolage in *Breezaway* cannot be, as Marcinkiewicz convincingly argues, pieced together, Warso demonstrates that in *The Tennis Court Oath* Ashbery creates a "hospitable space" that welcomes a participatory reading, thus opening up the possibility of collective sense-making.

In the first section a lot has been said about the New York School poets' intense interactions with painters, and their strong interest in visual arts. In the closing chapter

of the third section, Magdalena Szuster reminds us about their fascination with drama, thus contributing to a more comprehensive mapping of the group's positioning across different genres. Looking at Kenneth Koch's 1988 *One Thousand Avant-Garde Plays*, Szuster claims that his work might be considered an alternative to both mainstream and "postmodernist avant-garde" theatre (257). The scholar defines Koch's style as eclectic since it draws on a number of diverse traditions—occidental, oriental, surrealist, futurist, or even gospel (267). His reliance on a wide array of techniques, coupled with a consistent refusal to engage in any forms of political agitation, makes his work resistant to categorization. Szuster also asserts that although Koch's technique is montage-like, it exhibits internal consistency. As in the case of Schuyler's poetry, the seemingly unrelated parts form an underlying intricate pattern (266).

The closing section discusses the impact of the New York School of poetry on both US and Polish poets. A comprehensive and much needed perspective provided in this part significantly contributes to comparative literary studies. In his essay on LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Jerzy Kamionowski problematizes an intimate relationship between aesthetics and politics, demonstrating how O'Hara's personism, among other New York School techniques, shaped Baraka's poetics. The scholar's understanding of personism differs, however, from that offered by Marjorie Perloff. While Perloff conceives of O'Hara's apparently "straightforward" poetic performance as a non-confessional construct, Kamionowski reads it as a "non-masked personal presence," which might be considered a response to the "depersonalization" of poetry favored by the New Critics (283). The author argues that the New York School aesthetics became partly integrated into Baraka's conceptualization of "Black Aesthetics." At the same time, however, Baraka refused to separate his art from the pressing problems of racial discrimination, or to limit his radicalism to formal experimentation. This reminds us about the importance of the poet's broadly understood location and the impact it has on their approach towards newness and social-commitment in literature.

The two subsequent chapters elaborate the influence that O'Hara and Ashbery exerted on Polish contemporary poetry. Joanna Orska scrutinizes the "translation-transit game" between Ashbery and one of the major contemporary Polish poets—Andrzej Sosnowski (309). The scholar claims that a considerable interest in narrative poetic forms, or the so called *poet's prose*, observed in Poland in the 1990s was triggered by the translations of both New York School and modernist poetry (307). In her meticulous analysis, Orska demonstrates how Sosnowski's translations of Ashbery's *poet's prose*, affected—at many levels—his own writing, and renewed formally Polish prose. Krzysztof Siwczyk, on the other hand, examines how the critical reception of O'Hara's poems, translated by Piotr Sommer and collected in the volume *Twoja pojedynczość* (1986), shaped the understanding of his poetics. Siwczyk points out that literary critics at the time tended to reduce O'Hara's technique to a few slogans that comprised the idea of the poet's "authenticity" and "I see and describe" approach (331). Profiled in such a way, O'Hara was then deemed a major influencer, whose impact was identified in the works of the *brulion* generation writers like Marcin Świetlicki and Jacek Podsiadło, who became soon referred to as *o'harists*. Siwczyk claims that it was not until 2015, when more works by O'Hara were brought into Polish, that such oversimplified representations were started to be revised. The

recent translations enabled, as Siwczyk proves, new readings of O'Hara's poetics away from the prematurely ascribed labels. The critic brings together O'Hara and two contemporary Polish poets—Maciej Melecki and Marcin Sendecki—to rethink the meanings of "influence" and examine what their poetic languages share.

The volume closes with Przemysław Owczarek's critical-creative text, which might be regarded as an exercise in embodied reading-writing. The author is looking at O'Hara's poems while walking through the streets of Łódź—"an impoverished sister" of New York (337). The energy and rhythms of both cities—as well as those of O'Hara's verse—become transposed into Owczarek's text. The walk prompts the critic to ponder different aspects of "city habitats" as well as "textual habitats" of the New York School poet's work (343-344). "Close yet not to close reading" of the city-rooted poems intermingles with discussions of urban theory and references to O'Hara criticism. Multiple voices can be heard as the author is walking down Piotrkowska Street, arguing that O'Hara was, in fact, not a *flâneur*—a connoisseur of aesthetic pleasures, strolling around the city with no purpose or time limitations—but rather a "przemykacz"—an autochthon who moves frenetically and "intuitively knows where he is going and why" (361).

In his essay, Jacek Gutorow invites us to "engage in an attentive and committed reading, which is directed at discovering in a text the living and ever-changing forms of experience and expression" (169). I would argue that all essays gathered in this volume constitute such an invitation and enable the reader to become a curator of his/her experience of the "ephemeral event" known as the New York School of poetry. What is more, each chapter addresses the questions that are still very much alive in the critical discussions around most recent US poetry and poetics. This includes life-text interrelations, different meanings of the political in art, or the problem of expression, experiment and subjectivity. Thus, the present book is a highly recommended read not only for those interested specifically in the New York School, but for anyone committed to a non-reductive reading of literature.

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Joanna Mąkowska
University of Warsaw

Tadeusz Pióro and Marek Paryż, eds. *Thomas Pynchon*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. 2018, 256 pages.

The significance of Thomas Pynchon for American post-WWII literature is undisputed, therefore, for the Polish reader, the volume edited by Tadeusz Pióro and Marek Paryż comes with much anticipation, as do the successive translations of Pynchon's novels. But as Tadeusz Pióro points out in his closing article, Pynchon takes time. This entails not only the long process of writing, which, as Pióro shows, often spans over a number of decades but also the time that is necessary for the translators to overcome the many challenges that the author throws at them. It is difficult to imagine a casual reader of Pynchon, someone who simply picks up one of his novels, reads through from the first sentence to last and puts it away never to return to it again. I would rather think of a Pynchon reader as of a connoisseur, someone who not only reads the novels themselves multiple times, but also engages in lengthy discussions with other Pynchon readers, explores the enormity of detail that characterizes the author's work, as someone who tries to understand the principles of advanced physics and information technology, who reads lengthy books on American and global political history to be able to tell real events from those that Pynchon invented for our painful amusement.[1] Marcin Rychter writes about the Internet communities devoted to studying and discussing his work, much in the spirit of Pynchon's fiction itself, ridden with a variety of closed societies and almost obsessed with technology.

My belief that there are almost no casual readers of Pynchon is confirmed by the authors of the chapters in this volume, not in the sense that they openly share this belief (although I suspect they might), but in the sense that in my eyes they are members of the community of Pynchon readers. It seems to me that any of the authors in the volume could have written their chapter on any of Pynchon's novels, and possibly the decision to assign the material to the respective scholars was taken by drawing cards. I am writing this half-seriously to emphasize the number of connections between the various novels (and not only) that the authors were able to make.

It is true that some themes, references to particular essays appear more than once in the volume, but we must keep in mind that the book, in spite of its logical and chronological order, is itself a collection of essays that can, if need be, read individually, not that, as I have suggested, this is a likely situation. When read as a whole, the book presents Pynchon as a methodical and consistent author, who was not, however, immune to significant change. The best example of this is the clear division between his early and his late work put forward by Zuzanna Ładyga. It is an important differentiation because it helps to free Pynchon from the label of the iconic postmodern writer. It is true that to many theorists of postmodernism, such as the often-quoted Brian McHale, Pynchon has provided a fertile ground for literary analysis, but with postmodernism's dawn two decades ago, the label hardly does him any favors. Such a liberating approach seems to a manifestation of an implicit credo of the entire series, which, it seems to me, is to battle intellectual sloth that haunts the age of fake news.

1 As we learn from Mikołaj Wiśniewski's article, a simple rule of plausibility does not do the job: in Pynchon's fiction the historical is often equally absurd as the fictional.

