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Contents

Literature and Culture

Martin Procházka	
<i>Early American Utopias: Equality and the Individual Self</i>	7
Michal Peprník	
<i>The Transformation of Place in James Fenimore Cooper's Novel The Pioneers</i>	17
Gabriela Vöö	
<i>"We were all lions": Avatars of the Dandy in Poe's Tales of the Folio Club</i>	27
Marcela Sulak	
<i>Rivers, Roads and Conveyor Belts: The making of America(n poetry)</i>	39
Michaela Weiß	
<i>Call It Modernism: Henry Roth</i>	53
Martin Urdiales Shaw	
<i>Ethnic Encounters in 1930s Jewish American Childhood Novels of New York</i>	67
Stanislav Kolář	
<i>The Health of the Nation in the Shadow of Modern Historical Trauma: Art Spiegelman's In the Shadow of No Towers</i>	77
Zuzana Buráková	
<i>Finding Identity through Trauma</i>	87
Šárka Bubíková	
<i>Bonding, Separation and Identity in Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John</i>	97
Antonella Piazza	
<i>The Tempest on the screen of the eighties</i>	107
Petr Chalupský	
<i>The Logic of the Paradox – Self-Inventing and Popular Culture in Nicola Barker's Clear</i>	117
Ondřej Skovajsa	
<i>Lawrencovo setkání s Whitmanem</i>	133
Petr Kopecký	
<i>John Steinbeck a Robinson Jeffers: literární ikony Kalifornie v Československu</i>	145

Book Reviews

Jarmila Kojdecká	
<i>The Postmodern City of Dreadful Night (Petr Chalupský)</i>	167
Marie Crhová	
<i>Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature (Stanislav Kolář, Zuzana Buráková, and Katarína Šandorová)</i>	169
Stanislav Kolář	
<i>Jewishness as Humanism in Bernard Malamud's Fiction (Michaela Náhliková)</i>	171
Olga Roebuck	
<i>Úvod do studia dětství v americké literatuře (Šárka Bubíková)</i>	174

News, Announcements

Miroslav Černý	
<i>Pětašedesátiny prof. Stanislava Kavky</i>	179
<i>Universals and Typology in Word-Formation II</i>	183

Literature and Culture

Early American Utopias: Equality and the Individual Self

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Abstract

*After discussing the most important seventeenth and eighteenth-century religious utopian communities, the article focuses on the secularization of Foucauldian “pastoral power” and its impact on one of the first U.S. secular utopias, Charles Brockden Brown’s *Alcuin* (1798). Whereas the conclusion of *Alcuin* expresses the opinion that secularized “pastoral power” can transform traditional marriage and thus contribute to the democratization of sexual politics, some Brown’s novels, namely *Wieland* (1798) and the unfinished *Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist* (1804), explore the abuse of “pastoral power” and the effects of its use on the manipulation of individuals, their spirituality and moral principles. In this way, “pastoral power” is linked with the degradation of the original spiritual form of American utopianism.*

Keywords: American utopias, pastoral power, sexual politics, manipulation

Introduction

American utopia is a much broader concept than the familiar notions of America as the New Jerusalem or later, secular versions of the American Dream. It includes the teachings and practices of numerous religious sects and utopian societies and also experimentation with the role of women in the community, typical of the American version of utopias. As Lawrence Foster points out, one of the most important incentives of the later, nineteenth-century utopian communities was growing dissatisfaction with the “marriage and sex role-patterns” (4). Another often neglected aspect is that of class difference and social equality. As early as 1875, Charles Nordhoff distinguished between the European way of organizing working-class movements, mainly by means of trade unions, and the American approach:

Aside from systematized emigration to unsettled or thinly peopled regions, which the Trades-Unions of Europe ought to organize on a great scale, but which they have entirely neglected, the other outlets for the mass of dissatisfied hand-laborers lie through co-operative or communistic efforts. (Nordhoff 17)

While the co-operative movement was flourishing in some European countries, Nordhoff saw the U.S. as a country with “a number of successful Communistic Societies, pursuing agriculture and different branches of manufacturing” (17). Most of these societies (the Amana Society in Iowa, the Harmony Society in Western Pennsylvania, the Separatists at Zoar in eastern Ohio, the Shakers who established a number of communities, the Oneida “perfectionist” community in the upper New York State or the Icaria in Iowa) were based on religious principles but their nature was also economic consisting in a different organization of labor, distribution of wealth and property.

Although the gender and economic roots of American utopias are important, most of the early utopian communities were religious or esoteric projects. For instance, the Harmony Society in a village called Economy in Western Pennsylvania was based on the idea of common ownership of all property. This idea was supported by the belief in “Divine Economy,” the persuasion that the original Adam combined in himself both the male and the female sex and that “in the renewed world, man will be restored to the ideal godlike condition” (Nordhoff 86). The overcoming of gender and sexual differences justified the economic idea of communism. Similarly, the Oneida religious community, founded by the Yale theology student John Humphrey Noyes in 1848, was based on “common marriage” (i.e. frequent exchange of sexual partners). The major purpose was the integration of sexual, economic and government activities of individuals and the exclusion of the erotic “special love” as “the antisocial behavior threatening communal order” (Foster 9). Similar patterns, intertwining communal government, sexuality and economy, were to be found in the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, or the Mormon Church. In contrast to the previous communities, the Mormons were a church with its own Scripture, “the Book of Mormon” (1830) and its polygamy was based on the tradition of the Old Testament, the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Foster 11).

Discussing early American utopias, I will first outline the most important religious utopian projects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, then analyze the power relations typical of these communities, especially the links between power and sexuality, and finally focus on the theme of the abuse of power in the dystopian novels of Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810).

Religious Utopias in the 17th and 18th Centuries

The first attempt to establish a religiously tolerant and, in some respects, even “democratic” community dates back to the 1630s, when Roger Williams had to leave the Massachusetts Bay colony because of his criticism of its oligarchy and Puritan theocracy. He founded the Rhode Island colony in 1636, which became a refuge for Jews and Quakers, as well as Catholics.

Another approach shaping early American utopias was Christian communism, preached at that time by a Huguenot reformer, a converted Jesuit, Jean de Labadie (1610–74).

Labadie's activities led to the foundation of a community called the Labadists and headed by Anna van Schurman (1607–78) after their founder's death. The Labadists claimed that the true church consisted only of the spiritually reborn or "elect" people. The church was "of the other world" and its members, especially women, wore special clothes that resembled monastic garb. All members of the church were priests. There was a general belief in predestination. And the main emphasis was put on the practice of self-denial, especially fasting. Marriage, called "the Lord's work," was allowed only among converts.

After years of persecution in the Netherlands, which forced them to seek the protection of Elizabeth, the wife of Frederick of Palatine and the former "Winter Queen" of Bohemia, the Labadists were offered the use of the Castle of Thetinga in West Friesland, where they stayed until 1733. From there they organized the first unsuccessful mission to Surinam, the Dutch colony in the Caribbean. Their next destination was New Amsterdam, where they converted some people, including Ephraim George Herrman (1652–1689). His father, Augustin Heřman or Herrman(n) (?1605–86), was allegedly the son of a Prague alderman, who emigrated, entered the service of the West Indian Company, went to America as early as 1629, and settled in New Amsterdam in 1643. He planted indigo in Surinam and became one of the founders of the Virginian tobacco trade. He led an embassy to the Rhode Island colony and it is not unlikely that he was influenced by Roger Williams' principles of religious tolerance. At the end of the 1640s he led the colonists' resistance against the governor, Peter Stuyvesant, and in 1662 he received a charter for a territory in Maryland at the northern end of Chesapeake Bay, which he called Bohemia Manor or "Little Bohemia." The property had manorial privileges and Herrman received the title of Lord. He became known as "the Lord of the Bohemia Manor." Before his death, in 1684, he was convinced by his son Ephraim to give part of his land (3,750 acres) to the Labadists, who established their utopian community on it. Later Herrman came to think this step imprudent and attempted to withdraw his permission, but the leaders of the colonists deftly secured their ownership by legal means. Moreover, the sect drove his son Ephraim to madness and premature death by insisting that he should leave his wife and join the religious community.

The sect was controlled by a cunning person, Peter Sluyter, who imposed severe discipline including the rationing of bread, eating distasteful food, forfeiture of all personal property and strenuous work duties. The reward was absolute equality between men and women in all activities, but it was evident that some members of the colony, that is, Sluyter and his family, were more equal than others. In 1698 Sluyter persuaded the Labadists to partition the land into private lots and he himself became one of the cruelest slave-owners. This was the end of one of the first American religious utopias.

However, utopian efforts were not paralyzed by individual cunning and avarice. In 1671 Labadie met the founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn, who was so deeply affected by his opinions that he invited the Labadists to join the Quakers. William Penn's plan was to make Pennsylvania a larger replica of Rhode Island and to bring in representatives of different sects. Apart from the Quakers, there were also the Mennonites, a pacifist, Anabaptist church which separated from the Swiss reformed church of Ulrich Zwingli and were known for rejecting infant baptism as well as the link between the Church and the State. Another important sect was the Pietists, founded by Johann Jacob Zimmerman (1644–93) a follower of the German (Lusatian) mystic Jakob Böhme. For his unorthodox approach to Copernican theory Zimmermann was forced to leave the Lutheran church. He

also developed a numerological interpretation of the Apocalypse and designed a utopian community – “a society of the Woman in the Wilderness,” the apocalyptic symbol of the true church (a woman who was carried by an eagle to the wilderness to bring about the spiritual rebirth of humanity). Zimmerman himself did not reach Pennsylvania, but the group of Pietists arrived there in June 1694 led by his disciple Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708). Later, some members of the group, including Kelpius, established a sanctuary on the ridge above the Wissahickon Creek. The group lived mostly like hermits, devoting a good deal of time to contemplating the stars for signs of the arrival of the Millennium. Their emotional prayers accompanied with bonfires (the largest were made on Saint John’s Eve) often led to collective hallucinations: once they saw an angel in the sky and hoped he would announce the Day of Judgment.

The Pietists “believed in physical Resurrection for everyone who led a virtuous life and adhered to the principles of Theosophy” (Holloway 41). They also used many features of medieval magic and medicine, practiced music (which provoked the ire of the Puritans) and were on friendly terms with the Indians (compiling a vocabulary of their words). One of their principal beliefs was in individual immortality. Most of their days were filled with drudgery in the forest or on small fields, while evenings were dedicated to esoteric studies. This sect, which survived Kelpius and dissolved only in 1748 after the death of his successor Conrad Matthei, no doubt became the model for Charles Brockden Brown’s account of the life of old Wieland in the eponymous novel.

Another German religious community was the Baptist Brotherhood, founded in Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1719. They were also known as Dunkers or Dunkards (from German *dunken* – to dip). In 1735 they founded a settlement called Ephrata, a celibate colony which also included women. Their teaching followed mainly the Old Testament. The community had a monastic organization and its members lived in cells in two separate houses, one for men and another for women (both sexes were called “orders”). Their mystical belief was influenced by numerological principles, elaborating the Biblical description of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6.7). The numerological predictions were focused on the arrival of the Millennium. The life of the community members was extremely austere: they wore “coarse woolen habits” (Holloway 46), slept on beds with no pillows or mattresses, and had to get up at midnight for their devotions, and again at five in the morning for another divine service. Their severity was not only physical but also moral. The community became unsettled by the attempt of the brothers Eckerling to bring about its economic transformation, which also included the introduction of private enterprise and marriage.

A more interesting feature is their publication activities, which were encouraged by the leading men of the time, including Benjamin Franklin. Apart from treatises on theology, collections of hymns and the first German edition of the Bible published in America, the community, especially one of its later leaders, Conrad Beissel (1691–1768), produced beautiful esoteric books, such as *Ninety-Nine Mystical Sentences*. The colony became also known for its music (their compositions anticipated the so-called serial music of the twentieth century) and also for their educational activities. One of its late leaders, Peter Müller, translated the Declaration of Independence into seven languages (Holloway 49).

Although the community seemed to live in harmony, the dictatorial tendencies of its leaders and their religious self-delusions (Conrad Beissel believed himself to be the

second Christ) complicated individual relationships. However, the communistic principles of Ephrata persisted until 1783 when the society partially dissolved; but some of the devotees left for Snow Hill where they established a new religious centre. As late as 1920, there were still about 200 members of the sect in the U.S. (Holloway 52).

Pastoral and Utopia

The first utopian societies in America had distinctly pastoral features, which, according to Suvin, included the “rejection of money economy, cleavage between town and country, and state apparatus” (58). Most American pastorals, however, do not have sensual features (such as the tales of the Land of Cockayne, where food and drinks were available without labor), nor are they modeled on the classical tradition of the honest life of shepherds, their simple nature-based economy, expressed by the Latin phrase “*dapes inemptae*” (goods not acquired by purchase), and finally their erotic affairs and philosophical reflections. It can be argued that successful utopian communities enact on a small scale that which according to Foucault simultaneously occurred in the development of modern states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the transformation of power from its predominantly totalizing character, typical of the earlier stages of history, into its modern forms characterized by a “combination ... of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures.” According to Foucault, the “modern Western state has integrated into a new political shape an old power technique that originated in Christian institutions.” This technique is called “pastoral power” (Foucault 1994a, 332). Pastoral power is different from royal, sovereign power, since it consists not only in “command” but in “sacrifice for the life and salvation” of the community. It also does not look only after the community but after “each individual in particular”, and it cannot become efficient “without knowing the inside of the people’s minds ... exploring their souls, without making them to reveal their innermost secrets.” It is the power over people’s “conscience,” which – and this is most important – “is linked with the production of truth – the truth of the individual itself” (Foucault, “Subject” 333).