The introduction to the volume features a very decent biographical backdrop, which in the case of an author almost defined by his absence from public life,[2] is not easy to present. This is important because it draws our attention to the moral aspect of Pynchon's work, which can perhaps be tied to the reasons for his hiding. It seems that the moral dimension of contemporary literature has been relegated to a variety of minority discourses and feminist literature, whereas more "mainstream" authors have rarely been presented as moral thinkers in critical accounts. This aspect of Pynchon's writing is covered quite extensively in the book, I am happy to report. Tadeusz Pióro's introduction also signals two other themes that run through Pynchon's *oeuvre*, and both of them revolve around the ethos of the Enlightenment that saturates our natural-science-dominated world: our understanding of history and technology, and these are extensively developed upon in the successive essays.

In his analysis of Pynchon's debut novel *V*, Marek Paryż picks up the baton and shows how a set of beliefs formulated over two centuries ago still affects the logic of post-WWII America, and how the Enlightenment desire for certainty has given way to the emergence of totalitarian states on the global scale. In Paryż's view, Pynchon's taste for the irrational can be understood as a reaction to totalitarianism, which is a well-grounded argument, indeed. The scholar is quick to pick up on the sexuality in *V*, and by extent, also in Pynchon's later novels (especially *Gravity's Rainbow* is a case in point). From the very outset, sex for Pynchon is characterized by obsession and absurdity, both of which metonymically define the human condition. The article does an excellent job of explaining the ways in which Pynchon uses a variety of popular literary genres to means greater than exposing the grasp popular culture has over contemporary society. The argument showing how the form of the novel is instrumental to the exploration of its possible meanings reveals that from the very beginning we are dealing with a writer of great complexity and finesse, suggesting that the readers should always be on their toes lest we should jump to hasty conclusions or gross simplifications.

Jagoda Dolińska's chapter introduces to the readers of the volume the notion of entropy, a concept that resurfaces in almost every book-length analysis of Pynchon's prose, and references the very popular distinction between modernism and postmodernism that made Brian McHale a celebrity in the literary theory circles. What makes the essay truly noteworthy is her discussion of apophatic theology, as it sheds much light on the author's metaphysics. Metaphysics indeed seems to be a fruitful path to discuss Pynchon's discontent with the ethos of the Age of Reason. The aesthetics of chaos needs not to be grim, as it turns out, it can be almost cheerful, which is not to say that Dolińska omits the darker side of the human condition. Its duality is reflected well by a reference to the category of sublimity, discussed both in the most ancient and the most recent understanding. Perhaps I am splitting hairs at this stage, but I would be very interested to read what Dolińska would say about Burke's writing on the sublime, Burke being an early critic of the Enlightenment[3].

Jan Balbierz continues the reflection on the relationship between science and mysticism in his essay on *Gravity's Rainbow* associating the West with the regime

2 In an episode of *The Simpsons* Pynchon was shown with a paper bag over his head.

3 Some Polish historians of philosophy classify Burke as an Enlightenment thinker, but most often he is rather seen as a transitory figure.

of science and the East with spirituality. This common connection is revived and re-validated by exploring the historical fracture in human learning that took place around the nineteenth century. The reference to Bachtin seems almost necessary to be made in the context of Pynchon's best-known novel, an excellent manifestation of the carnivalesque, but also as Balbierz notices, a novel that "disintegrates novelistic patterns" (63). *Gravity's Rainbow* is perhaps nowadays the most quoted example of an encyclopedic narrative, but as the scholar points out, Pynchon's novel attains this status by standing in relation with prior encyclopedic narratives, such as those by Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Goethe, Melville, and Joyce.[4] The essay is also sensitive to the significance of human corporeality, a prominent theme in Pynchon's fiction, which in the context of *Gravity's Rainbow* is discussed in connection with Pavlov's psychological experimentation. The combination of hard science with questioned causal relationships produces a disturbing effect that permeates the atmosphere of Pynchon's famous work.

Arkadiusz Misztal's reading of *Gravity's Rainbow* expands Jan Balbierz's reflection on the novel's relationship with other crucial encyclopedic narratives by focusing on Melville's *Moby-Dick*. It is worth noting that Melville's *opus magnum* is not the most obvious of connections to be made, yet Misztal's position is well-grounded, especially by the way in which the scholar discusses the opening sentences of both novels. Looking at *Gravity's Rainbow* from the perspective of *Moby-Dick* allows us to appreciate the way in which Pynchon renegotiates the status of his own work. Misztal's careful discussion of the book's plot in connection to its formal structure would serve as an excellent introduction to the novel, should a new Polish edition be published. Those who are well-acquainted with *Gravity's Rainbow* will, without a doubt, appreciate Misztal's insight into the cinematic quality of Pynchon's narration. The argument stands firmly on two pillars: the author's unorthodox treatment of time and his taste for randomness. Historically, the development of the cinema is clearly connected with our perception of wars, the scholar observes, and so, indirectly, film has affected the way in which we write about the war.

Zofia Kolbuszewska contributes two articles to the volume, both outstanding, even in this collection, in terms of readability, to the extent that I would call them entertaining. The first one is devoted to *Slow Learner* and links Pynchon with Washington Irving's famous "Rip Van Winkle," a connection surprising, to say the least, but as it turns out, fully justified from the perspective Kolbuszewska offers, after all, in *Slow Learner* Pynchon experiences a literary encounter with himself twenty years junior. The scholar immediately exposes Pynchon's jester-like strategy of self-presentation and presents the author's attitude to his early short fiction as complex and ambiguous. From this standpoint, we can quickly recognize the significance of *Slow Learner* for understanding Pynchon's transformation over the many years of his literary career. The article provides a solid depiction of the historical backdrop for a more in-depth insight into the author's early output and helps to appreciate the prominence of certain themes in his later work, such as Pynchon's peculiar theory of garbage. The chapter beautifully comes together at the end and provides a smooth transition into Kolbuszewska's reading of *Vineland*.

4 Significant mentions of the last two are made in other places of the volume as well.

The long-anticipated novel, as the scholar observes, was met with "a benevolent disappointment" (115) and, as it is implied, the initial reception was perhaps somewhat hasty. Kolbuszewska explores the possible reasons for this state of affairs as she consistently shows the unobvious qualities of the novel. The category of cryptomimesis, the focal point of the article, opens up the discussion of *Vineland* in a variety of directions: morality, history, aesthetics of the media, all of the above being consistent with other articles in the volume. Kolbuszewska also studies the novel in the context of nostalgia, both understood traditionally, and in its revised version, which suits well Pynchon's description of contemporary America.

Mikołaj Wisniewski opens his article on *Mason & Dixon* with a reference to Captain John Smith, whose colorful, but to a large extent, fictional depiction of historical events well reflects the atmosphere of Pynchon's novel. History, even if recorded by an eye-witness, as it is made apparent, has a limited claim on the truth in the Enlightenment understanding of the word, and it is indeed the looming ghost of Enlightenment thinking that the writer seeks to exorcize in *Mason & Dixon*. As many articles in the volume show, a careful study of the historical context is instrumental when reading Pynchon, and nowhere is it more evident than in the case of this novel. Wiśniewski clearly shows that the most outlandish historical details in the novel can prove to be historically accurate, but they are often concealed amongst the author's amusing confabulations. Wiśniewski does a good job of exposing *Mason & Dixon*'s moral center of gravity. The birth of tourism is depicted in relation to colonial cruelty, consumer culture is built on suffering, all in the spirit of a failed understanding of progress. Here too we have a reference to nostalgia, which precedes the question of whether Pynchon is escapist or ironic in regards to the fantastic world he has created. It is very likely, it seems to me, that the writer is ironic in the most subversive of ways, and in this sense, Wiśniewski is right to expose the critical function of Pynchon's fiction.

Throughout the volume, as I have suggested, we develop a sense of dynamics that characterizes Pynchon's *oeuvre* as a whole, and Marcin Rychter's essay on *Against the Day* only reinforces this impression; after all, we are speaking about the author's first novel of the new millennium. It is quite natural, therefore, that Rychter begins his argument by referring to the network structure of the narrative, a structure which immediately brings to mind the developments in information technology. Just like Mikołaj Wiśniewski, Marcin Rychter is sensitive to the peculiar interpenetration of temporal planes in Pynchon's work, and here it is conceptually linked to the impact that the findings of quantum mechanics had on the collective metaphysics of the turn of the centuries. The possibility of parallel universes validated by scientific research way beyond the comprehension of a common consumer of culture has contributed to filling the religious void that opened up sometime towards the nineteenth century. The span of roughly one hundred years is where Pynchon's novel dwells as it moves back and forth to examine what is often referred to as The American Century. Reading *Against the Day* from a Dionysian perspective puts forward the idea of a collective permanent intoxication, which brilliantly captures the quirky logic of this, and many other novels by Thomas Pynchon. The Apollonian sense of order, which since the 1800s has been reduced to a fig leaf for the post-capitalist West, gives way to intellectual frivolity.