While some American utopias tend to establish themselves as ecclesiastical institutions (this is the case of the church of Mormons), most of them anticipate the formation of the individuating power in the modern state and concentrate not on “leading people to their salvation in the next world but, rather, ensuring it in this world” (Foucault, “Subject” 334). The “secularization” of American utopias may be interpreted as an expression of the turn towards these “worldly aims” (334). However, instead of modern state institutions (police, health care, social security, educational system), it is “private ventures, welfare societies, benefactors ... and philanthropists” that take the initiative (334). As a result, Foucault claims “that power of pastoral type, which over centuries had been linked to a defined religious institution, suddenly spreads out into the whole social body” (335). The first social utopias and the dystopian reactions to them represented in Charles Brockden Brown’s writings can be read in this interpretive framework.

***Alcuin* and the Management of Sexuality**

The title of Brockden Brown’s first published work, a dialogue about the political, social and legal status of women in the Early American Republic, refers to the eighth-century

ecclesiastical writer Alcuin or Ealhwine of York (?735–804), who became a teacher and counselor at the court of Charlemagne. Apart from its ironic use – Brown’s interlocutor is a typical subaltern² subject in the new democracy, a petty teacher overwhelmed by his daily toil and vexed by his mischievous pupils – the name may also refer to the historical Alcuin’s pastoral and utopian activities: to educate Charlemagne Alcuin read to him the first Christian utopia, Saint Augustine’s *City of God*, which made the ruler rethink the idea of sovereignty and become crowned as the first ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, thus combining both the spiritual and temporal aspects of power (qtd. in Burgett 137).

In his revealing analysis of Brown’s text in the context of Thomas Malthus’ *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), Bruce Burgett sees the common purport in both works: “socialization of reproductive activity” based on Foucauldian notions of “heteronormativity” and “biopolitics” (128). However, while Malthus pursues the way of regulation by means of state institutions, an approach that clearly distinguishes between “agents” and “victims” of power, Brown – with his background in the Quaker culture – emphasizes the “pastoral” features of his project. As Burgett points out, for Brown’s utopian project the central prerequisite is *consent* among the sexes (it can be added that this consent is intended as a substitute for imperfect social contract which cannot prevent the marginalization of women, other races, aliens or minors), but in *Alcuin*, there is no “simple opposition between coercion and consent” (Burgett 140). As a consequence, utopian marriage, based on love and equal rights of partners, operates in *Alcuin* as a technique of “pastoral power.” As becomes clear from the conclusion of the dialogue, this power ensures the stability of the society, which is not a matter of marriage as a legal institution but, to use Foucault’s term, marriage as a “political technology of individuals” (Foucault, “Political”).

Having transformed the traditional purpose of secular society, the *honestum* (human dignity based on practical morality), into “liberty” and “spontaneous” union of the sexes (Brown, *Alcuin* 104–105), Brown anticipates a change in this technology, which, as Foucault points out, consists in the emphasis on “the reason of state”: the state (or marriage) becomes important in itself and for itself, “as a set of forces and strengths that could be reinforced or weakened according to the politics followed by the governments” (Foucault, “Political” 408). As a consequence, individuals lose their importance as targets of pastoral power, and secular, dissolvable marriage becomes a major instrument for regulating sexuality as Foucauldian “bio-power” – whose locus is no longer in the other world but in the bodies of the citizens of the new republic.

In the conclusion of *Alcuin* it becomes evident that the “pastoral power” of marriage, which has been employed against the rationalist utopia of the “Paradise of Women” using the authority of “nature” to criticize marriage as an institution based on “custom” and “habit,” may become an end in itself: the “spontaneous” nature of the union guarantees that it is “just” (Brown, *Alcuin* 105). However, the problem is that this spontaneity is no longer a category representing the power of nature. It is based on “personal fidelity,” which can be interpreted as a specific secularized form of Saint Augustine’s *honestum*. According to Burgett, this secularization leads to the “denaturalization” of marriage, whose purpose is no longer seen in the divinely instituted regulation of “natural” sexual drives, but in the “democratization” of sexual politics (Burgett 140).

The Abuse of “Pastoral Power”: Brown’s Dystopias

In his revealing study of Brockden Brown’s Quaker past (Kafer), Petr Kafer has shown how powerful was the influence of pastoral power vested in the nonconformist churches and religious societies on Brown’s novels. He has also pointed out the importance of the conflict between early revolutionary state power and the Society of Friends, which led even to the deportation of Brown’s father together with other leading Philadelphia Quakers as potential “spies” and enemies of the new regime in 1777. This conflict influenced the plots of most of Brown’s Gothic novels, but the most important instances of its impact are two novels written in 1798, one finished and the other abandoned: *Wieland, or the Transformation*, subtitled *An American Tale*, and *The Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*. An important element linking both novels is not just the “subaltern” character of Carwin (qtd. in White 50) who mastered ventriloquism, but also the setting – the margins of the civilized world represented by the Pennsylvania backwoods.

In *Wieland* this is a privileged space of religious utopia which, as I have already shown, shares some features with the early mystical religious communities, such as the Woman in the Wilderness colony founded on the ridge above the Wissahickon Creek. Significantly, old Wieland, who mysteriously dies in his woodland temple, is no longer connected with any community: he is the utopian individual influenced by a radical prophetic teaching of the Camissards – Protestant artisans, peasants and small landholders who fought the Catholic authorities in the south of France (Bas-Languedoc) at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Their teaching had powerful millennial features (White 46), and they also pleaded for a retreat to the “Desert,” expecting that they would meet divine judgment there, as did many utopian societies.

In *Carwin*, we also encounter a utopia, but as a perverted scheme of a secret European society, represented by an Irishman called Ludloe. Although the character of Ludloe can be traced back to another manipulator, Falkland in William Godwin’s novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), he is probably a descendant of Edmund Ludlow (?1617–92), a historian and an infamous general in the army of Oliver Cromwell (Leask 104), responsible for much bloodshed in Ireland and partially also for the execution of Charles I. In *Carwin*, Ludloe’s secret society uses technologies of pastoral power to manipulate the people. The protagonist has to live in Spain and become a monk. The practices of Ludloe’s society may also be said to resemble the Bavarian Illuminati, whose alleged conspiracy was considered a great danger for the Early Republic.

However, it is not Ludloe but Carwin who revolutionizes pastoral power by severing it from its supernatural source. In learning ventriloquism, Carwin uses empirical facts: he plays with the echoes of his shouts, multiplying and modifying them. The young hero is a cowherd and the setting reminds us of the pastoral *locus amoenus* transferred to the New World: a rugged, rocky landscape in the Pennsylvania backwoods. Another important feature is that Carwin imitates, or ‘echoes,’ the cry of Native Americans, “the shrill tones of the Mohawk savage,” using the sign of the cultural (no longer religious or ethical) other as the device of his technology of power. Carwin’s new subjectivity is no longer essential: according to White, he is “less a subject, than a nexus of a geography, voice and project” (50). This new, radical form of pastoral technology is a source of great expectations for Ludloe, who wishes to use Carwin, representing quintessential American freedom born in

the frontier backwoods, as a device of utopian political power deployed in secret on some remote Pacific islands, whose relative sizes resemble those of Britain and Ireland.

As White points out, Carwin's ventriloquism gives unlimited power, indeed divine sovereignty, to a subaltern voice expressing the dynamic of the "serial" society of the American backwoods (not based on the *polis* or community, but on isolated farms and enclaves). *Pace* Thomas Jefferson, Brown refuses to see these backwoods as a utopia of freedom. In this respect the dystopia of Carwin is less fictitious than it may appear, since it is nourished by the anxieties of recent colonial history, especially the Paxton Riots in Pennsylvania in 1763–64 which were one of the outcomes of the movement called The Great Awakening, and also fear resulting from contemporary events, such as the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 (White 41, 44).

It can be argued that Brown's dystopian novels point out the traps of both European and American utopias, showing the abuses of pastoral power as well as the rationalist utopian projects as the "political technologies of individuals." What appears in *Alcuin* as a new political technology of individuals becomes a nightmare in *Carwin* and *Wieland* precisely because of the problematic nexus between the notions referred to in the title of this lecture: "equality" and "individual self." In Brown's writings, marriage based on equality becomes an advanced technology of what used to be pastoral power, and the individual self is dissolved into an assemblage of devices integrated only by the obscure authority of a displaced ventriloquist voice. The sequel to Carwin is not a monster out of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Shelley was an avid reader of Brown) but rather a human being dissolved into a set of bodily fragments and held together by prosthetic technology and commanding voice, as in Poe's short story "The Man Who Was Used Up." Thus, the utopian quality of Brown's writing not only consists in a radical reformulation of the religious as well as secular issues of early American utopias, but also in the anticipation of some features of modern existence, such as the manipulation of individuals by anonymous forces or the fragmentation of the self.

Notes

¹ There is some confusion concerning his date and place of birth; according to the Czech sources Heřman was born in 1621 either in the small town of Mšeno or in a neighboring village, Mělnické Vtelno. However, this date is improbable, since Heřman came to the New World in 1633 as an employee of the West Indian Company (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/european/imcz/ndl.html#bibl>, visited 23 February 2009). U.S. sources favor an earlier birthdate (see *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, eds. James Grant Wilson, John Fiske, and Stanley L. Klos. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887–1889, 1999; and <http://famousamericans.net/augustineherrman/>, visited 23 February 2009).

² Coined by Antonio Gramsci, the term expresses the inferior position of a marginalized individual vis-à-vis a hegemonic power. Subaltern citizens are deprived of agency due to their social, ethnic, etc. status.

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The Transformation of Place in James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Pioneers

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Abstract

The paper examines the contradictory interpretations and evaluations of the transformation of place in James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Pioneers (1823). The comparison of the extradiegetic frame of the prologue and the diegetic narrative has revealed significant gaps (displacements and erasures) not only in the diegetic narrative but also in the idyllic pastoral prospect of the frame. While most interpretations stress either the subversive impossibility of reconciling the tensions and conflicts of the plot or seeking their resolution at the diegetic level of the text, this paper argues that the reconciliation should be sought outside those two levels, in the space of the reader's mind, where both the displacements and the returns of the displaced are enacted and coexist in the formation of cultural memory.

Keywords: James Fenimore Cooper; The Pioneers, place, transformation, environmental criticism, frame, forest, displacement, prospect, pastoral

1. Introduction

The theme of the transformation of nature and progress in James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Pioneers* (1823) can be interpreted in surprisingly different, even contradictory ways. Some readers stress the novel's legitimization of the American colonization of the West in the name of social, economic and moral progress and the law.¹ Other readers, from the environmental or mythological perspective, underline the subversive charge of Cooper's writing. The myth school focuses on rituals of manhood outside mainstream society; John Cawelti, echoing Leslie Fiedler (Fiedler xx), finds in Cooper's writing the anti-myth of

“the hero’s flight from civilization, which he comes to recognize as totally destructive of nature and spirit” (Cawelti 151–160). The environmental approach is interested less in social interaction and more in the interaction between the human world and nature; it tends to interpret the process of the transformation of the wilderness as defilement and is interested in the strategies of wilderness conservation and management in the text (Milder 414). Is the structure of the novel really so open and thematically ambivalent as to accommodate seemingly contradictory readings?

The Pioneers is Cooper’s third novel and the first book to introduce Cooper’s most famous character, Natty Bumppo, an intrepid frontiersman. After a novel of manners set in England (*Precaution: A Novel*, 1820) and a historical novel in the manner of Walter Scott (*The Spy; A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, 1821), Cooper moved to a more syncretic form, a formal hybrid that mixes sketches from frontier life with romance and low comedy.² Like *The Spy*, *The Pioneers* became an immediate literary bestseller at the time of its publication and continues to be one of Cooper’s best-loved books, especially for those who are repelled by the adventure elements and graphic violence of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).

2. The frame

The novel opens with a prospect of the whole region in its contemporary appearance. The prospect view offers a picture of the American pastoral,³ the American idyll – a cultural landscape of picturesque diversity with cultivated nature (fields and pastures) and scattered settlements.

The mountains are generally arable to the tops, although instances are not wanting, where the sides are jugged with rocks, that aid greatly in giving to the country that romantic and picturesque character which it so eminently possesses. The vales are narrow, rich, and cultivated; with a stream uniformly winding through each. Beautiful and thriving villages are found interspersed along the margins of the small lakes, or situated at those points of the streams which are favorable for manufacturing; and neat and comfortable farms, with every indication of wealth about them, are scattered profusely through the vales, and even to the mountain tops. Roads diverge in every direction from the even and graceful bottoms of the valleys, to the most rugged and intricate passes of the hills. Academies, and minor edifices of learning, meet the eye of the stranger, at every few miles, as he winds his way through this uneven territory; and places for the worship of God, abound with that frequency which characterize a moral and reflecting people, and with that variety of exterior and canonical government which flows from unfettered liberty of conscience. (*The Pioneers* 13)

The idyllic prospect view of the present scene seems to suggest that the past conflicts and problems have been resolved and the countryside has not been devastated by the careless settlers; it has not become a wasteland. However, the prospect view was traditionally used to impose aesthetic order upon the actual scene and to produce a sense of harmony by erasing confusing and disparate details of life.⁴ Shour explains: “The spatial element of prospect allowed a broader ‘view’ to reconcile the extremes of topography, as well as the juxtaposition of settlement and wilderness. This convention diffuses the contradiction and

tension of an immediate point of view by placing it in a large space in which these apparent disharmonies could co-exist" (Shour). This gesture of erasure and the harmonizing organization of large dominant elements (visible from a distance) call into question the missing elements, small or large. There are at least two elements that play a vital role in the plot and that are missing from the prospect picture of the present – human characters and the forest. In fact, I will argue that these two elements are the most essential components of the diegetic fictional world.

The absence of human characters in the picture is in a certain respect understandable; from a far-ranging bird's eye perspective they would be too small to be noticeable, unless they were placed in the foreground of the picture. On the other hand the human presence has a representation here – the appearance of the country (with the exception of the rocky cliffs) is to a large extent the result of human work; the picture paints fields, pastures, roads, farms and public buildings.

The absence of forest or trees in the picture is more unsettling. In the process of literary interpretation it does not matter very much whether such an omission is a mistake, negligence or intention. The forest is the first environment that is introduced to the reader in the novel, and it is the form of nature that is most endangered by the settlers' ruthless and thoughtless exploitation. The reader is naturally curious whether the attempts at conservation of the forest wilderness will succeed or fail, and looks to the frame to provide the answer. The frame, however, shuns a direct answer and indirectly, through the absence of reference, seems to testify to the failure of the conservationist project and exhibits only the success of a transformation of wilderness into agricultural land, a cultural landscape.

As a result, the frame poses the question whether this gap, the absence of human figures and forest wilderness, foreshadows a structural feature of the diegetic narrative, the displacement.

3. The displacement of the wilderness

In spite of the important role of the frame, the main weight of meaning is carried by the diegetic plot (see Genette 228–229). As Philbrick put it, the fictional world of *The Pioneers* is far from being a pastoral idyll: "Looked at closely, the episodes of the novel reveal anything but harmony and loving cooperation in the affairs of men" (69). Although Philbrick refers to the social life of the village of Templeton, his reference can be extended to the natural environment because it is badly affected by human interference and exploitation of its resources.

In the material sense, the wilderness of the region in the novel is the space of three material substances: land, water, and air. The destructive aspect of the advancing colonization is represented through the element of fire and the main tool of the destruction of the forest, the ax. In their pristine state the three elements are rich and plentiful: the land abounds in trees, the water is teeming with fish, and the air is filled with huge flocks of birds. These three resources, however, are growing thin as a result of the reckless exploitation by the settlers. The forest is being cut down and large areas are stripped of trees, the woods no longer abound in game, and even the lake is in danger of being fished out. Cooper shows the destructive conduct of the settlers in three beautifully conceived scenes and several minor snapshots from the life of the village.

The destruction of the forest is demonstrated in a synecdochic manner through the encounter with the giant woodcutter Billy Kirby during the main protagonists' trip to the mountains. Kirby is a good-natured butcher of nature. He enjoys cutting down trees and will not miss the forest.

"Now, I call no country much improved, that is pretty well covered with trees. Stumps are a different thing, for they do not shade the land; and besides, if you dig them, they make a fence that will turn any thing bigger than a hog, being grand for breachy cattle." (*The Pioneers* 230)

When the traveling party meets him, he is tapping maple trees for their sap and making maple sugar. He does the tapping in a very reckless manner, giving the trees such deep cuts that they will never recover and will soon die. On top of that he is choosing, as he proudly announces, the soundest trees (*The Pioneers* 227).

Judge Temple, the owner of most of the land in the region, is upset by such wasteful conduct but he has no legal measures to stop this destruction.

"It greaves me to witness the extravagance that pervades this country," said the Judge, "where the settlers trifle with the blessings they might enjoy, with the prodigality of successful adventurers. You are not exempt from the censure yourself, Kirby, for you make dreadful wounds in these trees, where a small incision would effect the same object. I earnestly beg you will remember, that once gone, none living will see their loss remedied." (*The Pioneers* 229)

The second scene (the element of air) involves the mass shooting of a huge flock of pigeons, organized by the sheriff, Richard Jones, Judge Temple's agile and enterprising cousin. When the settlers finish firing their guns, including a cannon, the land is covered with dead and dying birds (*The Pioneers* 252).

The third scene of mass destruction is set in the element of water and depicts fishing on the lake. Once again the human action gets out of control, and – thanks to modern technology and the efficient organization of the work – so many fish are caught that the community cannot process them and possibly very few fish are left in the lake to reproduce.

The destructive force of the settlers is exemplified most eloquently through the element of fire.⁵ One of the first snapshots offers a view of huge piles of logs, carelessly heaped in front of a house, with huge (excessive) fires burning inside. The firearms of the settlers and their clearings have driven away the game from the region. And the most dramatic event in the plot, the forest fire, in which the two main young protagonists would have perished without the help of old Natty Bumppo, was started by a settler, who carelessly threw away a half-burned torch.

4. Displacement of characters

The destruction of the wilderness is conjoined with the removal and dislocation of the last remaining original inhabitant, Chingachgook, the last of the Native Americans who had lived in the area, and his friend Natty Bumppo, the first white inhabitant of the area.

Chingachgook more or less voluntarily displaces himself into the eternal hunting grounds of his ancestors, while Natty Bumppo, after a conflict with the new order and its law, removes himself further to the west, to avoid clearings and the sounds of axes.

Even though at the end the plot sounds like an elegy for the disappearing wilderness and its inhabitants, both the novel and the frame make it clear that Cooper is not dreaming of a Romantic retreat into the wild and is dedicated to social progress. "Cooper never questions the superiority of the civilized ideal to nature. What he questions is America's faithfulness to that ideal" (Milder 416). To be civilized in the true sense of the word means to show due respect to the past and to nature. For Cooper as a Romantic writer, the wilderness is not an antagonistic environment, as it was for the Puritans (the howling wilderness, full of savage men and savage beasts) (Bradford 60), but it is a wonderful creation of God, and as such, potentially, a temple of God. In *The Deerslayer*, Natty Bumppo's attitude to the wilderness is described in the following words: "...he loved the woods for their freshness, their sublime solitudes, their vastness, and the impress that they everywhere bore of the divine hand of their creator" (*The Deerslayer* 758). Considering the divine aspect of the wilderness, the destruction of the wilderness can be regarded as sacrilege and defilement of God's work.

The destructive power of the settlers does not give much hope for any better future, and considerably weakens the legitimization of the transformation of the wilderness and of social progress. Yet there are forces at work that operate to check the ruthless, reckless, restless energy of the settlers' new world. This counterforce, the force of reason and justice, is represented by the well-meaning but too often erring Judge Temple, his daughter Elizabeth, the dispossessed young gentleman Oliver Effingham, and impersonally, by the new laws. Judge Temple, in spite of several mistakes and blunders, displays a concern for the protection of the natural wealth of America. He is dedicated to the letter of the law and strives for justice.

Even though, unlike her father or Natty Bumppo, Elizabeth does not display any environmental concern, she approaches the wilderness from an aesthetic perspective; she can perceive beauty in the forest. And she is generally compassionate in her heart; she likes to "rule" (her father and her husband) and "manage";⁶ being a true daughter of her enterprising father, she is likely to contribute to the alliance against the wasteful manners of the settlers.

Oliver Effingham, who finally marries Elizabeth Temple, is the grandson of the original owner of the land around Lake Otsego, and the son of Judge Temple's friend and business partner. Though born in America, he was educated in Europe, and so he can bring to America European culture and Romantic sensibility, with its admiration for nature. As an adoptive son of Chingachgook and as a person who lived for a time with Natty Bumppo in his log cabin, he came to understand the wilderness better than the settlers, and is consequently better qualified and more motivated to prevent the destruction of the wilderness.

The framing extradiegetic picture of the pastoral landscape seems to suggest that the post-revolutionary anarchy (the lawless free-for-all so familiar to us) is over and the landscape has been transformed into a carefully managed cultural landscape. Nevertheless, as I have pointed out, this contemporary cultural landscape does not include human figures in the picture and omits references to the element that is dominant in the diegetic narrative, the forest wilderness. And this absence is a gaping absence. It suggests that the

transformation of the wilderness into a cultural landscape did involve the displacement of some essential elements of the physical environment, and seems to indicate that the enlightened land managers have not been fully successful. The diegetic text thus seems to repeat the act of displacement and erasure of the frame.

5. Re-placement

At face value, we could conclude, both the frame and the diegetic narrative seem to legitimize the process of colonization and offer model resolutions of the conflicts. The transformation of the place into a pastoral landscape is made possible through the physical exclusion and displacement of elements of the old order: the hunter Natty becomes a poacher and goes West, while Chingachgook, the last representative of the original owners of the land, conveniently dies, as does Major Effingham, to whom the Delawares had given the land before the revolution for his services. The wilderness, the frame suggests, is gone too. As a result, the affirmation of the westward march of civilization is accompanied by the criticism of the consequences. The absence of human characters and the forest from the frame, and the presence of the signs of civilization (such as buildings and fields), give the impression of the insignificance of the individual in the large, impersonal (semi-natural) movement of history. The individual is invisible in the frame, as is the forest wilderness. The diegetic narrative, in a retrospective, brings both missing elements to the foreground, makes history into a story of individuals, and reveals in the impersonal historical process the complicated and complex work of human agency, where the individual is bound to perish or disappear, but not without a material and mental trace. This trace can be very temporary, like the one pigeon shot by Natty, or of lasting effect, the extermination of the last flocks of pigeons by the settlers. In the space of fiction these material traces leave deep mental traces and shape the cultural memory.

Even though the physical displacement of the wilderness and its inhabitants is presented here as an act of historical necessity, like the dispossession of the Native Americans, the displacement does not bring a complete erasure of the trace. Literature and art are the field that allows the interplay between displacement and re-placement. Cooper has returned from the social margin to the literary center the displaced elements such as the backwoodsmen, Native Americans, exiled loyalists, the forest and forest wildlife. Through the positive embracement of those marginalized elements by the main model protagonists (Judge Temple, Elizabeth Temple and Oliver Effingham), Cooper has made them part of the reader's mental set-up. Though in the diegetic narrative these archaic elements of place are physically gone, they are firmly planted in the reader's mind.

What are the effects of the replacement of the marginalized archaic characters? Rather than a cultural nostalgia they generate a sense of the cultural diversity of America as its important constitutive feature. The marginalized characters represent the importance of an inclusive rather than exclusive concept of America. The new emerging American culture should draw inspiration for its manners and ethical values both from the best of Europe (exemplified in Oliver Effingham, a son of a loyalist) and from the best of the native Americans (Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook), be they white or red.

Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, besides their cultural meaning, also have a powerful mythopoeic function. Out of all the marginalized figures, they leave the deepest imprint

in the reader's mind and still roam the forests of our imagination. Cooper must have realized this mythopoeic dimension of his writing because he came back to his pair of forest heroes three years later in a prequel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Their power rests partly in the nostalgic charm of primitivism, and partly in their subversive charge. The charm of primitivism is constituted by the desire for more simple and straightforward forms of thought and conduct, the world of chivalric values and heroic action, and a less wasteful economy that is more respectful to nature. The subversive charge is related to their potential in the plot to challenge the existing social conventions and laws when these laws and conventions clash with feeling or reason. In this respect they are progenitors of future heroes from the margin, including the Western movie heroes.

Conclusion

The surprising displacement of human characters and of the forest wilderness in the frame of the novel and the transformation of the rough frontier into an American pastoral cannot be explained as a mere prolepsis (anticipation) of the result of the notorious westward march of civilization and its consequent displacement of incongruous elements. This is because the diegetic narrative brings the human world to the forefront in a rich diversity and very vividly visualizes the forest wilderness. The diegetic narrative does not, however, stand against the frame only as a challenge to the ideological project of the frame, but at the same time it reiterates its project as well as subversively questioning it. In the human world of the diegetic narrative, the act of displacement (the marginalization of the characters connected with the older modes of life) goes hand in hand with the acknowledgement of their inherent cultural value and symbolic potential. Through the model protagonists, Judge Temple, his daughter Elizabeth and Oliver Effingham, the values of the old worlds of Europe and Native America are asserted, and from the reader's perspective the marginalized and displaced minor protagonists, Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, assume a symbolic role as heroes of popular culture and become prototypes of subversive heroes in numerous stories of consolidations of the social order. The thematic structure of *The Pioneers* is indeed very open and complex, and allows for both affirmation and subversion.

Notes

¹ McWilliams describes the transformation of the region as “the change from a State of Nature to a State of Civilization” (McWilliams, Jr. 103).

² According to Thomas Philbrick the form of *The Pioneers* combines the techniques of prose fiction and of descriptive poems, such as Thomson's *The Seasons* (Philbrick 61).

³ Henry Nash Smith refers to the ideal of the American pastoral landscape as “the garden of the world” and connects this “master symbol” with a set of metaphors, “expressing fecundity, growth, increase, and the blissful labor in the earth...” (Smith 123). Leo Marx adds to Smith's definition that the pastoral scene “usually is dominated by natural objects: in the foreground a pasture, a twisting brook with cattle grazing nearby, then a clump of elms on a rise in the middle distance and beyond that, way off on the western horizon, a line of dark hills” (Marx 141).

In my opinion, the garden is a rather misleading concept for the American pastoral landscape because we are likely to imagine a vegetable and flower garden with a lawn or a fruit orchard rather than the open agricultural landscape Smith and Marx had in mind. For this reason I prefer the term 'the American pastoral' without any further metaphoric denominations.

⁴ The technique of confrontation of the idyllic present with the turbulent past has a precedent. See Filson 39–62. "Thus we behold Kentucke, lately an howling wilderness, the habitation of savages and wild beasts, become a fruitful field; this region, so favourably distinguished by nature, now become the habitation of civilization" (Filson 39).

⁵ Thomas Philbrick has connected the element of fire and heat with the hot season of summer and carefully traces the imagery of fire throughout the text in order to demonstrate the correspondences between the natural and human world (see Philbrick 73–75).

⁶ Elizabeth says in the epilogue to her husband: "I manage more deeply than you can imagine, sir." (*The Pioneers* 457).