Rychter is quite specific about the fact that Pynchon is not a nihilist, on the contrary, the scholar makes a strong case for the presence of Christian thinking in his prose, and even his use of the typically postmodernist metafictional devices could be tied to moral ends. Living in the digital age we have learned that our hopes for a free and innocent exchange of information have been childishly naïve and we have found ourselves bound between the freedom and criminality of the Dark Web, and the relatively safe oppression of the social media. The dichotomy of dangerous freedom and safe oppression can also be extended to the political plane, the problem of terrorism, to be precise, which in the novel is introduced by an allusion to 9/11, by many seen as the symbolic beginning of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, one is tempted to suspect that Pynchon's anti-establishment sympathies would make him side with the terrorists, but as Rychter points out, it is clearly not the case, for the author, an acute political mind fully realizes that terrorism actually contributes to the enforcement of oppressive authority. In this light, the introduced elements of Christian morality come in handy, but we must keep in mind that Pynchon is always far from being a typical moralist.

Zuzanna Ładyga's article is an unobvious continuation of Marcin Rychter's reading of *Against the Day*. Her analysis of *Inherent Vice* daringly takes on some of the negative reviews of Pynchon's 2009 novel to elaborate on the transformation the author's body of work underwent as a consequence of the gradual dawn of postmodernism. Ładyga sees the novel as the author's critical self-reflection, which helps to understand his departure from some of his trademark features. It is not a sign of Pynchon losing his touch, but rather a hint regarding his pursuit of other goals. Reading *Inherent Vice* with certain expectations formed by the merits of his earlier prose is a doomed enterprise, for it is set on a foundation of intellectual complacency, which a writer like Pynchon simply cannot tolerate. *Inherent Vice* turns out to be an interesting move on the author's part, and his direction seems to have much in common with the likes of David Foster Wallace, who himself was heavily influenced by Pynchon's early work.

Alicja Piechucka's chapter also seems to carry a distant echo of Wallace, as it brings together themes of entertainment and boredom, two seminal topics of Wallace's great novels, *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*, respectively. The focus here is on the female perspective, an interesting arch between *Bleeding Edge* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. A feminist take on Pynchon's work seems rather fresh, and at the same time obviously appropriate, after all, Oedipa Maas is one of the most recognizable characters in American postmodern prose. Piechucka presents Pynchon as a man quite familiar with the popular culture marketed for women, fashion and accessories, all of which are neatly inscribed in a discussion of the recent developments in the entertainment business. The play of contradictions consistently executed by Pynchon brings to mind associations with the superhero culture (an attractive woman with a seemingly boring job turns out to lead a life of danger and adventure, much like Clark Kent, taking off his nerdy glasses to rescue humanity). Piechucka is easily able to make the connection between chic-lit and consumerism, in the meantime discussing such interesting topics as the relationship between gender and politics (along the lines of the two major political parties in the United States), and the link between womanhood and 9/11. It is especially worthwhile to reflect on the role of the family in the context

of the fallen Twin Towers, the scholar demonstrates. Piechucka finishes her argument comparing Pynchon's image of America at the beginning of the twenty-first century with F. Scott Fitzgerald's America from a hundred years prior, again encouraging the discussion of what The American Century was like.

The final two articles in the collection look back on the entirety of Pynchon's literary output from two different, but not disconnected perspectives. Paweł Stachura's pondering of the encyclopedic quality in Pynchon's novels opens the author's work for fresh interpretative possibilities and sheds new light on the reflections that have been developing throughout the volume. Stachura clearly opposes flattened, simplistic approaches to an iconic author, a frequent problem with literati of such a status. A link to Derrida which leads through Joyce's *Ulysses* is convincing especially that Pynchon, as the scholar shows, processes and even parodies Derrida's work. An inquiry into the way postmodern writers have subverted the relationship between literature and its theory seems almost essential when writing about someone like Thomas Pynchon. Multiple references to the ancient tradition and classical devices of philology depict the author as a literary erudite, which helps to appreciate the depth and complexity of his prose.

The final essay in the collection studies the way in which Pynchon constructs his storylines. By making yet another link with Melville's *opus magnum*, Tadeusz Pióro is able to display an unobvious narrative strategy that Pynchon often resorts to: diminishing narrative tension. Such a procedure, in the scholar's eyes, serves an intricate purpose, it helps the author avoid the cynicism attributed at times to late-postmodern writers. This argument ties in well with the point Alicja Piechucka made earlier on; Pynchon appears to reach far beyond the literary tradition that made him its icon. It is true that a narrow reading of Pynchon's most famous novel could easily lead to the conclusion that *Gravity's Rainbow* ends in a cynical way, but a careful study of the narrative techniques employed points to the contrary. By deconstructing what we know as a happy ending, Tadeusz Pióro shows, Pynchon reveals disguised levels of irony throughout the novel. *Gravity's Rainbow* ends with what the scholar calls a "simulacrum of a moral" (255), which together with the formal complexity and amount of detail is impossible to trivialize. It appears, therefore, that Pynchon has found a way out of the impasse that brought postmodernism to its end, even before that end came to be.

The volume as a whole has much to offer to the Pynchon aficionado. It presents us with a richness of interpretative possibilities while still revolving around some of the main themes in Pynchon studies. It helps to understand the significant transformations the author's body of work underwent outlining a possible trajectory of his future novels, should they ever see print. Considering that Thomas Pynchon was born in 1937, the volume might, though I heartily hope it will not, cover the entirety of his *oeuvre*. From the thirteen essays on 256 pages, the writer emerges as an eternal literary rebel and avant-gardist, constantly eager to push his prose to its limits taking on formal, theoretical and philosophical restrictions. The recently departed Philip Roth would habitually express the opinion that the novel as a form of cultural expression is finished, Don Delillo in his *Mao II* has voiced a view that in this day and age, the novelist will be replaced by the terrorist in the business of shaping our cultural

awareness, whereas Pynchon has continued, and hopefully continues, to relentlessly fight in its defense.

Jarosław Hetman
Nicolas Copernicus University, Toruń

Francesca De Lucia. *Italian American Cultural Fictions: From Diaspora to Globalization*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2017. 180 pages.

In the introduction to his *Buried Caesars*, Robert Viscusi maintains that one of the biggest problems for Italian Americans has been and continues to be Italy itself. According to Viscusi, Italy's cultural and economic policy has relied heavily on diaspora communities to promote the penetration of goods and the exposure of the national heritage in the US. In return, descendants of Italian immigrants have received very little recognition. This neglect applies also to the academy, where Italian-American studies, despite of having attracted a small but devoted following, are still absent from major scholarly conversation. It is therefore important to register a new addition to the still meagre canon of works on Italian Americans authored by scholars from the fatherland. Francesca De Lucia, with her *Italian American Cultural Fictions*, follows in the footsteps of, among others, Martino Marazzi, Marcella Bencivenni and Simone Cinotto, who are contributing in spreading Italian-American studies in Italy.

Italian American Cultural Fictions is very ambitious in scope, aiming to provide a survey on Italian-American cultural production mainly, but not exclusively, in literature, from the "classic age" of the first part of the twentieth century to the present. De Lucia's intent, however, is not to give a detailed chronicle of a century of cultural production, but in particular to focus her account on the transition from an earlier mode of representation, labelled "emblematic ethnicity," to a more recent one, the "latent ethnicity." According to De Lucia, "emblematic" ethnicity focused on "the ways in which immigrants and their children struggled to overcome discrimination and elaborated a new identity borne out of the interaction of Italian and mainstream American elements" (27). Gradually, "emblematic" ethnicity has been replaced by a different mode, defined "latent"; the latter is the product of a "second diaspora"—from city ghettoes to the suburbs—and of progressive cultural integration into the mainstream: the latent mode, therefore, is a way of representing ethnicity which sheds oppositional elements of the culture and reinvents identity by relying on neutralized and sanitized symbols.

Central to this study is the concept of "cultural fiction," a label broadly including representations of a specific culture produced in different forms—from novels to films and newspaper articles—by both insiders and outsiders of a specific group. The author's effort goes in the direction of finding common ground by intersecting viewpoints and media and thus identifying the narrative representation of the group as discourse, where insider views and visions from the mainstream are understood in continuous and dialectic relationship. However, fiction takes the lion's share of De Lucia's effort, and her forays into cinema, however insightful, fail to do justice to the extremely complex interaction between Italian Americans and the big screen.

Historical and cultural conflicts are crucial determiners in the shaping of these cultural fictions, and, in particular, the book identifies in WWII the "watershed period" responsible for a major restructuring of the defining ideas of ethnicity. The war effort allowed Italian Americans to assert their loyalty to the host country, the United states, without "feeling disloyal to their roots" (11). The fight against the Fascist regime was increasingly seen as liberation of the mother country, whose oppressed population did not possess the strength to break free from the dictatorship. Quite significantly, however, this episode remains underrepresented in Italian-American fictions, as, De Lucia notes, memories of this period are still "ambivalent and troubled," a sign that official discourse did not completely overlap with private perceptions.

Spread throughout three chapters, the analysis of the "cultural fictions" that have accompanied or reflected on the crucial transition of the Italian-American community from the 1920s to the 1950s provide the most interesting contribution in De Lucia's work, as the author charts this dark territory thanks to meticulous work on available sources. The very lack of significant fictionalizations of the period in question, in either book or cinematic form, highlights the traumatic effect that the whole war experience had on the community. *Italian American Cultural Fictions*, in this perspective, proves to be an invaluable synthesis as the scholar has managed to put together a sizeable amount of documents digging in different directions, which prove essential in making sense of this oxymoronic Italian-American tale of oblivion.

The first part of this survey, "Documenting Fascism and World War II in an Italian-American Perspective," on the one hand registers the division of the Italian-American press in two opposite camps; the pro-Fascist, which urged the community to cling to national culture and values, and an anti-fascist cohort which started gaining ground after the invasion of Ethiopia and the consequent end of Washington's benign attitude towards Mussolini. This latter group emphasized continuity between opposition to the regime and Americanism, even employing to its advantage the symbolic circumstance of Garibaldi's birthday occurring on July the 4th. The chapter concludes with Frank Capra's propaganda movies (*Why We Fight*, 1943) where, more than the content itself, it is the director's ethnic background which, according to De Lucia, becomes part of the cultural fiction: in fact, the opportunity of having an Italian American who nurtured no qualms about which side to support proved to be a strong propagandistic move for the USA and contributed in framing America's role in the conflict in a positive light.

The second part of this module, "Fictions and Memoirs of the Italian-American War Experience," posits a crucial distinction between an official discourse, as shown in John Hersey's Pulitzer Prize winning novel from 1944, *A Bell for Adano*, and marginal sites of controversy as found in two works by Italian-American writers. Hersey's novel can be seen in continuity with Capra's propaganda movies, with the main character, Major Joppolo, an idealized figure of rectitude with saint-like features, who symbolizes the unproblematic allegiance to countries at war with each other. Joppolo is "an integrated American who is capable of making effective use of his immigrant background" (82); ethnic origin is turned into insider knowledge and becomes a crucial asset for winning over the Italian population and paving the way for the liberation of the country. The only works by Italian Americans where

the war, albeit obliquely, is addressed, are Mario Puzo's first novel, *The Dark Arena* (1955), and Gay Talese's memoir *Unto the Sons* (1992), both providing evidence of an antagonistic ethnic stance alongside the official narrative. Puzo's work has an Italian-American protagonist, Walter Mosca, a veteran who fails to readjust to the society back home: according to De Lucia, "by antagonising the society of early post-war reconstruction," Mosca "makes the opposite journey to the standard one for Italian Americans who served in the army" (78), thus hinting at a problematic negation of the triumphalism that dominated public discourse. In Talese's memoir, instead, the author's father is portrayed as deeply conflicted between his public and private selves, showing an "almost schizophrenic combination of an endorsement of American values and an atavistic connection to roots" (83). The same silence is the main element emerging from the following chapter, which details the internment of Italian Americans following Executive Order 9066. This controversial phase of the community's history is briefly described by Jerre Mangione in his *An Ethnic At Large* (1978) and in a belated collection of testimonials from former interns in Lawrence DiStasi's *Una storia segreta* (2001)—another signal that "while the war acted as a catalyst for the group's process of integration, it also forced Italian Americans to repress and minimize certain elements of their culture" (90).

Italian American Cultural Fictions considers the "cultural amnesia" (163) regarding the war years as the necessary prelude paving the way for new, individual and more pacified forms of ethnicity which belong in the "latent" mode. This momentous passage, far from being exclusive to the community of Italian descent, is part of the postwar "second" diaspora from urban ghettoes to leafy and spacious suburbs. De Lucia's wide catalogue of "latent" ethnics include intriguing readings of Don DeLillo, Anthony Giardina and the Afro-Italian-American Kim Ragusa, each showing different strategies of individual reinvention and incorporation of their cultural background.

In this perspective, the more recent evolution of Italian-American writing that is offered in the last part of *Italian American Cultural Fictions* highlights one of the problematic features of the "latent" restructuring of ethnic representation: in her survey of female writing in chapter 6, De Lucia underlines how both Mari Benasutti and Rita Ciresi employ cliché and caricature in representing Italian-American characters. In her reading, the scholar connects this choice to different individual causes, an interpretation consistent with her more general understanding of the "latent" mode as an "interior and non-essentialist trait" (165); the feeling remains, however, that a wider, more collective factor might be at work: if, as Fred Gardaphé suggested, Italian Americans are "whites" on a "leash," are the writers unconsciously voicing a deeper sense of unease, result of the lingering stigma affecting Italian Americans? Is the "latent-ethnic" writer, in his/her pursuit of a successful integration between heritage and the larger American scene, fighting a battle against mainstream "cultural fictions" that pigeonhole Italians into a small number of pre-determined roles? Can this fight be considered, or aspire to be considered, as a collective task for Italian Americans?

In an age of transmedial narratives, De Lucia's introduction of the "cultural fiction" concept provides a useful perspective to approach the often heterogeneous and multi-faceted discourses constructed around minority and marginal groups. Her subdivision of the Italian-American cultural narrative in two phases, persuasively

grounded on specific historical conditions, helps making sense of the evolution and changes within the Italian-American tradition. Her investigation into several instances of the "latent" mode provide convincing support for the interpretation of its connection with the multiple possibilities of negotiating an identity that opened up after WWII. *Italian American Cultural Fictions* will provide a precious reference point for further research on this controversial period of Italian-American cultural history, and scholars might want to follow De Lucia's example of identifying narrative strands into disparate and seemingly non-narrative sources.

Sostene M. Zangari

Randall J. Stephens. *The Devil's Music: How Christians Inspired, Condemned, and Embraced Rock 'n' Roll*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018. 337 pages.

Two films a couple of years apart encapsulate both the history of rock and roll, especially its roots, and what was best in the music in the 1970s. The film that primarily deals with the roots of rock is the popular cult film *The Blues Bothers* of 1980, which in the course of its humorous narrative frames rock and its roots between the Gospel number "The Old Landmark" performed by James Brown and the James Cleveland Choir and the eponymous Blues Brothers' version of "Jailhouse Rock," made famous by the King. The history is augmented with a number of classic blues and soul numbers by some the most outstanding artists of their respective musical modes. The other film is the landmark rockumentary *The Last Waltz of The Band*, brought to the screen in 1978 by that great rock fan Martin Scorsese, who had participated in making the now largely dated classic rockumentary *Woodstock*. *The Last Waltz*, on the other hand, showcases rock at its very best, making a strong case in the opinion of the reviewer that this popular music at its zenith could be called great art, which in that sense remains "forever young."