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“We were all lions”: Avatars of the Dandy in Poe’s *Tales of the Folio Club*

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Abstract

The essay discusses the dandy figures in three early tales by Edgar Allan Poe, “The Duc De L’Omelette,” “Bon-Bon,” and “Lionizing.” Although the tales are parodies of the styles of contemporary British and American authors, themselves dandies, they also address serious issues related to literary personality, the artificial and fictional nature of identity, as well as social and literary authority. As an author writing for literary magazines, Poe felt the pressure to conform to the editors’ demand for writing that was marketable, but was also intent on producing quality works. His dandy characters allowed him to comment on the status of intellectual labor in antebellum America, the fleeting nature of literary fashion, and the difficulty to succeed in a cultural ambiance in which authors were torn between the demands of originality and popularity.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, antebellum American culture, dandyism, the literary dandy, parody and satire, modern notions of the self and identity, social hierarchy, status and authority, literary professionalism, commodification of literature

Making efforts to ingratiate himself with magazine editors and to attract readers by writing tales that were both popular and of good quality, the young Edgar Allan Poe had to acknowledge that literary fame depended on more frivolous factors: publicity could also be achieved by notoriety. The writer and editor Nathaniel Parker Willis, for instance, only a few years Poe’s senior and a much more moderate talent, made his way to literary fame not only as a writer and editor, but also by means of fancy clothes, provocative manners, and by attracting public attention in Boston, New York and London. True, his public image

was not always favorable, his career was littered with scandals, his personal appearance and attitude were often subjected to acerbic criticism. Yet he was present in the social and literary circles of the cities he resided in, and was widely known as a successful author and editor during the 1830s and 1840s. In 1846, Poe provided a short overview of Willis's career in "The Literati of New York City," a series of critical essays published in six installments in the Philadelphia magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*. He evaluated Willis's work positively, but finished the essay contending that "in a republic such as ours, the mere man of letters must ever be a cipher [and must] unite the *éclat* of the *littérateur* with that of the man of fashion or of society" (*Essays and Reviews* 1124, italics in the original). The conspicuous presence of the dandy, this self-made celebrity, on the British and American literary scene prompted Poe to address the issue of fashioning a social identity and putting not only one's work, but one's self on display for the literary market. In his earliest collection of burlesques and literary satires, *Tales of the Folio Club*, the dandy is a recurring character through which Poe explored what it meant, in Jacksonian America, to be "a cipher."

Poe's earliest prose writings document the rise of a new social type that unites the qualities of the fop, the gourmet, and the aspiring writer. Several memorable characters in the tales published between 1832 and 1835 dress daintily, excel in cooking, and are engaged in intellectual endeavors. The eponymous hero of "The Duc De L'Omelette," a French aristocrat whose life depends on the impeccability of his clothing and dinner, dies of disgust when he sees an ortolan, a rare and expensive delicacy, improperly served. Arriving in Hell, he manages to engage the devil in a game of cards, wins, and gets his life back. In "Bon-Bon," a grotesque little chef and philosopher also enters into a pact, albeit a losing one, with the devil. He proposes the deal in expectation of a successful career as a thinker and writer, but the hoofed gentleman tricks him out of both his life and his soul. Robert Jones, the narrator of "Lionizing," earns fame in the fashionable society of Fum-Fudge on account of his magnificent nose, as well as by attending dinners and by publishing a pamphlet on the science of Nosology. But alas, he loses his high social standing when he shoots off the nose of his rival, the Elector of Bluddennuff. The latest fashion for "lions" is to have no nose at all. In the political satire "Four Beasts in One" the Syrian tyrant Epimanes, also known as the "Prince of Poets and the Delight of the Universe," leads a procession of people and beasts wearing the costume of a giraffe. A tale in the gothic mode, "The Assigination," features a mysterious hero whose looks, manners, attire, poetic accomplishments and connoisseurship recall the most famous literary dandy of the previous generation, Lord Byron.

The tales mentioned above were meant to be included into a volume, *Tales of the Folio Club*, a collection of eleven short stories that Poe offered, without success, to publishers in Boston and Philadelphia. Poe's overall intent in writing these tales was parody: in each of the pieces he emulated and gently mocked the styles of fashionable authors of the day, writers he admired or disliked. According to "The Folio Club," the short introductory piece to the volume that survived in manuscript and which had initially served as an introduction, the eleven tales of the collection formed a coherent whole: they were the writings presented by the members of a literary club at their monthly reunion (131).¹ Poe's original intention was to attach to each tale critical commentaries provided by the club members (Hammond 25). Thus, the writings in the volume would have parodied not only the styles

of fellow authors but also some of the critical views of the time. As Poe could not find a publisher for the prospective book, the tales appeared separately in the literary magazines he was working for during the 1830s, the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, the *Baltimore Sunday Visitor*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and *Godey's Lady's Book*. The critical commentaries, if they were written at all, did not survive.

The genial fops of the *Tales of the Folio Club* are all engaged in literary exploits, desperately seeking success in areas in which they have the most expertise: wearing fine clothes, eating or cooking, and writing. These elements of the dandy paradigm become, in the tales, metaphors of identity and authority in the changing social ambiance of Jacksonian America. My essay investigates how Poe captured, in three comic tales, "The Duc De L'Omelette," "Bon-Bon," and "Lionizing,"²² the emergence of dandyism as a new means of self-definition and self-assertion. I will argue that the character of the dandy offered Poe an opportunity to experiment with a new notion of the self, acknowledging that identity was not natural or essential, but socially constructed. In addition to this, he also explored strategies of achieving authority in the realm of the social and the aesthetic. As Poe was dependent on literary periodicals for publication and had the intention of leaving a mark on the magazine culture of his time, the portrayal of these comic dandy figures allowed him to reflect on the status of intellectual labor in a cultural ambiance in which the commercialization and commodification of literature was an accomplished fact. Thus, while these tales are clearly meant to parody popular literary modes, styles and authors, as well as to satirize literary personages and actual dandies, Poe also addressed the larger implications of identity, authority, and literary professionalism. By this he stands out as one of the keenest cultural critics of his time.

1. The art of clothing and a new notion of the self

The appealing and titillating character of the dandy was, by the early 1830s, firmly established on the social and literary scenes of Britain and the United States. The emergence of the type dates back, in fact, to the Regency period, when ideas about dandyism as well as flesh-and-blood "lions" travelled to and fro across the English Channel. The prototype of the dandy was probably George Brummel (1778–1840), the legendary fop of the Regency period who was befriended by the Prince of Wales, later King George IV. After his fall-out with the monarch, he spent his later life in Paris. The fame of "Beau" Brummel long outlived the person, and the spirit of dandyism started to spread on the continent (Stanton 57). In a parallel process, French aristocrats in exile, who had found shelter in London during the Revolution, imbibed dandyish ideas and attitudes. Returning to post-Napoleonic France, they unleashed a cultural paradigm shift that radically challenged existing social hierarchies (Feldman 1–2). Unlike aristocrats who were born into positions of privilege, dandies were self-made celebrities. They professed authority not in the realm of hereditary power but in that of the intellectual and the aesthetic. Poe had a keen eye for the cultural developments of his time, but was always careful to remove the characters of his tales to distant – European, Oriental, or purely imaginary – settings. Plots of Gothic mystery regularly take place in Germany and even Hungary, which Poe probably thought of as the easternmost outpost of German culture. Elegant aristocratic characters, portrayed either seriously or satirically, belong either to England or France. "The Duc De L'Omelette"

and “Bon-Bon” are set in Paris, dandyism’s second most important center at the time. The plot of “Lionizing” takes place in the city of “Fum-Fudge,” a thinly disguised version of London. Such metropolitan ambiances offered Poe an insight into the regulated systems that accommodate the dandy: fashion, cuisine, and shared artistic expertise among the privileged.

The relatively new phenomenon of dandyism inspired Poe to explore the artificial, constructed nature of the self and identity, and steered him towards the careful crafting of his own public image as an author. Although never quite a dandy, Poe seems to have consciously designed his looks in order to create a specific impression even when he was living at the edge of poverty. “His figure was remarkably good, and he carried himself erect and well, as one who had been trained to it,” recalled John H. B. Latrobe, one of the editors of the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, in 1877. “He was dressed in black, and his frockcoat was buttoned to the throat, where it met the black stock, then almost universally worn. Not a particle of white was visible” (qtd. in Quinn 204). The dandies in the *Tales of the Folio Club* are individuals with an excess of creativity, concerned equally with sartorial and intellectual elegance. Through discipline and professionalism, they appear as figures of authority in the realm of the social or the aesthetic. Their elegance is more than a decorative supplement to their appealing face and body: it is a constitutive factor of their identity.

It is difficult to imagine the dandy in less than perfect attire. Called upon by the Devil to strip for the furnace, the Duc De L’Omelette objects vehemently. “Who are you, pray,” he inquires indignantly, “that I should divest myself at your bidding of the sweetest pantaloons ever made by Bourdon, the daintiest robe-de chambre ever put together by Rombêrt . . . – not to mention the trouble I should have in drawing off my gloves?” The Duc’s elaborate looks, his pantaloons, “robe-de-chambre,” gloves, hair rolled on paper strips, the “rose-wood coffin inlaid with ivory” (144) in which he is spirited away to the Devil’s underworld compound, are tokens of a status that is achieved by commitment to, and expertise in, designing his looks. Bon-Bon, the *restaurateur* and metaphysician, wears such an assortment of colors (pea-green, bright purple, yellow, sky-blue, and crimson) and materials (flannel, velvet, and satin) that it is difficult to say whether “Pierre Bon-Bon was indeed a bird of Paradise, or the rather a very Paradise of perfection” (167-68). Excellence in clothing, along with proficiency in cooking and writing, is his trademark. Robert Jones, the hero-narrator of “Lionizing,” works hard from a very early age to improve on the size and shape of his remarkable nose, giving his “proboscis a couple of pulls and [swallowing] a half dozen of drams” (212). The dandy’s clothes are ultimately inseparable from his body, or his body has the flexibility of clothing. In either case, the emphasis falls on the external, the visible, the aesthetic, which ultimately reinforces the notion of the self as artifact.

Such a conception of the self as a construct, a fiction, goes against the idea of the body as a natural entity, an organic substance that lies beneath the manipulated surface of garments. Dandies place the core of their identity in their appearance, which is a shiny surface that diverts attention from, if not entirely denies, the existence of a fixed internal essence. As Jessica R. Feldman contends, “Dandies flaunt what a culture usually attempts to ignore or hide, that the human body is never ‘natural,’ or naked of cultural clothing, but is instead a system of signification, a cultural construct. Once dandies discover the power of self-presentation, they can no longer imagine a self independent of cultural mediation”

(270). Poe's dandies have no inner essence, no core of being that lies enveloped in clothes, the indicators of their social existence. Literally, they are what they wear. The Duc De L'Omelette, for instance, is aware of the fact that divesting himself of his clothes, the sartorial component of his self, would annihilate him. In "Lionizing," Robert Jones's identity as a dandy, the darling of fashionable society, depends on his remarkable nose that is widely admired, immortalized in painting, and written about. When the public taste changes and the opposite of a protruding proboscis becomes the latest fashion, the young lion ends up as a social nonentity. The latter case might suggest the vulnerability of the dandy to the whim of his audience, and thus his ineffectiveness as a social and cultural type. However, in Poe's tales, especially in parodies and satires like the ones meant to be included in *The Folio Club*, the argument does not depend on the outcome of the plot. His dandy tales stand out by their viable and essentially modern conception of the self: invented, fictional, and open for experimentation.

Poe's notion of self and identity that found expression in these early tales was at odds with those of Thomas Carlyle whose philosophy of clothes had such a sweeping effect on the American version of German and English romantic thought, Transcendentalism.³ The earliest versions of Poe's dandy tales "The Duc De L'Omelette" and "Bon-Bon" were written before the installments of Carlyle's seminal work on the philosophy of clothes, *Sartor Resartus* was first published, between 1833 and 1834, in *Fraser's Magazine*. But had the ideas of Carlyle's hero, "Professor Diogenes Teufelsdröck," been available, Poe would have disagreed with them. For Carlyle, clothes constitute a powerful metaphor for the visible world of appearances that conceal an invisible spiritual essence. In the preliminary chapter of *Sartor*, the speaking voice defines clothing as "the vestural Tissue . . . which Man's Soul wears as its outmost wrappage and overall; wherein . . . his whole Self lives, moves, and has its being" (4). This was, ultimately, the shorthand version of the romantic epistemology informing Emerson's notion of Nature. Poe had little intellectual affinity with either Emerson or Carlyle. Later in his life he referred to the literary circles of Boston as the "Frogpondians" ("Letter to Frederick W. Thomas"), and although he frequently reflected on contemporary British authors in his essays and reviews, he only mentioned Thomas Carlyle in passing. Elsewhere he called the philosopher's writing "obscure," and himself "an ass" (*Essays and Reviews* 461). Poe's dandies are self-created works of art in whom appearance and essence are one and the same. Through such characters, Poe proposed a proto-modernist notion of the self which, like the figure of dandy, would stay on the European and American literary scene for quite a long time.

2. The art of cooking and an ironic view of the soul

There is a character in two of Poe's tales under scrutiny here that both represents a spiritual entity and has some of the attributes of a dandy. The plots of "The Duc De L'Omelette" and "Bon-Bon" turn upon a pact with the devil. "His Grace" or "Baal-Zebub, Prince of the Fly" (144) receives the Duc in his resplendent underworld apartment, and the two of them engage in a game of cards. "His Majesty", the mysterious diabolic gentleman, who turns up in the little café in Rouen, enters into a lengthy conversation with Pierre Bon-Bon before snatching his soul. The devil is a comic figure⁴ in both tales, yet one that allows Poe to take another look at issues related to art and connoisseurship, intellectual endeavors,

essence and appearance. That the soul becomes, in “The Duc De L’Omelette,” the stake in a game of *rouge-et-noir* or, in “Bon-Bon,” the object of bargain, is an ironic commentary on the soul’s spiritual nature. The comic plot of the latter tale even suggests that the soul is edible. These, and the circumstance that both incidents involving the devil take place after a foiled dinner, lead us to another art form that is prominent in Poe’s dandy tales: the culinary.

The opening statement of “The Duc De L’Omelette” evokes the shock of frustration in existentially important activities: “Keats died of criticism . . . The Duc De L’Omelette perished of an ortolan” (143). Baptiste, his valet, made the mistake of serving the small bird, a rare delicacy, without a paper cover. Bon-Bon, the philosopher and *restaurateur*, botches a couple of dishes: he spoils *des oeufs à la Princesse* and overturns a stew (169). His blunder makes him excessively anxious, and thus vulnerable to the devil’s advances. The plight of Poe’s dandies foregrounds the extreme fragility of the artist, no matter if he invests in the art of poetry or in the art of life. Being a dandy, like writing poetry, requires full commitment and orderliness of execution. If elegance in clothing is a binding obligation for him, so are eating and cooking. As we have already seen, wearing elegant garments does not serve the purpose of covering and protecting the natural, naked body, but is constitutive of the self and identity. By the same logic, neither cooking, nor eating serve the purpose of nourishment. Rather, like clothing, they are stylized activities, means of creating the self through hard work, extreme discipline, and even self-denial.