What connects both films to the book under review is their take on the connection between rock and religion that Randall Stephens explores at length from a cultural history perspective. In the films we see and hear this history in a tangible fashion. In *The Last Waltz* quite pertinent is the rock-hymn "Forever Young," performed on screen by a certain Nobel laureate to be who wrote it years before his overtly Christian album *Slow Train Coming* that was yet to come. More significantly, the film captures the inspired rendition of The Band's classic "The Weight," with the vocal support of the superlative Gospel group the Staples. The Gospel group did not have to depart from their métier to any great degree in their stirring contribution to this rock song's performance, almost appropriating it from The Band, and demonstrating its debt to their spiritual music tradition. More directly related to Stephens' study is the James Brown number referred to above, where the great soul artist reprises the "Devil destroying" routines—including "hard singing": "shouting, keening, moaning, screaming, and exhortation" (Bayles 156)—of his musical mentor Ira Tucker, which in his career Brown had partially incorporated into his secular style. In other words, what both films largely prove in their own fashion is the first part of Stephens' claim, that religion inspired rock. The book scrupulously charts the historical dynamics of

how the "Devil destroying" music played a role in inspiring what many American Christians felt was "the Devil's music," only to change their minds and give rise to the powerful trend of Christian rock.

Stephens' version of the story begins through outlining the close connection between Southern Pentecostalism and a number of crucial initiators of rock and roll. Artists such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash all shared Pentecostal or similar Church of holiness roots. Elvis Presley, among others, acknowledged his religious background but claimed there were no connections between it and his music in religious terms. Stephens, by contrast, forcefully argues that the leap from dynamic sanctified music to rock 'n' roll was not that great. Consequently, "The culture of southern Pentecostalism helped give birth to the new genre of rock 'n' roll. That religious stream was one of many that fed into the larger river of rock 'n' roll, but it was an important tributary" (28). When the religious services of those Pentecostal churches are described it becomes quite evident their stylized presentation in *The Blues Brothers* is not that far off from how it was. In James Baldwin's semiautobiographical *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, set in 1930s Harlem, the congregants of the protagonist's family's Pentecostal church "sang with all the strength that was in them, and clapped their hands for joy" (qtd. on p. 32). James Brown has reported that the posts in the church he attended had to be padded so that congregants taken by the spirit would not inadvertently hurt themselves.

However, virtually the same environment that bred the first generation of rock and rollers also produced some of the strongest criticisms of the new musical form. Symbolic of the close proximity from rocker to condemnation is the family relationship between Jerry Lee Lewis and Pentecostal televangelist Jimmy Lee Swaggart, who even used his musical cousin as an illustration and "a stern warning to youngsters and their parents" (2). This war for the souls of the nation's youth, as Stephens presents it, had its ups and downs. At the onset of the '60s rock's initial fervor seemed to have dissipated, ostensibly providing relief for its critics. The King had been drafted into armed service, Buddy Holly and others died in tragic accidents, some artists, like Little Richard, even returned to the ministry. But this was just a lull in the storm as the Beatles and their music rose and John Lennon made his unwieldy statement about the band being more popular than Jesus, which set the fires ablaze again in conservative Christian hearts. Nevertheless, the spiritual striving of the hippy generation eventually fell flat and many of the disaffected youth returned to Jesus in the end. This was by no means stepping into the same river twice, however, and the religious expression of the new generation hardly resembled that of their elders. A symbolic turning point was the Dallas Explo '72 festival—so close on the heels of Woodstock—which attracted two hundred thousand youth. From there Christian rock would steadily develop into a multi-million dollar industry by the next decade, and would garner a billion dollars a year by the late 1990s.

This synopsis hardly does justice to the rich story Stephens relates. He deftly plots the account against the political and cultural background of the represented time span and fills it with vivid detail and stimulating insights. The author sees the roots of the Pentecostal appropriation of the culture of the times together with the later appropriation of rock by Christians stemming from the dynamics of outsider religious movements and their flexibility. He gives the example of William Booth, the founder of the similarly

non-mainstream Salvation Army in Britain in the nineteenth century, who states: "The music of the Army is not, as a rule, original. We seize upon the strains that have already caught the ear of the masses, we load them with our one great theme—salvation—and so we make the very enemy help us fill the air with our Saviour's fame" (12).

Such a tactic is hardly new in the history of Christianity. Pope Gregory famously instructed the bishop Augustine in his efforts to convert the Anglo Saxons to remove the idols from the pagan temples but to save the edifices themselves where people had been gathering and sprinkle them with holy water. Even Saint Paul himself had claimed he was willing to be all things to all people if it would bring them to Christ. Acculturation has been a particular forte of the Catholic imagination (Greeley)—one of the reasons for the widely differing religious traditions in Catholic countries—but it is not restricted to one branch of Christianity and Stephens' account demonstrates this: his portrait of the Pentecostals is particularly engaging. That this process produced tension within Christianity is also not new; the trouble the Jesuits had in gaining official acceptance for their efforts to use far reaching acculturation in their missionary effort in the Orient serves as a prime example. The more recent instantiation of these dynamics documented in *The Devil's Music* further proves their deep hold in the religion.

Stephens notes a particular phenomenon accompanying the rise of Christian rock that begs further examination. Although the rise of Christian rock as a separate branch in the entertainment industry is important cultural history, what is quite significant is the engagement of major rock artists such as Van Morrison or Bob Dylan with the form for at least a part of their career. Even the Beatles touched upon it with the deeply moving "Let It Be": one of their most memorable songs before they broke up. This phenomenon is worth probing deeper.

It is well known that religion has inspired much of the great art over the millennia. Why then should it not have influenced rock to some degree? Certainly the extent and depth of the influence is worth a fuller investigation, and not just through its more overt expression for which Stephens lays a sound groundwork. Where should one begin such a query? One of the vocalists from the Staples gives a hint at the very end of "The Weight" sequence of *The Last Waltz*. Deeply moved by the effort and its poignant result she exclaims: "Beautiful!" Would it be too much to claim that what the singer intuitively felt is that in this song Gospel music met rock at the transcendentals: truth, beauty and the good? Perhaps, but it is hard to think of a more appropriate appraisal of the music than through its affinity to this currently overlooked if not forgotten quality. And where you have the transcendentals, the Transcendent cannot be that far away.

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Christopher Garbowski
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

Joy Katzmarzik. *Comic Art and Avant-Garde: Bill Waterson's 'Calvin and Hobbes' and the Art of American Newspaper Comic Strips*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019. 298 pages.

Newspaper comic strips are one of the most accessible and well-known examples of American popular culture. As M. Thomas Inge points out, "[a]long with jazz, the comics strip as we know it perhaps represents America's major indigenous contribution to world culture" (xi). *Peanuts*, *Dilbert*, and *Garfield*, to name just a few, have entertained readers for years, mixing humor with political commentary and social criticism. As such, as objects of academic and critical interest, comic strips are located at a creative and compelling intersection of literary studies, cultural studies, visual studies, media studies, American studies, and comics studies. Indeed, newspaper comic strips and their scholarly investigation have been marked by a peculiar paradox. On the one hand, recent years has seen an unprecedented resurgence of graphic novel and comics studies, triggered by the publication of such contemporary masterpieces as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986), Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* (2000), or Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006), as well as the never-ending interest in the DC and Marvel universes. On the other hand, while so much attention has been given to longer graphic works, newspaper comic strips, popular as they are, have been somewhat neglected in comics studies. While numerous anthologies of various comic strips (*The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper* Comics (1977), *The Comic Strip Century: Celebrating 100 Years of an American Art Form* (1995), or publications in "the complete" format, such as, for example, *The Complete Peanuts*) and studies highlighting the cultural significance of the form (*Comics as Culture* (1990)) have been published at least since the 1970s, few books actually provided an insightful analysis of concrete titles.

Joy Katzmarzik, in her study *Comic Art and Avant-Garde*, published as a part of "The American Studies Monograph Series" edited for the German Association for American Studies, examines the genre of newspaper comic strips through the lens of Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* (1985-1995). Thus, while she firmly positions her research within the critical framework of cultural studies, she also expands it by constructively engaging with the notion of the medium per se. As such, Katzmarzik's book adds to the growing field of more specialized studies of newspaper strips, including David Kunzle's *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer* (2007) or Michael Tisserand's *Krazy: George Herriman*, a *Life in Black and White* (2016). Drawing on Amy L. Devitt's *Writing Genres* (2004), Katzmarzik structures her analysis around the central question of the genre, the newspaper comic strip, and examines *Calvin and Hobbes* from a multifaceted perspective, in which both form and content of the strip play an important role. Each of the five chapters centers on a given genre question, such as the definition of the newspaper comic strip, its history, formal features, and, finally, its capability to comment on the realities of the 1980s and the 1990s, as evidenced by Calvin and Hobbes specifically. As such, all chapters in the book may be treated as a mini-study of a particular issue, which, bit by bit, build on one another to provide the reader with a comprehensive view of Watterson's work. As Katzmarzik herself observes in the introduction (14), such an approach has both its advantages and limitations, because she is able to highlight certain issues at the expense of others.

In any case, thanks to the elaborate and yet rigid structure of the book, Katzmarzik takes the reader step-by-step through all the different facets of *Calvin and Hobbes*. In the extensive introduction, which is listed in the table of contents as the first chapter, the reader is presented with various perspectives on studying newspaper comic strips, which, however, are limited to rather general and evident questions of humor, popular culture, and downplaying comics as an art form. Indeed, in her introductory discussion of Leslie Fiedler's *Waiting for the End* (1965) or David Kunzle's two-volume history of early comic strips (1973, 1990), the author appears to address rather obvious questions, as the current research on the form has already dealt with such issues. In the second part of the introduction, Katzmarzik presents the general premise of the strip and its main characters, locating the 6-year-old Calvin in an intertextual field of adolescent protagonists and the history of religion (with John Calvin as the obvious reference). She characterizes Calvin as a "hybrid" character, neither and both a child and an adult (25), and further refers to him as a "pragmatist," "sentimentalist" and "philosopher" (26-28). Respectively, Hobbes, neither and both a stuffed and a real tiger, is seen as "a parody of Thomas Hobbes's ego-centered worldview" (32). And intriguing as these points are, unfortunately, due to the structure to which the author adheres, they are further developed only in chapter five.

Indeed, in the following three chapters, Katzmarzik focuses on the formal features of newspaper comic strips. In the second chapter, she comments on various working definitions of comics and the implied hybrid nature of the form. And as relevant as these issues are, they nevertheless constitute a mere background for what appears to be of most interest to the reader in this study, namely the approach to the comic strip itself. Once again, it is in the final section of Chapter Two that Katzmarzik raises some interesting points. For one, instead of simply focusing on the formal features of the comic strip, such as sequentiality, length, verbal-visual narration and the presence of a recurring cast, which have been analysed by the majority of comics scholars, she treats the medium of the strip as a starting point for a functional analysis. Indeed, Katzmarzik argues that "the question of… function is equally important to grasp the genre and goes beyond a mere normative level by posing the question of [its] narrative potential beyond the narrative structures imposed on [it]" (44). She subsequently lists the functions of the comic strip that, though crucial, have often been overlooked in "purely" medial studies. These functions include the ability to elicit sympathy and the presence of "recurring surprise" that, when combined, have "the potential to confront the reader with the deepest questions of human nature" (46). Once again, however, this argument is somewhat cut short and the full "functional" potential of *Calvin and Hobbes* is unpacked in the fifth chapter.

What follows in the third chapter is a historical overview of how the comic strip has fulfilled its functions since the 1890s to the 1990s. The author traces the development of the genre since the times of *Hogan's Alley*, and the cult figure of the Yellow Kid, *Little Nemo*, and *Krazy Kat*, which first freely explored the potential of the form. Then, Katzmarzik focuses on the so-called Golden Age of Comics, i.e. the 1930s and the 1940s, comments on the censorship of comics in the 1950s (brought about by the publication of Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954), and, finally, describes the impact of Pop Art on comics in general. The "general" reader

will of course greatly benefit from such a historical overview. The "specialist" reader, a comics scholar or a cultural scholar, however, could browse through this section as it is largely based on Robert C. Harvey's *The Art of Funnies* (1994), Jean-Paul Gabillet's *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American* Comic Books (2010), or *From Comics Strips to Graphic Novels* (2013) edited by Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon. Once again, the most insightful section is the final one, in which Katzmarzik locates Watterson's work in the context of the 1980s and the 1990s. She demonstrates that while Watterson himself was never involved in the underground and avant-garde comix scene which flourished in the 1980s (with Robert Crumb and Art Spiegelman as its main representatives), even as the so-called mainstream artist he still insisted that newspaper comic strips should be regarded as an art form. Indeed, in his struggle for greater artistic freedom, Watterson is presented as a unique figure in the mercantile world of mainstream publishing. Katzmarzik quotes from and analyses numerous interviews with Watterson. She also extensively refers to a lecture given by the artist at Ohio State's Festival of Cartoon Art in 1989, tellingly entitled "On the Cheapening of Comics." It is at this point in the book that Katzmarzik lifts the veil on why she refers to avant-garde in the title of her study, as Waterson emerges as a radical and unorthodox artist. He actively opposed the market rules which governed the publication of his strip and, as Katzmarzik points out, stopped *Calvin and Hobbes* in 1995, that was at the time during which the strip enjoyed its greatest popularity.

Chapter four, in turn, examines in detail the formal features of comic strips, systematically arranging various graphic and narrative techniques. Katzmarzik discusses layout, panel composition, character design, background, and lettering first, roughly drawing from Will Eisner's classic work *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985). Such a general discussion is followed by a thorough analysis of selected strips from *Calvin and Hobbes*. Katzmarzik demonstrates how Watterson manages to do a sort of balancing act between the limitations that the form implies (which have to do with space, length, etc.) and his avant-garde aspirations, playing with panel shape, colour, perspective, and composition. Of course, the ultimate goal of such an analysis is not to give media studies "its due," but to demonstrate that the comic strip, similarly to other visual narratives, narrates through its structure. Indeed, as Katzmarzik points out, Watterson uses "the visuals as an active narrative element" (150). In what appears to be a somewhat unforeseen pairing, Katzmarzik then moves on to a discussion of humour. Though crucial in a study devoted to the comic strip, the analysis of humour nevertheless seems at odds with a very systematic and methodical examination of the formal and structural features of the comic strip. Still, Katzmarzik sets to analyse the forms of humour with the same precision, listing incongruity of characters, literal meaning of words, unexpected references, unexpected places, and unexpected reaction of objects as the main features of humour in the comic strip. She refers to a number of classic strips and classic literary texts to exemplify the mechanisms of humour, demonstrating that, when assessed against such a background, *Calvin and Hobbes* once again does not "play by the rules," but rebels against the expectations of the mass market and the mass audience.

Indeed, as Katzmarzik subsequently demonstrates in the fifth and final chapter of her study, *Calvin and Hobbes*, a work of art in itself, does not shy away from

engaging in a political and cultural debate. Of course, Katzmarzik understands what the capabilities and the limitations of the medium of the comic strip are and, thanks to the argument that has been presented in the book so far, the reader is fully aware of them as well, yet she is able to see the political behind the ostensibly humorous. In a somewhat ironic, but at the same time instructive, manner, the chapter begins with a quotation from an interview with Bill Watterson, who points out that "[i]f you draw anything more subtle than a pie in the face, you're considered a philosopher. You can sneak in an honest reflection once in a while, because readers rarely have their guard up" (175). With that thought in mind, Katzmarzik sets to discuss Watterson's comic strip in the broad context of the 1980s and the early 1990s in America, with a particular focus on issues such as religion, the environment, and the role of television. *Calvin and Hobbes* is seen as "a humorous blueprint of society" (176). It uses fragmentation to parody and exaggerate certain trends and ideas.

The analyses of the selected strips that follow truly constitute one of the most interesting sections of the book. Katzmarzik looks at the (post)Puritan American society of the 1980s and demonstrates how the comic strip, and Calvin in particular (the reference to John Calvin is of course highlighted at this point), parodies postmodern ethics. Respectively, drawing on Watterson's life-long interest in modernist art and its principles, with a particular focus on the notions of craft, authorship, and creativity, Katzmarzik then moves on to examine the role and status of post-modernist art, as presented in the strip. She reads *Calvin and Hobbes* in terms of its critique of post-modernist artistic "gimmicks," such as self-staging, downplaying the role of skill and talent, and inventing -isms in an attempt to legitimize what is often derivative. This pairing of religion and art explored in the first part of the final chapter finds its counterpart in the combined discussion of ecology and mass media that follows. While Calvin is seen as a character who tends to romanticize nature in a truly transcendentalist fashion, as the child of the 1980s, he also ultimately renounces it for the sake of television. Indeed, Watterson's work in general is seen as a parody and exaggeration of certain contemporary trends.