Achieving and maintaining competence in dressing flawlessly, cooking masterfully, and eating like a gourmet requires orderliness and training. Becoming a dandy means adopting an identity that is dependent on, as James Eli Adams claims, “an aesthetic regimen, an elaborately articulated program of self-discipline” (2). For the Duc De L’Omelette, to have roasted ortolan for dinner is both a particularly high point in his daily routine and a painstakingly regulated ritual. The etiquette of preparing and serving the small songbird lifts out the act of eating from the realm of the natural and the instinctual. The ortolan is, like the dandy, an exotic creature, an artist and a work of art in the same time. “[T]he little winged wanderer, enamored, melting, indolent” is born in a golden cage “from its home in far Peru” to the Duc’s apartment in Paris (143). For a dandy and a gourmet like the Duc, killing, preparing, serving, and eating the bird requires a strict method that precludes disorder and contingency. While the exact source of Poe’s knowledge of how to roast an ortolan cannot be located, a book of zoological curiosities published in 1869 adequately summarizes the phases and rules of transforming this delicate songbird into a delicacy. The bird is fattened for days in a dark room. When it is “a handful” in size, it is drowned by plunging her head into a glass of brandy. The tiny carcass is carefully picked, then roasted in a paper bag soaked in olive oil. The ortolan thus prepared is served under a paper cover so that its scent and flavor should not evaporate (Timbs 175–77). By his adherence to the discipline of creating and consuming such a veritable work of art as roasted ortolan, the fastidious dandy places ascesis in the service of aesthetics.

That asceticism should be posited as the condition of creating aesthetic enjoyment looks like a paradox. The two, however, are hardly opposites. Ascesis, the “elaboration and stylization of an activity” is, according to Michel Foucault, a constitutive part of the “arts of existence” or “techniques of the self,” those rules of conduct by which men “seek to transform themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that

carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria" (10-11). A gourmet's dinner represents a peak of pleasure, yet the established practices that bring forth this pleasure are rigorous and binding. The Duc De L'Omelette does not eat his victuals in order to feed his body, but transforms food into an essential means of crafting his self. The dandy is not a physical being but a masterfully wrought work of art that collapses if the integrity of the process of creation is compromised. When the dinner of roasted ortolan is spoiled, the Duc perishes.

While the death of the Duc De L'Omelette is caused by excessive perfectionism manifesting in fastidiousness, the fall of Pierre Bon-Bon is brought about by a similar perfectionism manifesting in vanity and gluttony. The tiny philosopher – only three feet tall – is the author of several delicious dishes as well as learned works in metaphysics: "His *patés à la fois* were beyond doubt immaculate; but what pen can do justice to his essays *sur la Nature* – his *thoughts sur l'Ame* – his observations *sur l'Esprit*?" (164). The eponymous hero of the tale "Bon-Bon" is equally interested in the pleasures of the palate and those of the soul.⁵ He is a gourmet and a cook, sports a rotund belly, and reads voluminous philosophical manuscripts (167, 170). When on a terrific night the devil pays him a visit, the *restaurateur* learns that the cultivated souls of the philosophers he admires have all been turned into artfully prepared dishes on the dinner table of hell. He also finds out that in order to enjoy a hearty and delicious meal, the devil does not wait for the souls to go stale after they are removed from their shell, the dead body. If "the souls are consigned [to hell] in the usual way," he has them pickled, or else he purchases spirits "*vivente corpore*" (178, italics in the original). Those whose souls he procured in this latter way live on joyfully, never missing their spiritual component. Bon-Bon, the philosopher-gourmet, rushes to join the company of those who achieved the immortality of fame, and offers his soul to the devil in order to be prepared as "*soufflée*", "*fricassée*", "*ragoût*" or "*fricandeau*" (179). The comic revelation that the soul is not only palpable but also edible ironically subverts the Romantic notion of the soul as a spiritual entity. During "His Majesty's" visit, Bon-Bon finds out that the soul is not even the prerequisite of an individual's physical and intellectual performance. The devil has, in his wallet, the contract for the soul of that "clever fellow" Voltaire (179). "Is *he* not in possession of all his faculties, mental and corporeal?" (178, italics in the original), he queries the flabbergasted philosopher with mock indignation.

By representing the soul as food for the devil, Poe offers a slanted view of Christian theology as well. With his usual playfulness, he pays a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the Eucharist, turning upside down the idea of Christ's body as spiritual nourishment for the faithful. But more importantly, by exploring cuisine – another area, besides clothing, that pertains to social refinement –, he directs attention to a new conception of the self as commodity. The cultivation of the self and soul is, like French cuisine, subordinated to strict rules, but ultimately subjected to the judgment of individual taste. In "Bon-Bon," the souls that end up as tasty morsels on the devil's dinner table are criticized as "pretty good," "passable," "exquisite," stomach-turning, flavorless, or "a little rancid on account of the gall" (176-77). The phenomenon of dandyism rests on the idea of the self as a "thing" crafted into an artificial object of art, the worth of which is ultimately determined by the viewer or the consumer. The tale's comic discourse conflating the idea of the soul as man's spiritual essence with that of the soul as a dish is Poe's ironic commentary on a cultural

ambiance in which intellectual accomplishment is subjected to the rules of consumption. Bon-Bon, the *restaurateur*, chef and philosopher, eagerly enters into a deal with the devil in order to gain fame and public recognition. His plight dramatizes the early nineteenth-century author's desperate wish to succeed, through professional accomplishment, in a literary market increasingly controlled by the rules of capitalist exchange instead of aesthetic principles.

3. The craft of writing and the market value of literary talent

The heroes of Poe's dandy tales are committed not only to sartorial elegance and high quality cuisine, but also excel in complex professional activities. Working hard with his pen and chef's ladle, Bon-Bon attains a respectable social position both as an author and as the owner of a restaurant in Rouen. With nerve and expertise in playing cards, the Duc De L'Omelette defeats the devil in a game of *rouge-et-noir*, and escapes the torments of hell. By assiduously pulling his own nose, then following it with determination, Robert Jones becomes a celebrated member of the high society of Fum-Fudge. The three dandies succeed in achieving social standing and status without relying on inherited privilege, and manage to recast the quotidian activities of clothing, cooking, eating, or playing cards as forms of art.

The careers of Poe's dandies are comic examples of a paradigm shift that occurred, both in Britain and in the United States, during the first decades of the nineteenth century. In this period, economic transformations "incited increasingly complicated and anxious efforts to claim new form of status and to construct new hierarchies of authority," that of the "professional man" (Adams 5, 6). Dandies represented, in the new phase of social competition, the self-made person who achieved, by his own creative efforts, public fame and recognition. Poe's dandy tales provide veritable blueprints of success. In addition to proficiency in clothing and cooking, their accomplishments include writing. The Duc De L'Omelette is "author of the 'Mazurkiad,' and Member of the Academy" (144), Pierre Bon-Bon is a renowned writer of metaphysical treatises (164), and Robert Jones, the hero of "Lionizing," has written a pamphlet on the science of "Nosology" (213). Through these endearingly funny characters Poe evoked a new type of authorial persona that dominated the literary world of the 1830s, that of the literary dandy.

Critics have identified among the authors parodied in *The Tales of the Folio Club* the British writers Thomas Moore, Edward Bulwer, and Benjamin Disraeli, the Americans John Neal, Nathaniel Parker Willis, and Edgar Allan Poe himself (see Hammond 26, 27, Benton). All of them displayed dandyish airs and attitudes in the early phase of their careers. The British authors who made their *début* during the 1820s capitalized on the joint appeal of their personal appeal and literary talent. The young Benjamin Disraeli and Edward Bulwer, for example, were not only accomplished writers but also generally regarded as dandies. The reason for the latter was not so much their dedication to sartorial elegance but the fact that the public imagination conflated their biographical person with their fictional personae (Allen 68). Their novels of *début*, Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826, 1827) and Bulwer's *Pelham* (1828), featured young heroes moving with ease in fashionable London society. Their American apprentice, the aspiring author and editor Nathaniel Parker Willis imbibed, in the 1820s, the basic skills of dandyism in the fashionable circles

of London (Baker 61-62), and returning home, spread them assiduously on the other side of the Atlantic.

"Beau" Brummel, the father of all dandies, was a commoner, yet he was able to rise to the status of the British Regent's favorite by his skill in defining fashion and embodying an ideal of elegance and wit set by himself. The literary dandies in Poe's *Tales of the Folio Club* are heroes who, by their personal appeal and professional expertise, challenge traditional social arrangements and aspire to status on the basis of their accomplishments. The Duc De L'Omelette, although just an upstart, challenges the monarch of Hell in grand style as if they were equals. First, he wishes to escape eternal damnation by means of a duel. But, as "his majesty does not fence" (146), they agree on a game of cards. The game of *rouge-et-noir* epitomizes the contest between the aristocracy of birth and privilege against the emerging arbiter of fashion and intellect: the tale captures the moment when status shifts from the former to the latter. Throughout the game, the Devil is "all confidence," the Duc is "all attention." The Duc thrives by means of intellectual agility, while the Devil resorts to the habitual mechanisms of power: "His Grace thought of his game. His Majesty did not think, he shuffled" (146). The saucy dandy, the representative of an emerging aristocracy of taste and competence, revokes old divisions of authority and status. He deals cards with a sure hand and plays with skill. He wins, and saves himself through intellectual discipline enhanced by professional competence. In "Lionizing," the transition of power from the old generation to the new is a little less smooth. When Robert Jones's father learns that his son's "chief end of existence" (217) is the cultivation of his nose and the study of "Nosology," he kicks his son out of the door to "follow his nose" (213).

While successfully rising in society, dandies subvert existing hierarchies and redefine the rules of fashion and connoisseurship. These new social upstarts succeed by their ability to impose their own style as a new standard of excellence. Robert Jones makes his début in the high circles of society not only by writing a scientific work on the nose, but also by displaying his own nose in front of the Duchess of Bless-my-Soul, the Marquis of So-and-So, and the Earl of This-and-That (213).⁶ Although an association of Robert Jones's "proboscis" with Tristram Shandy's minuscule nose in Laurence Sterne's novel readily offers itself, and scholars like Marie Bonaparte and John Arnold read sexual references into the tale (see Arnold 52), it is more likely that Poe applied the nose in regard to literary style (see Thomson 94-95). "Is it quite original?"... Has *no* copy been taken?" (214, italics in the original), an artist inquires when Robert Jones offers his nose, in exchange of a thousand pounds, as a model for a painting. The portrait of the nose is then sent, with compliments, to the wife of the Regent (214). It is relevant that Jones is defined by his nose the way dandies are identifiable by their styles, and originality is a requirement for both. However, fashions and dominant styles are subject to change, and the whim of the public may shift in a matter of seconds. Provoked to a duel by the jealous Elector of Bluddennuff, Robert Jones takes aim and shoots off the nose of his opponent. But alas, his triumph is short-lived, as the arbiters of taste in the city of Fum-Fudge rapidly shift their favor from the dandy sporting a protruding nose to the one who has no nose at all. Old Mr. Jones accurately explains the new situation to his son: "in hitting the Elector upon the nose you have overshot your mark. You have a fine nose, it is true; but then Bluddennuff has none. You are damned, and he has become the hero of the day" (217).

The slightly bitter outcome of “Lionizing” adequately summarizes the plight of the writer in antebellum America. The era of the self-made man was definitely not a favorable time for the self-made author. Those writers who had no personal means to lead a comfortable middle-class lifestyle depended on the emerging publishing industry for their subsistence. The absence of an international copyright law made the publication of original books by American authors difficult (Whalen 36), and the literary magazines, these vibrant products of the early nineteenth-century literary market, were still struggling with economic difficulties in the United States. “We are behind the age in a *very* important branch of literature . . .,” Poe complained in 1836. “Magazine writing,” he predicted, “in the end (not far distant), will be the *most* influential of all departments of Letters” (“Magazine Writing” 397-98, italics in the original). However, the periodical and commercial nature of the literary magazines rendered them extremely vulnerable to the changing demands of the reading public, and the success of the authors working for them was, to say the least, temporary and fleeting. The fate of Poe’s early dandy figures reflects the uncertainty of the literary market. Only one of them, the Duc De L’Omelette, is lucky enough to succeed in his contest with the devil; Bon-Bon and Robert Jones fail pitifully after their brief moment of success. It is very likely that the battered careers of the dandies in the *Tales of the Folio Club* point to Poe’s own resentment at his vain struggle, during the early 1830s, to make a living as an author and editor. When he decided upon a literary career, Poe set out for a lifelong struggle to make himself known in the literary circles of Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia and New York, and establish his prestige as an author and critic. By inspiration and hard work, he was able to churn out poetry, prose fiction and criticism at a remarkable pace, giving evidence of his expertise. However, his efforts were close to futile at a time when the literary market was not yet prepared to accommodate and support such professionalism. In his dandy tales, Poe holds a mirror to the increasingly commercialized literary scene of his time. If clothing and cooking are elevated to the status of art, then writing becomes, through an act of ironic inversion, merely a craft.