As a whole, the book effectively discusses how Watterson's work builds on the existing tradition of the comic strip genre, exploring its possibilities and limitations to comment on the America of the 1980s and the early 1990s. It is a truly interesting and engaging read.

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Małgorzata Olsza
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Carmen Rueda-Ramos and Susana Jiménez Placer, eds. *Constructing the Self: Essays on Southern Life-Writing.* València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2017. 370 pages.

Constructing the Self: Essays on Southern Life-Writing is a crowning achievement of the Research Group "Discourse and Identity" at the University of Santiago de Compostela. The book is the 147th volume in the "Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans" series published by Publicacions de la Universitat de València. The nuanced readings of southern autobiographical writing not only suggest the continuing relevance of the works the edited volume explores, but also the importance of what these southern texts set out to show: that southern autobiographical writing not only (re)constructs and performs the self, but also presents a self-image of southern culture embracing the plurality of selves. *Constructing the Self* is a triumph of collaborative work by eighteen contributors from all around Europe and the USA working within southern studies. It is from this international collaboration that the book draws its strength. Carmen Rueda-Ramos and Susana Jiménez Placer managed to compile a truly impressive list of renowned scholars collaborating on this book project, yet the editors were able to unify these numerous voices into a cohesive text divided into five interrelated and cross-linked sections.

This division of essays "loosely reflects the development of southern life-writing, from its beginning to more recent approaches to autobiographical works that incorporate contemporary critical theories and perspectives" (31). The book progresses

from analyses of the subversive quality of the earliest autobiographical writings by African Americans, narratives reconciling the self across the color line, blurred generic boundaries between autobiography and fiction, and on to further transgressions of the memoir genre, to end with the final section, devoted to pilgrimages of self-discovery.

Carmen Rueda-Ramos and Susana Jiménez Placer did a commendable job in covering all the conceptual ground in an ambitious and well-researched introduction to the book entitled "The Enduring Impulse to Tell about the Self and the South." A better introduction to the subject matter of *Constructing the Self* is hard to find. It is a highly informative guide to which readers may confidently turn for an enlightened condensation of southern autobiographical writing. The introduction is a treasure trove of names and titles, the sort of piece that would work well as an introductory essay for a course in southern life-writing. The editors researched the topic with full realization of the vast socio-cultural context needed to create this impressive road map to an expansive body of literature.

The book opens with the section "Subversive (re)creations of the Self – Past and Present" which has two essays in which renowned southern literary critics analyze how African American life-writing authors constructed themselves in a social environment which conspired against them. In the opening essay "'My Story is Better than Yours': The Changing Politics of and Motives for Composing Southern African American Life Narratives," Trudier Harris analyzes the contrasting impulses that moved African American southern writers: the impulse to bear witness to a collective experience (communal concerns, Frederick Douglass or Booker T. Washington) or to engage in literary self-creation (individualistic concerns, e.g. Zora Neal Hurston), or to express social consciousness (embracing activism, e.g. Maya Angelou, Alice Walker or Anne Moody).

This social aspect of African American autobiographies is also the main focus of Robert Brinkmeyer's essay "Working a Lever: Booker T. Washington's Autobiographies as Tools for Social Change." Brinkmeyer examines the subversive potential of Washington's autobiographical writings—a potential embedded in Washington's theories on practical education and the dignity of meaningful manual labor performed by African Americans. In his nuanced reading of Washington's life-writings through the prism of "economic-social gospel" Brinkmeyer challenges a common belief in Washington's accommodationist and reactionary ideas (as evidenced in the writer's ideas about economic advancement rather than political agitation).

The next section, "The Legacy of Race: Reconciling Selves," brings other readings of southern life-writings across the racial spectrum. The four essays contained in this section focus on the continuing racial divide and on attempts to form meaningful relationships across the color line. The first essay, "'I Knew Then Who I Was': Memory, Narrative, and Sense of Self in Autobiographies of the Jim Crow South," offers the interesting perspective of a historian reading literary texts. Jennifer Ritterhouse does not reduce autobiographical narratives to "factual" records of historical events. Nor does she simply read them as scripts or patterns. She suggests, rather, an analysis of subjective lived experiences. She brilliantly problematizes "the truth-value" of retrospective stories of childhood racial learning from the Jim Crow South.

In the next contribution, "Daily Encounters: The Coming of Age of Melton A. McLaurin," Elizabeth Hayes Turner analyzes McLaurin's *Separate Pasts: Growing Up*

White in the Segregated South as a "conversion narrative." A historian by profession, McLaurin wrote of his own lived experience, a decision that served as a therapeutic act which allowed him to deal with the past. In her article Hayes Turner provides an engaging and informative account of McLaurin's self-transformation through a series of stages which led to his rejection of family paternalism and of the role of the privileged white man.

The legacy of race is also the subject of the essay written by Pearl McHaney. In her "Life Writing in Poetry and Prose: Natasha Tretheway's Personal and National Revelations" she discusses how US Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey's interweaves her own personal story with the history of her region and nation in her poetry and prose. McHaney skillfully identifies and locates Trethewey's life story on the larger canvas of national histories—stories of racism, poverty, cotton, the Jim Crow Laws, and the unrecognized work of the Louisiana Native Guards. Telling her own story—McHaney proves—gave Trethewey a chance to uncover and/or recover untold or erased stories which constitute shared knowledge: "Trethewey's life writing in prose and poetry emanates from the personal, but her imperative is to reveal us to ourselves, as insisting that our history is a shared history."

The issues of race and racial reconciliation also segue into the final essay of this section. In "Southern Autobiography Around the Table of Brotherhood: A Dream Deferred, a Dream Deceased, and Dream Destroyed, a Dream Dismissed?" Ineke Bockting explores racial relations through the prism of commensality, first denied across the color line and then subversively performed during the Civil Rights Movement. Using Martin Luther King's "table of brotherhood" metaphor Bockting probes the themes of abundance, success and innocence in various southern life writings.

The third section, "Authors, Narrators, and Fictionalized Selves," turns the discussion of life-writings away from the perspective of how and why racial identities are performed and constructed and towards stylistic analysis of the genre and discussion of the fictionalization of life-writings. In her discussion of "Memoirs' Characters: Writer, Narrator, Protagonist" Peggy Whitman Prenshaw interrogates the three components of the memoir—the voices of the writer, storytelling narrator, and protagonist—using autobiographies written by southern women as examples. Prenshaw probes how Ellen Douglas's, Mary Karr's, and Maya Angelou's stories relate to the credibility of life writings, to truth telling, and to sensory details engaging the readers.

While the following contributions in this section generally refer to the fictionalization of memoirs (analysis of a given author's factual self and fictionalized self), Thomas L. McHaney's essay "Faulkner and Autobiography in Fiction" offers an intriguing analysis of Faulkner's "embellished autobiography" in his fiction. Faulkner's other biographers "have given attention to the writer's propensity for biographical application and exaggeration in his poetry and fiction" or, in other words, to Faulkner's inclination towards "impersonations, imitations, fabrications, fictional personas, role-playing, and legends about himself." Unlike such biographers, Thomas McHaney, manifesting copious and fascinating knowledge about his subject, carefully reads one of Faulkner's letters and points out how information included in it might enrich our understanding of *The Sound and the Fury*.

Gerald Préher's article "'A Someone Somewhere': Locating Richard Ford's

Southern Self in his Fiction and Non-Fiction" traces Ford's ambivalent stance towards his southern origin and his being labeled a southern author. Préher traces Ford's inner struggle and love-hate relationship with the South in *The Sportswriter*. In the closing essay in this section, "Self-Fashioning and Philippe Labro's 'Southern Memoir' *The Foreign Student*," Nahem Yousaf offers an analysis of the "memoir with the texture of fiction." Yousaf provides depth to his analysis of how Labro's southern exposure in his youth influenced his self-fashioning as author through historically rich contextualization of changes southern culture has undergone and his elegant articulation of the metamorphoses of life writing as genre. Actually, Yousaf claims that one informs the other: the hybridity of the genre (Labro's text as either "an autobiographical novel", "true tale" or "a memoirlike novel") might reflect the transcultural perspective on a book written by a French journalist who was an international student in Virginia in the 1950s.

Part four, "Transgressors and Performers of Self," brings exhaustive discussions about the strategies southern women use to construct and deconstruct their selves. Carmen Rueda-Ramos's "Appalachian Women's Autobiographies from the Margins: Crossing the Boundaries of the Genre" brilliantly analyzes the transgressive quality of life narratives written by marginalized women. The life writings chosen for the analysis "do not conform to the conventional specifications of the genre." Rueda-Ramos's reading of Appalachian women's autobiographical narratives as "outlaw genres" is particularly enlightening—the author points to the ability of generic hybridization to blur the boundaries between the individual and collective.

A different form of transgression is analyzed by Susana Jiménez Placer in her article "'Pariahs for Flattering Reasons': Confessions of Failed Southern Ladies on the Black Help." In contradistinction to Rueda-Ramos's article about Appalachian women's "relational auto/biographies," Jiménez Placer's captivating work sheds light on societal transgressions of southern ladies in a series of southern autobiographies. Her analysis of Virginia Foster Durr's, Florence Kings', and Shirley Abbott's memoirs concentrates on depictions of rebellious acts against traditional expectations towards ladies and mammies.

The next two essays in this section address the issue of performativity. Beata Zawadka's contribution "'A Tarnished Lady?': Tallulah Bankhead's Southern Performance in Hollywood" offers an insight into the southern actress's self-reflective characterization in her acting style (reenactment of the status of the white elite southern female). In her analysis of Bankhead's self-fashioning Zawadka pushes the traditional boundaries of the autobiographical genre. While performance of white elite ladyhood in Zawadka's article is identified as "drag," performance in the last essay in this section, Sandra Ballard's "Grief and Humor: Appalachian Writers Using Autobiography to Find a Way Home," relies on the use of humor. Ballard pinpoints possible uses of humor as a counterbalance to grief, which could be applicable not only in the case of Appalachian autobiographies, but also African American slave narratives, mountain memoirs, and black autobiographies.

The final section of the book, "Sites for Self-Explorations: Travel and Illness Narratives," offers a glimpse into life-writing as a site of self-discovery. A quest for identity can take a very physical, geographical shape. That is the case in the first two essays of this section. Jesús Varela-Zapata, in "The Self Elsewhere: Alice Walker's

Identity in the Wider World," persuasively claims that travelling to other places allows writers to extend their activism. Varela-Zapata sees *Overcoming Speechlessness* as Walker's travelogue engaged in international activism. He perceptively discusses the parallels between Walker's own experiences during the Jim Crow South and then the Civil Rights era, with stories of brutality and genocide.

In "Reflecting on the Region, Revisioning the Self: John Gould Fletcher's Song of His Life and Its Transatlantic Context" Waldemar Zacharasiewicz interprets Fletcher's self portrait in his autobiography *Life Is My Song* as the poet's constant attempt to find his "stable identity." Zacharasiewicz demonstrates that suffering from bouts of manic depression and never feeling at home wherever he was (due to his feelings of cosmopolitanism), Fletcher attempted to create a sense of self affected by his travels and illness.

In her article, "The Physicality of Reminiscence: The Stimuli of the South in Bobbie Ann Mason's *Clear Springs: A Memoir*," Candela Delgado Marin explores Mason's memoir from an intriguing conceptual-analytical perspective: southern autobiography as a record of bodily impressions and physical sensations. Delgado Marin chooses to treat sensory memoirs as a critical lens to analyze Bobbie Ann Mason's exploration of her self and her native region. In the final contribution to the volume, titled "Coming to the End: The Perception of Mortality in the Autobiographical Writings of Reynolds Price and Tim McLaurin," Marcel Arbeit turns his critical eye to an analysis of illness and disability narratives, a relatively new sub-genre of life-writing. Arbeit analyzes how authors use illness narratives to tell the story of personal struggle to reconstruct their bodies and sense of self.

The dramatic increase in authorship, publication, and readership of life writing, which has by now become mainstream in American autobiographical writing, necessitates a study of self-narratives through the prism of contemporary theories about culture, narrative, and techniques of self-representation. Demonstrating how various southerners across time and space channeled the autobiographical impulse, *Constructing the Self: Essays on Southern Life-Writing* answers that demand. It is an invaluable handbook for those who wish to have authoritative information on southern lived experience and its textual representation. Contributors to this volume not only discuss canonical autobiographies by both black and white authors, but also poetry, fictionalized autobiographies and various types of memoirs. Even though the individual essays easily stand on their own, readers will also benefit from reading the collection in its entirety due to its overarching themes. Due to the broad variety of theoretical approaches, the volume succeeds in offering breadth and depth of expertise on southern life-writing.

Contributors to this volume consulted an important array of sources, and this highly readable and extremely insightful book therefore provides rich, well-documented insights into the subject matter. *Constructing the Self* will become an invaluable research tool for any scholar wishing to study life-writing in general and southern autobiographical writing in particular. A thoughtful and engaging read, this book will be useful also for students in a variety of fields ranging from literary, cultural, African American studies to sociology and history.

Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

CONTRIBUTORS

Ewa Antoszek is an Assistant Professor at the Department of American Literature and Culture of Maria-Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Her interests include American ethnic literatures with a particular focus on Mexican-American and African-American writers, women's studies and representations of space(s) in literature. She is the author of *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings* (2012) and several articles analyzing issues related to the situation of ethnic minorities in the U.S. Her current research examines Latina authors and artists in the U.S. (re)writing the border.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-2714-3031; antoszek@umcs.edu.pl]

Izabella Kimak is an Assistant Professor at the Department of American Literature and Culture at Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Her research interests encompass American ethnic literature, race, post-colonial and gender studies, and the intersection of literary and non-literary arts. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the EAAS Women's Network and a co-coordinator of the ExRe(y) project.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-2212-8174; izakimak@gmail.com]

Jerry D. Leonard (Ph.D. in English, J.D. in Law) teaches English at Lanzhou Jiaotong University in northwestern China. He is the editor of the anthology *Legal Studies as Cultural Studies* (1995) and the author of *Mo Yan Thought* (2017) and *Teaching Spivak—Otherwise* (2019).
[ORCID: 0000-0002-0860-8825; meeposmao@yahoo.com]

Zbigniew Maszewski has for the last forty years been teaching courses in American literature. His areas of interest include American Modernism, American Romanticism and comparative studies. In 2003 he published *William Faulkner and Bruno Schulz: A Comparative Study.* He has lectured in Spain, Italy, Turkey and Japan.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-9144-6838; z.maszewski@yahoo.com]

Agnieszka Matysiak is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Applied Linguistics at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, specializing in literary studies. She is the author of *The Backstage as the Diegetic Space in the (Neo)Gothic Dramas* (2010). She received her PhD in 2017.
[ORCID: 0000-0003-0134-7690; ag.matysiak@gmail.com]

Jarosław Milewski is a PhD student affiliated with the Department of American Literature and Culture at the University of Łódź. He has published articles on links between Irish nationalism and homosexuality in Jamie O'Neill's prose, and on mechanisms of alignment with power in Sarah Schulman's works. He serves as the

editorial secretary of *InterAlia*, a journal of queer studies. His PhD project analyzes Schulman's practices of resistance to the culture industry of AIDS.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-6948-8601; jmilewski92@gmail.com]

Marta Rzepecka is affiliated with the University of Rzeszów. She earned her master's and doctoral degrees at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Her research focuses on rhetoric and the American presidency, especially twentieth- and twenty-first-century presidents' foreign policy.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-0355-790X; marta.rzepecka@ur.edu.pl]

Shiri Rosenberg holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Music from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and a Master's degree in Language Education in a Multicultural Society from Levinsky College of Education in Tel Aviv, with which she is now affiliated. She has been an educator and counselor for the Israeli Ministry of Education for more than 15 years. She is enrolled in the graduate program in American Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.
[ORCID: 0000-0002-5804-9427; shirienglish@gmail.com]

Jerzy Sobieraj is an Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Uniwersytet SWPS), Warsaw, Poland. His research focuses on Southern literature, culture, and history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first Polish monograph about the Ku Klux Klan is among his books. He is also the author of *Collisions of Conflict: Studies in American History and Culture, 1820–1920* (2014).
[ORCID: 0000-0002-1358-0732; jsobieraj@swps.edu.pl]