Concluding remarks

Poe’s fascination with the dandy in the early phase of his career was almost inevitable. The relatively new phenomenon of dandyism inspired him to explore, in the *Tales of the Folio Club*, the artificial, constructed nature of the self, and guided him towards the invention of his own authorial persona. The dandies of his early tales are individuals with an excess of creativity, concerned equally with sartorial, culinary, and intellectual elegance. They painstakingly bring into being and display crafted images of themselves in front of a real or imagined audiences and, by commanding some singular skills, they manage to carve out a niche for themselves in the hierarchical society of their time. The emergence of the dandy was coeval with the democratization and commodification of literature and with Poe’s own debut as a writer for the literary magazines of Philadelphia, Baltimore and Richmond. There is an eerie correspondence between the growing public appeal of the dandy and the spreading of the popular literary magazines that writers, Poe among them, depended on for publication and income. Both the dandy and the magazines relied on fashion for their existence, even if they were at the same time engaged in the creation of fashion. Their visibility rested on their ability to display uniqueness and distinctiveness,

qualities which ensured the continuity of their presence on the public scene. Poe's dandies are artists who struggle, yet hardly ever thrive in an ambiance that demands talent and originality. Those who admire them – highly positioned patrons, acquaintances, or readers – seldom reward their efforts adequately. The trajectory of their rise – and, more often, of their fall – dramatizes the difficult situation of the professional author in the United States during the antebellum decades.

Notes

¹ All references to the texts of the tales discussed in this essay are to the definitive versions published in the volume Edgar Allan Poe, *Poetry and Tales* (New York: The Library of America, 1984).

² The tales were first published under the titles "The Duke De L'Omelette" (*Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, March 3, 1832), "The Bargain Lost" (*Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, December 1, 1832), and "Lion-izing. A Tale" (*Southern Literary Messenger*, May 1835). Poe changed the titles, and also rewrote and re-edited the texts in subsequent editions. My essay refers to the titles as they appear in *Poetry and Tales*.

³ Carlyle owed the first publication in book form of *Satror Resartus* to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who arranged the first publication in book form in Boston by publisher James Munroe in 1836 (Tarr 415).

⁴ Poe's deployment of the character of the devil conformed to a tradition sufficiently well established in the British magazines. The character's immediate model must have been the devil featured in Edward Bulwer's series of articles published between 1931 and 1932 in the *New Monthly Magazine*, "Asmodeus at Large," a series of witty dialogues on themes that interested Bulwer (Allen 27). Asmodeus, the editorial persona's conversation partner, is a devil trapped in a jar.

⁵ Poe is indebted for the idea of the "culinary philosopher" to Isaac Disraeli, father of Benjamin Disraeli, who in Volume 2 of his monumental collection of essays *Curiosities of Literature* (1793) playfully conflated the art of cooking with that of thinking. The chapter entitled "Ancient Cookery and Cooks" provides an introduction to the metaphysics of cookery. "[T]he ancients, indeed," explains Disraeli, "appear to have raised the culinary art into a science, and dignified cooks into professors" (434).

⁶ The satire of the tale is directed to Nathaniel Parker Willis who, in 1831, frequented the dinner parties of Lady Blessington, providing detailed commentaries on London high society in the *New York Mirror*. On his return to the United States and embarking on a career as a writer, editor and public celebrity, his critics dubbed him "an empty suit of clothes" (Tomc 110-11, 104).

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Rivers, Roads and Conveyor Belts: The making of America(n poetry)

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Abstract

This paper describes the chronotope of modular time-space in the infrastructure of early twentieth-century New York and in literary and cinematic depictions of the city. It argues that most international modernist lyric poetry placed its speakers outside of the flow of time in space. Critics view modular time-space as particularly antithetical to personal identity. But the African American Langston Hughes and the feminist immigrant Mina Loy situated their poems within the flow of time in space, and used modular time-space to demonstrate racism and sexism in American society, arguing for the inclusion of women and African Americans in social discourse.

Keywords: chronotope, lyric poetry, New York, Chaplin, Hughes, Loy, Whitman, Halpern, Lorca

When time becomes visible in Charlie Chaplin's 1936 film, *Modern Times*, it is incarnate in the conveyor belt over which Charlie Chaplin's little tramp is bent at the Electro Steel Corp. Each fragment of a second, denoted by the regular appearance of a bolt under the tramp's wrench, fixes the assembly-line worker's position in space and his movement in time. Each second is identical to the one before it and the one that will follow. For the tramp, time is abstract, detached from an organic context, unmoored from a past cause and a future effect, and without a narrative to explain and anchor it, since the tramp will never see the finished product of his labor. He experiences time as an eternal now, since it has no lineal or narrative progression; it is a now divided into identical increments, each interchangeable with the one before.

Each increment of time that moves down the convey belt of the factory circumscribes the tramp's physical location and his activity. His task is to stand in one place before a belt that conveys the bolts he is meant to tighten. But when he wishes to convey his own

ideas, peppering his argument with gesticulations, the belt continues to move along, carrying the bolts he should have been tightening. The tramp, who has literally fallen behind, must dash to the belt's end, where he bumps against a second "practically rigid body of reference." This portly body, rigid with rage, belongs to his workmate, who cuffs him, and urges him forward. Thus, the tramp learns with practice what Einstein discovered through mathematics: there is no absolute space; there is only "an infinite number of spaces, which are in motion with respect to one another" (Einstein 139).

Thus, in the material world, his embodied being is at odds with his lyrical impulse to step out of the flow of time in space, to ignore the other bodies around him, to stop the flow of time in space with his voice. Only those who have the luxury of standing still, the foreman, the owner, the supervisor, can afford to regard the lineal narrative of the world, can imagine oneself a subject, not an object. But to stand still is to be outside of time and space.

The scene discussed above from *Modern Times* illustrates what I am calling the chronotope of modular time-space. I borrow the term *chronotope* from the Russian theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, for whom it designates the fusing of time and space into a concrete whole in literary art (84). This is the literary version of what Einstein – whom Bakhtin cites – called "the space-time continuum" in his famous 1920 papers on the special and general theories of relativity. Bakhtin describes it thus: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84).

I find it particularly helpful to talk about the new style of writing that emerges in 1920s New York in terms of genre, as defined by Bakhtin in his 1937–8 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," for this will clarify the meaning of the adjective "modern" in the film title *Modern Times*, as well as the word "lyrical" I have used to describe Chaplin's response to modern time. As Bakhtin's translators, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, point out, "a genre is neither a collection of devices nor a particular way of combining linguistic elements;" rather, it is "a specific way of visualizing a given part of reality" (275). Taking inspiration from Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, Bakhtin realized that the context for actions and events is shaped primarily by the kind of space and time that operate within them. Thus, literary genres are distinguished predominantly according to the ways they configure the shape and depicted experience of time. In other words, depicted time and space unite in very distinct and particular ways in different literary genres. Bestowing his signature on the modernist preoccupation with time, Bakhtin sees the chronotope as "the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (250). Indeed, the chronotope of modular time and space shapes the narrative of Chaplin's *Modern Times* so intimately that time/space becomes the antagonist of the film.

In this paper, I wish to demonstrate the innovative use to which two poets put the modular chronotope in creating modernist lyric poetry firmly grounded in time-space, not outside of it. The poetry of Langston Hughes and Mina Loy, which depicts sexism and racism temporally and spatially, argues against the social and civic limitations of racist and sexist America. Their poetry engages chronotopic arguments for the inclusion of voices normally left out of American civic discourse. While other artists, secure in their social position, may lament the loss of identity that the chronotope of modular time-space signifies, for Loy and Hughes, this chronotope enables the very construction of self-consciousness and identity.

Indeed, standard depictions of modular time-space from this period are often antithetical to personal identity in film, architecture and poetry. In *Modern Times*, for example, footage of herds of sheep driven into a slaughterhouse are juxtaposed against images of workers flooding the factory hall. The scene in which Chaplin's worker falls into the cogs and wheels of the factory mechanism argues eloquently, if not very subtly, that modern time is brutal, destructive, and overwhelming to those who have no islands of property or wealth unto which they can escape to contemplate time's flow from afar. Time has moved from an unseen system of measurement to a dominant force that measures and quantifies its human creators. It can do this only insofar as it cleanses itself from particularity. It must become uniform and exchangeable, like money, as in the proverb "time is money."

If you were viewing *Modern Times* when it premiered in New York, you would recognize the infrastructure of modular time-space because, for more than a century and a half, it had been visible in such features as the street grid, which was superimposed on the island without regard for the island's topography. The grid erased geological time by leveling hills, razing valleys, felling forests and filling the lakes, as if the flat blades of a stopwatch had passed over the island, making each block equal and identical to every other block. Rem Koolhaas's appellation for the zoned and gridded New York of 1916, the "ghost-town of the future," extends the grid's demolition of organic difference in both temporal directions (108). Likewise, Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford's time studies and assembly line production models created a system in which each laboring human body was interchangeable with that of any other, regardless of age, race, language and religious creed, since each body's significance was exhausted in its performance of a given task at a predetermined uniform pace.

Like many popular literary works of international modernism, the film *Modern Times* reacts to the city's inhuman temporal and spatial architecture by privileging those moments in which the subject can turn away from the overwhelming flow of time in space, and the flow of space in time. The heart of *Modern Times* consists in those lyrical interludes in which the individual escapes from the normal flow of time in space, such as the little tramp's oil-can ballet above the fray of frantic workers who are unable to pursue the little man, since they are still held in thrall by the conveyor belts.¹ His love for the little gamin, celebrated in an abandoned shack on edge of the city's forgotten shore, removed from all traffic, temporal and spatial, returns Chaplin to humanity. In privacy (outside of the narrative flow of time in space) then, not in public circulation, is he a person, a man, a beloved and a lover. Thus, the "modern times" of the movie's title, so vividly portrayed therein, are, for all their comic value, somehow less "real" to little tramp and the viewers that identify with him than the timelessness of privacy. In the end, the film is "about" the triumph of the little guy, the proletariat, who is able to stop time – at least for a while – by shutting down the Electro Steel Corps and symbolically bringing the march of industrialism to a halt.

In poetry depicting big, modern, hyper-industrialized cities, such as New York, we see a similar conclusion: private identity can survive only outside of the flow of time in space. García Lorca's *Poet in New York*, published in 1929 is interesting in its recognition of a subsection of New York Americans who live below the flow of time in space – the residents of Harlem. They are able to retain their personal identities in Lorca's rendition of them, because they are noble primitives who simply do not understand time, space, and modern inventions.² Since they do not understand them, they do not accept them or

internalize them. The King of Harlem retains his identity, hidden though it is. Lorca's Wall Street, on the other hand, is pure space-in-motion, a consuming machine that de-personalizes all with whom it comes in contact. Lorca captures the dichotomy in a succinct couplet in the poem "King of Harlem":

¡Ay, Harlem disfrazada!
¡Ay, Harlem, amenazada por un gentío de trajes sin cabeza! (32)

[Ay, Harlem in disguise!
Ay, Harlem, menaced by a mob of headlines suits!]³

If one artistic response to the incompatibility of personal identity and modern time is an undermining of the external world, and a privileging of timeless interiority, another artistic response is a comical acceptance. For example, in prose fiction, Mark Anderson notes that the privileged mode of twentieth century narrative is the travel narrative. In it, the big city, late capitalism and increasingly fluid, shifting forms of property, seen through the lens of Einsteinian physics, engenders "a relativized perception of things in motion, of subtle or unconscious displacements of energy, fluctuating or ephemeral patterns of circulation and exchange." The traveling narrative replaces novels of landed property, in which identity was the dominant concern (98). Incessant circulation is, of course, destabilizing, and Anderson's traveling narrative stresses the incompatibility of moving space and personal identity. Anderson's exemplary travel narrative is Franz Kafka's *Amerika*.

Like *Modern Times*, *Amerika* is a comedy. Both derive their comic punch from the incongruence between the hero's expectations for recognition and the physical (temporal-spatial) reality that strips them of their personhood. The same can be said for Moyshe Leyb Halpern's *In New York*, published in Yiddish in 1919. The poem "Our Earth" details a city hewed from a rock by a hungry giant, which is an obvious allegory for industry. Here immigrant laborers are the "them," and the city/monster is the "he." The movement of the immigrants, like the movement of Chaplin's tramp, is in the service of capitalism, and, like the tramp, the immigrants are reduced to edible cogs of a machine.

And with a whip he braided for himself from tongues of fire,
he forces them (like wheels of a gigantic machine
that spin to the cadence of driven steam)
to prepare for him fresh food each morning.
And you, with glasses on your nose
and the forehead of an accounting artist,
stand in the middle of the night,
like a foreman in a factory
with pencil and paper.
And like a blind man counts the money he's begged—
count over, one by one, the children that are made
in this cliff city.
And mind that, of the semen, not one drop
shall be spilled in vain,
while the giant swings his fiery whip

and forces a million people of the world dragged together
 (like wheels of a gigantic machine
 that spin to the cadence of driven steam)
 to prepare for him fresh food each morning. (39–40)⁴

Sometimes space-as-motion narratives in American poetry can take advantage of the breakdown of the individual, however, and be used to forge a community. Unlike Kafka's *Amerika*, in which Karel, the main character, travels through the (to him, foreign) United States, slowly losing every vestige of identity he has, Walt Whitman's speaker praises travel and the subsequent breakdown of identity, which would set him apart from all others. The decomposition of the self enables him to join himself to the community of commuters on Brooklyn Ferry in the 1856 poem "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," creating what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community" (6), that of a democratic United States. Here the speaker translates himself fifty, one hundred years into the future, by virtue of the fact that two bodies moving along the same trajectory are interchangeable as well as by the fact that the reader is able to put herself in Whitman's place by reading his poem.

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt;
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd;
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was
 refresh'd;
 Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood, yet was
 hurried;
 Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the thick-stem'd pipes of
 steamboats, I look'd. (129)

In this passage, Whitman the speaker is returning from work on the Brooklyn Ferry, the symbolic final leg in the journey to Cathay, the fulfillment of Columbus' voyage around the world, as the poems with which this one is collected suggest. Furthermore, this particular poem is embedded in, and contextualized by, an expanding collection – one that increases with the growth of the United States and with the aging of the speaker, who participates in America's history by witnessing, nursing, celebrating, and recording. By extension, then, anyone who travels along Brooklyn ferry, anyone who *stands in Walt Whitman's space* becomes incorporated into the body of America. Sharing Whitman's *eye* allows one to exchange his or her *I* with Whitman. Although Whitman reluctantly saw the Brooklyn Bridge replace the ferry in 1883, he safeguarded the validity of its exchange value by writing the poem. Therefore, readers are able to travel virtually along Brooklyn Ferry with Whitman through the reading of the poem.

As the ferry draws near to the shore, all entities, the speaking I, the apprehensible you, and all the fluids and film between them, have merged. They are not exactly interchangeable; instead, they are one. The compass of the speaker's eye, its embrace of material formerly considered *treyf* – especially the physicality of the loving, procreating, decaying, sweating body, and those who earned their daily bread from their bodies – has merged with that of the speaking *I*. While such monologism is within the bounds of lyric poetry, is, indeed, a hallmark of romantic lyricism, it does pose a challenge to the idea of

interchangeability I seek to describe here. The addressee has been apprehended already, before he or she is born, by virtue of the fact that Whitman has written this poem anticipating that the addressee will read it “fifty, one hundred years hence.” The union of the speaker and the addressee happens outside of biological time, on the eternal pages of a poem. The speaker of the poem receives his identity from his body, it is true, but it is a body that is both inside time, and outside of it: the body is able both to “stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift/current” (129). This image of standing still while being in motion, at the same time is, in fact, one that Bergson uses in describing duration, which is the lived experience of time. It is internal precisely because it is not situated in space.

Now that I have proposed standard reactions to “modern times” or, rather “modernist time,” and its attendant standardization of space, I will turn to the chronotope of modular time, to show how it is used to assert identity in poems depicting marginalized characters. In the movie *Modern Times*, in the physical city grid of New York, in the travel novels, and the poetry I have discussed above (except for that of Whitman), time has been the dominant feature of each time-space unit. In contrast, in modular time-space, the spatial aspect of the chronotope is enhanced. In the poems below, spatial interchangeability is the key element to community membership. For, if two bodies are spatially interchangeable, mustn’t they also be equal? In other words, what becomes important is the ability to occupy common space. Langston Hughes creates a lyric *I* that recognizing the limits of its own subjectivity by testing the interchangeability of the *space* the *I* inhabits. This is, after all, one of the characteristics of the lyric *I*, to be a sort of placeholder that is effective as an *I* when a reader is able to imagine himself or herself in that place. The following poem is from Langston Hughes’ “A Negro Speaks of Rivers” taken from this 1926 debut collection *The Weary Blues*.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset. (23)⁵

Most critics believe that all Hughes is doing is creating a genealogy to connect him to Africa, and that the speaker in this poem is exercising a Whitman-esque transcendence of time and space here. It is certainly a legitimate move to see the “I” here as standing in for the whole of the Africa American community – in this sense, Hughes is repeating Whitman’s move, but for black America only. Indeed, all the rivers listed in the poem are sites of violence and forced labor, though only the Mississippi is mentioned (in *The Big Sea*) in conjunction with the slave trade.

But I am suggesting quite another interpretive move. There is nothing in the syntax of the poem to suggest we must read the “I” as a synecdoche for African Americans. In fact, a close reading of the poem will allow for ambiguity, will demand ambiguity. The people subsumed under the pronoun *I* might have built the pyramids, or they might have ordered the pyramids built. Does the speaker mean the Congo before the Belgian slave trade, or after? The slippage between referents allows us to read the poem both ways. Furthermore,

the idea in circulation in Hughes's time that the Euphrates was the site of the Garden of Eden, renders the Euphrates (the poem's origin) a symbol of the pre-racial dawn of humanity. All of the racial ambiguity here sets the stage for interchangeability of the speaker's I with that of the poem's contemporary reader. The audience for Hughes' poetry was as white as it was black.

The racial ambiguity of the speaker is enhanced by the circumstances surrounding the poem's birth. Langston Hughes recalls in *The Big Sea*, that this poem came to him as he was traveling by train from St. Louis to Mexico, to visit his father. While in Texas, he was given the opportunity to translate himself from a "Negro" to a "Mexican," thereby avoiding Jim Crow segregation laws, and securing for himself a very comfortable place in a Pullman sleeper. Rhetorically, Hughes's poem lays claim to civic equality: all rivers serve the same purpose (are interchangeable); human blood is like rivers. The ambiguity of the position of the speaker with regard to the river also reveals how arbitrary the grounds on which one human is enslaved and one is the slave, for we do not know if the speaker of the poem is the slave or the master until we get to the Mississippi. Reading the poem in the context by the collection in which it was published in 1926, *The Weary Blues*, the poem's genealogy makes the claim that the African American heritage in America is normative, not "other." And the claim is supported with a reference to Abraham Lincoln himself, presiding over the United States during the Civil War and acknowledging slavery to be a moral, social and political evil. Hughes' poem, insofar as it is a lyric, anticipates the reader's urge to identify with the "I" of the lyric, and turns that urge into a political statement. Because, obviously, white readers won't put themselves in the place of the speaker's I. Why not? Until all readers can identify with the speaker who is both black and white, something in America has to change.

Most of the poems in Langston Hughes's 1926 collection of poetry *The Weary Blues*, and also the 1927 *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, delineate the limits of the chronotope of modular time/space in an attempt to deploy it. A voice is always placed – even when (especially when) a speaker positions herself beyond time and space. For, to assume the position of universal speaker, from which all traces of individuality have been erased, means merely to assume the mask of the dominant social power – in Hughes's case, the "white man." This is why, in the essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes is so critical of the poet Countee Cullen, who says he wants to be "a poet" and not "a Negro Poet." According to Hughes, Cullen wants to ignore the place (Harlem, African American culture) and speak to white society. For when he says he wants to speak "to everyone" Hughes reminds him that the only place that white society recognizes is its own.

White American readers' inability to identify with Hughes's colored speaker is not just a metaphysical problem, but also a physical problem. The speakers of Hughes's poems are as restricted by space as the little Tramp in *Modern Times* is restricted by time. In order to be interchangeable, you have to be able to coexist in the same physical realm – that is, there cannot be segregation, for starters. Hughes points out the problem in his essay "My America":

Yet many Americans who cannot speak English—so recent is their arrival on our shores—may travel about the country at will securing food, hotel, and rail accommodations wherever they wish to purchase them. I may not. These Americans, once

naturalized, may vote in Mississippi or Texas, if they live there. I may not. They may work at whatever job their skills command. But I may not. They may purchase tickets for concerts, theaters, lectures wherever they are sold throughout the United States. I may not. They may repeat the Oath of Allegiance with its ringing phrase of “liberty and justice for all,” with a deep faith in its truth—as compared to the limitations and oppressions they have experienced in the Old World. I repeat the oath, too, but I know that the phrase about “liberty and justice” does not fully apply to me. I am an American—but I am a colored American. (*Langston Hughes Reader* 500)

LeRoi Jones explains Hughes’s predicament in his book *Blues People*:

What is so often forgotten in any discussion of the Negro’s ‘place’ in American society is the fact that it was only as a slave that he really had one. The post-slave society had no place for the black American, and if there were to be any area of the society where the Negro might have an integral function, that area would have to be one that he created for himself. (55)⁶

For a graphic explanation of the speaker’s of Hughes’ poetry, let us plot them on one of the chronotopes described by Mikhail Bakhtin, the chronotope of the road. In this chronotope, “the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contract may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another” (243). But this works only when each individual met on the road is recognized as an individual with a right to occupy space and a voice with which to meet the voices around him or her. If the road is an equalizer, collapsing social distance in Bakhtin’s schema, it is just this lack of personhood that is denied the African American speaker. When Hughes’s characters hit the road, they’re immediately lynched, as in the poem “Silhouette”:

Southern gentle lady,
Do not swoon
They’ve just hung a black man
In the dark of the moon.

They’ve hung a black man
To a roadside tree
In the dark of the moon

For the world to see
How Dixie protects
Its white womanhood.
Southern gentle lady,
Be good!
Be good! (305)⁷

Before some ethnicities or religions or individuals in America are able to even set foot on this kind of road, they first need to construct it.

The poem of modular time-space refuses assimilation into the cultural, social or linguistic norms of the world in which it occurs. But this does not happen because he or she finds the cultural, social or linguistic norms dehumanizing (as in the case of Chaplin's tramp). Rather, the speaking subject of this type of poem is not able to achieve subjectivity because his or her place in society is not recognized; his or her physical body is non-normative (Black, or female). That is, the speaking subject is only recognized in a spatially or temporally constricted unit that lies outside of social discourse – places where time does not flow, but rather, circles around its small, enclosed space. Take, for example, the following poem by Mina Loy, an English-born poet, artist and designer, one-time consort to the founder of Italian Futurism, Giovanni Papini, and immigrant to America. It is called "The Ineffectual Marriage":

Ding dong said the bell
Mioivanni Gina called
Would it be fitting for you to tell
the time for supper
Pooh said Mioivanni I am
Outside time and space

Patience said Gina is an attribute
And she learned at any hour to offer
The dish appropriately delectable

What had Mioivanni made of his ego
In his library
What had Gina wondered among the pots and pans
One never asked the other
So they the wise ones eat their suppers in peace. (37)

Here the female Gina and the male Mioivanni (a blending of the names Mina and Giovanni) are spatially relegated within the rooms of a single house. He, in the library, is "beyond time and space." She is in the kitchen cooking and cleaning. Like Lorca's "negroes of Harlem" disguised as doormen and cooks, Chaplin's factory worker/tramp and Hughes's kitchen boy in the poem "I, Too, Sing America," Gina acts according to the dictates of time (quotidian, biological). Her very spatial location will not allow her to overcome the temporal boundaries of her world. When the two characters intermingle, it is through labor – her production and his consumption of food. We see their physical separation graphically, in the blank spaces on the page. We also see hints that Gina is to Mioivanni as one of the physical objects of the house – notice the position of the bell's utterance ("ding dong") directly over Gina's, and "said the bell" directly above "Gina called."

This depiction of the selfless woman, contented in her circular domesticity, is sharply dropped just after the "pet simplicities of [Gina's] universe/ where circles were only round/ having no vices" have "ranged themselves among her audacious happinesses." The poem

ends abruptly, in a parenthesis, “(This narrative halted when I learned that the house which inspired it was the home of a mad woman.

--Forte dei Marmi)” (39)

The fact that the narrative is written in third person, except for the observation that Gina is mad, deprives Gina of a voice twice over. First, her world permits her no subjectivity – her voice mimics the rhythm and the content of the clock, the “ding dong.” Even her “poems,” which she writes on the milk bill, are temporal markers, “Good morning” and “Good night.” Secondly, her madness would relieve her of even a limited, housewifely, membership in society. A mad person is, by definition, a person whose madness defines her; she has no other identity. At least in this poem, the madness is all we need to know about her. The poem breaks off as soon as we receive this fact.

Earlier I mentioned that chronotopes make useful indicators of genre. In calling Chaplin’s oil can ballet “lyrical” because it stopped the flow of time in space, I was thinking about Northrop Frye’s definition in “Theory of Genres,” for which he draws upon the etymology of verse as an agricultural term that meant to turn back at the end of the plowed row in a field. Since dominant post-Romantic critical practices which remain with us today have favored a lyric characterized by such generic features as an integrated, stable speaker who speaks as a private person outside the flow of time and space. Here “outside” would mean “beyond” time and space, or as a master of it, in the social sense. But, as this article has attempted to make clear, a mastery of the temporal and spatial public (or commercial) world is a pre-requisite to achieving self-consciousness of a private speaker. The lyric can accommodate poems that deliver a powerful critique of dominant social and cultural practices, but it can also become the literary arm of the American melting pot agenda of the 1910s and 1920s, which urged assimilation and uniformity, an adoption of an Anglo-Saxonized version of America.

What I am calling the chronotope of modular time-space seems to work so well as a social critique because it affords a kind of double vision. Not only do the speakers see themselves almost exclusively through the eyes of normative society, but they also see normative society for what it is. The forced physical interiority of Gina in Mina’s Loy’s “The Ineffectual Marriage,” or the kitchen boy in Langston Hughes’s “I Too, Sing America” allows for “our eyes” that “look out,” rather than in. Loy’s poem “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots,” illustrates. Here Loy depicts women not as unpaid laborers confined to a separate workspace by the division of labor, but as a commodity that must first be purchased and then placed. Dots are marriage portions, or dowries, and so poor women are condemned to an eternal placelessness:

See the men pass
Their hats are not ours
We take a walk
They are going somewhere
And they may look everywhere
Men’s eyes look into things
Our eyes look out. (21)⁸

No matter the quality of vision, denying the lyric subject's relationship to the spatial and the temporal architecture of the poetically depicted world by positing a particular experience as normative undermines or denies the legitimacy of those whose experience of time depends very much on physical, spatial limitations – those who suffer from racial discrimination in which segregation is experienced as a spatial dislocation. For example, when Langston Hughes makes his speaker's ability to "sing" America contingent on the possibility of eating "in the kitchen" in the poem "I Too Sing America" (46) he is spatializing his experience of the world.

In the 1920s and 1930s no one knew if Langston Hughes's hope that the African American laborer could leave the kitchen of the nation and "sing America" in the dining room (or W.E.B. DuBois's striving to be a "co-worker in the Kingdom of Culture" [5]) was well founded or even possible. But the poem itself borrows from the spatial and temporal architecture of 1920s New York that was already imbued with pedagogical intent by civic-minded factory owners, engineers, landscape artists who were interested in assimilating immigrants and southern migrants. Each poem designs an inclusive model of the nation; one that would include the poet as a member. Indeed, Mark Morrisson points out that much of the discourse about modern American literature during the early part of the twentieth century was in the service of creating an American 'imagined community' as a living organism, one that might be expressed and even *grown* by a national literature" (13). The shape of this community, the voices that will be included in it, become the single most important question, then.

Notes

¹ I use the work "lyrical" here in the sense of the romantic and post-romantic lyric genre, which tends to place the speaker outside of the flow of time in space. See "Lyric Poetry," *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan.

² Depictions of the King of Harlem and Harlemites as disguised and depictions of their unfamiliarity with the use of common manufactured objects abound in the poem "The King of Harlem." They are further clarified in a lecture García Lorca gave in Madrid in March 1932: "I wanted to write *the* poem of the black race in North America, and to show the pain the blacks feel to be black in a contrary world. They are slaves of all the white man's inventions and machines, perpetually afraid that someday they will forget how to light the gas stove or steer the automobile or fasten the starched collar, afraid of driving a fork through the eye. I mean that these inventions are not theirs. The blacks live on borrowed things..." Translation Simon & White (García Lorca, Simon & White 190).

³ Translations here and elsewhere are mine, unless noted otherwise.

⁴ Thanks to Kathryn Hellerstein, whose translations of Halpern I read before I wrote my own. See Kathryn Hellerstein, *In New York. A Selection*. Ed. & Trans. Kathryn Hellerstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Poetry Series, 1982).

⁵ All page numbers here refer to *The Collected Poems*.

⁶ See also Ernest Borneman, "The Roots of Jazz," p. 23–24 and Christopher Small, 461–70.

⁷ This poem first appeared under the title "Three Songs About Lynching," along with "Flight" and "Lynching Song" in the journal *Opportunity*, June, 1936, page 170. It was collected and

published in *A New Song*, New York: International Worker's Order, 1938, and again in *One Way Ticket*, New York: Knopf, 1949. This text is taken from *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*.

⁸ I would be misrepresenting Loy if I did not point out that several of her poems, such as "Songs to Joannes" (53–70) depict time as the dominant mode chronotope of modular time-space. They specifically gender time, and discuss space only in terms of the human body.

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Call It Modernism: Henry Roth

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Abstract

Unlike almost all previous works by American writers of Jewish origin, Henry Roth's novel Call It Sleep (1934) is more a story of initiation than a story of assimilation and acculturation. Roth's prose is thus much closer to the works of Anglo-American modernists. The essay analyzes modernist features in Call It Sleep, on both the thematic and formal levels, and concentrates on the parallels with Eliot's Wasteland.

Keywords: American Jewish Modernism, Henry Roth, Call It Sleep, T. S. Eliot, The Wasteland

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In the 1920s modernism became increasingly popular among the new generation of American Jewish novelists. Among the most prominent American Jewish modernists of that time belong Waldo Frank (1914–1967), Samuel Ornitz (1890–1957) and Paul Rosenfeld (1890–1945). However, the writer who became the most eminent representative of American Jewish modernism in prose was Henry Roth (1906–1995), who became famous mainly for his first novel *Call It Sleep* (1934).

Call It Sleep is set in various parts of New York (Brownsville, the Lower East Side and Harlem) at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time millions of East European Jews were fleeing tsarist Russia to seek refuge in America. Though the novel deals with the lives of the immigrants (Roth himself came from Tysmenica in Galicia, which was at that time a part of Austria-Hungary), it did not fit into the traditional genre of immigration narratives—as written e.g. by Abraham Cahan (1860–1951), Mary Antin (1881–1949) or Anzia Yezierska (1885–1970). *Call It Sleep* is more a story of initiation than a story of

assimilation and acculturation. Moreover, even though it was written in the 1930s, it did not primarily focus on the economic crisis and its consequences.

The novel was not well received at the time of its publication. It only became appreciated in the second half of the 20th century, when American Jewish literature became part of the mainstream. Although *Call It Sleep* belongs among the most important American (Jewish) modernist novels, it had very little influence and no direct following. The position of ethnic minority writers was described by Josef Jařab:

Looking back at the beginning of the [20th] century today it must be rather disappointing to observe that disproportionately little of the social and cultural experience within the pluralistic melting pot of the United States was perceived by the mainstream modernist community as particularly modern, or even interesting. Yet, the experience was clearly an exciting feature so typical of the modern times—change of country, of place, of home, change of language and lifestyle, of identity, which was sometimes accompanied by changes of name and even of appearance. Mobility, movement, journeys, uprooting, passing, becoming ... all these manifestations of change brought about by modernity naturally became the subject matter of artistic works produced by minority artists who, however, were regularly, and also by the then current definition of art and literature, considered parochial, provincial, and marginal. Or nonexistent. (Jařab 6)

Many American Jewish writers tried to capture the enormous changes in modern society (see e.g. Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*, 1917, or Edna Ferber's *So Big*, 1924). Not only does Roth deal with these changes that brought about the sense of alienation or cultural displacement, he also shows their effects on the mind of modern man, such as fear, guilt, aggression, paranoia or loneliness, which represent an essential part of modernist aesthetics.

Search for method

Before writing his novel, Roth could as well have quoted T. S. Eliot: "I have *lived* through material for a score of long poems in the last six months" (Eliot, *Wasteland* x). He gathered substantial material that he wanted to transform into fiction: immigration, his close relationship with his mother, or the turbulent city life of New York. Yet he did not know how to use this material to create a work of art.

At that time, Roth was close to the modernist poet and critic Eda Lou Walton (1894–1961), to whom he dedicated his novel. He became familiar with the *Wasteland* of T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) and *Ulysses* by James Joyce (1882–1941), and it was these two writers that inspired him (Sollors 160). He realized that it was abstraction and use of language that created the fictional world. As Daniel Schwarz observed: Joyce believed "that language had the potential to discover the value of trivial things" (17).

Moreover, he learnt that the quest of his protagonist did not necessarily have to be external. The main emphasis was placed rather on the internal monologue and stream of consciousness of the over-sensitive and self-doubting and self-centered child protagonist David Shearl,¹ who can see and hear various things but is not able to understand them.

As his mother remarked: “Aren’t you just a pair of eyes and ears! You see, you hear, you remember, but when will you know?” (Roth 173).

Both Roth and Joyce combine several narrative techniques. The unknown narrators function as stage directors, presenting the surroundings and the action. But the only consciousness they enter is that of the protagonist.

The story of *Ulysses* is built upon parallels with Homer’s *Odyssey*, the works of William Shakespeare, the story of Jesus, and Hebraic narratives, especially the Passover stories (i.e. the song “Chad Gadya”). Eliot’s poetry also oscillates between modern and ancient setting and characters. That is the method employed by James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1922): he uses stories and rituals of primitive or ancient tribes to create a link between their practices and modern ones. Roth followed the example of these writers by combining myths and stories from many cultures, e.g. Oedipus Rex, the life of Jesus, Germanic mythology, the story of Isaiah, or “Chad Gadya”.

Roth’s method of narration is closer to *The Wasteland*, as Joyce’s *Ulysses* has a more organized structure based on Homer. *Call It Sleep* and *The Wasteland* have no such underlying frame; they merge myths and the present. The method was described by T. S. Eliot as follows:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. [...] Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. (Eliot, *Prose* 177–8)

In Eliot, Joyce and Roth, the historical narratives are being re-lived in the modern world and are helping the protagonists to find meaning and order. The myths and legends become alive in the characters’ lives; they are not distant abstract models that are morally superior or unreachable, even though *The Wasteland* is often interpreted in that way.²

American Wasteland

The immigrants viewed America as *goldene medina*, the golden land, where riches and subsequent happiness lie on the pavement. However, their naive expectations were often disappointed. The novel starts with the arrival of the protagonist David Schearl and his mother Genya at Ellis Island. As in the second part of Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, the “Game of Chess” begins:

Now Albert’s coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He’ll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
[...] and think of poor Albert,
He’s been in the army for four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don’t give it him, there’s others will, I said. (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 56)

In the novel it is not the husband Albert who is coming home, but his wife Genya and her child, who has never seen his father before. Albert goes to Ellis Island to meet his family. He is late and his wife does not immediately recognize him, which creates a constant and growing tension in the novel:

But these two stood silent, apart; the man staring with aloof, offended eyes grimly down at the water-or if he turned his face toward his wife at all, it was only to glare in harsh contempt at the blue straw hat worn by the child in her arms, and then his hostile eyes would sweep about the deck to see if anyone else was observing them. And his wife beside him regarding him uneasily, appealingly. And the child against her breast looking from one to the other with watchful, frightened eyes. (Roth 11)

He does not even look at his wife, being ashamed of her, as she and the child look so old-fashioned. It is as if he was thinking of leaving and never admitting they belonged to him.

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for a lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.) (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 56)

Both of his parents did something shameful in their home country. Genya had a relationship with a Catholic organist and Albert did not help his father, who was attacked by a bull, and let him die. The nature and the past of his parents are partially revealed in the decorations they bring home and hang on the wall. Genya bought a picture of corn and her husband brought bull's horns. Corn is not only a symbol of fertility, but David views it as a symbol of his mother's "playing" with the organist. Consequently, he sees himself as the *benkart* (bastard) about whom his mother was talking. David even understands the connection between the bull's horns and his father's uncontrollable fits of aggression. He sees his father as a wild, dangerous man with enormous strength. He associates him with a hammer which his father used against one of his co-workers in a fit of uncontrollable anger.

All these attributes point to the second most powerful Nordic god, Thor, son of Odin, who was married to the goddess of vegetation and fertility, Sif (Sibylla). She had been married and had a son, who was later adopted by gods (Rydberg 563). During storms, Thor rode on his thunder-chariot pulled by two goats, whereas Albert drove around town delivering milk and descending in anger on all who crossed his path. Thor was known for his physical, not mental strength and his uncontrollable temper (Rydberg 182). Roth is thus presenting the family in a mythical context, which is a strategy used by most modernist writers.

Albert, an insecure man with a bad temper, went to America first, and after a few years sent for his wife and son. However, he held a strong suspicion that David was not his. All these mysteries, guilt, suppressed anger and fear are recurrent motifs in the novel.

David does not and cannot understand it. Therefore he sees his father Albert as aggressive and cruel: "He had seen it before – that look, that flicker of veiled suspicion more frightening than wrath – had seen it almost always the day his father had thrown up a job. Why? What had he done? He didn't know. He didn't even want to know. It frightened him too much. Everything he knew frightened him" (Roth 137).

The alienation is not only within the family, but also between America and newcomers. David is only a child and his memories of his homeland are blurred and fragmented. The same is true for his vision of America, which he sees as a hostile world with a foreign culture and language. He feels he is not wanted, and indeed America does not welcome him:

And before them, rising high on her pedestal from the scaling swarmy brilliance of sunlit water to the West, Liberty. The spinning disk of the late afternoon sun slanted behind her, and to those on board who gazed, her features were charred with shadow, her depths exhausted, her masses ironed to one single plain. Against the luminous sky the rays of her halo were spikes of darkness roweling the air; shadow flattened the torch she bore to a black cross against flawless light – the blackened hilt of a broken sword. Liberty. (Roth 14)

The Statue of Liberty does not welcome the newcomers as in the most famous sonnet by Emma Lazarus (1849–1887), “The New Colossus” (1883). “The Mother of Exiles” stopped asking the Old World:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door! (Lazarus, *Poems* 202–3)

By describing the Statue of Liberty as cold and hostile, Roth joined his American Jewish predecessors—e.g. Abraham Cahan, Samuel Ornitz or Ludwig Lewisohn (1882–1955)—and tried to express his critical attitude to America.

The Statue reappears at the end of the novel, where it is seen as a prostitute anyone can enter: “And do you know, you can go all the way up inside her for twenty-five cents. For only twenty-five cents, mind you! Every American man, woman and child ought to go up inside her, it’s a thrilling experience. The Statue of Liberty is –” (Roth 415) American values of freedom and democracy are presented as a cheap commodity.

Perceptions as reality

The main motto of modernism was to make and see things new. That is why modernist writers often tried to represent the ever-changing perceptions of the protagonists reflecting the outside world. According to Stephen Frosh, “[m]odernism is [...] always about the present, but it dramatizes an awareness that the present is a temporary state” (121). The temporariness is best demonstrated in David’s perceptions of a cellar of the house in which the Schearl family lives. David associates it with dirt, danger, sexuality and death. His mother’s sexuality and his father’s aggression are also part of the “cellar”—which represents everything that is forbidden and suppressed. This image helps him to project all his paranoid feelings of fear and guilt.

David’s only shelter against the alien, hostile world is his mother Genya. He is extremely dependent on her. Thus he suffers greatly whenever he feels his mother is not

paying close attention to him. Yet the dependence is mutual. Genya is isolated from the outer world both by her nature and the language barrier. Though she knows a few English words, nobody can understand her apart from the Jewish immigrants. She tries to compensate for her alienation from her husband and her social surroundings by taking care of her son. David sees her as his only parent and life model. That separates him from the other boys in the street, who look up to their fathers. He watches her every move and believes that she is mentally and physically part of him. Her body is in a way an extended part of his. He is therefore very anxious when he slowly realizes that her body is an object of interest for other men.

Albert has a friend Luter whom he often invites for dinner. It is soon obvious that Luter is not interested in the food but in the shapely body of the hostess. David believes that no man has a right to look at his mother that way: "Luter, his eyes narrowed by a fixed yawn, was staring at his mother, at her hips. For the first time, David was aware of how her flesh, confined by the skirt, formed separate molds against it. He felt suddenly bewildered, struggling with something in his mind that would not become a thought" (Roth 40).

Still, he does not know what is really happening. He eventually understands it after a visit. His mother took him to play with his friend Yussie and his sister Annie. Yussie showed him a rat trap. He explains how the rats live in the cellar and creep out into the flats. This scares David even more. Later he is caught in a trap by Annie, who shuts him up in a closet and wants to play bad:

"Yuh must ask me," she said. "G'wan ask me."

"Wot?"

"Yuh must say, Yuh wanna play bad? Say it!"

He trembled. "Yuh wanna play bad?"

"Now, *you* said it," she whispered. "Don' forget, you said it."

By the emphasis of her words, David knew he had crossed some awful threshold.

"Will yuh tell?"

"No," he answered weakly. The guilt was his.

"Yuh swear?"

"I swear."

"Yuh know w' ea babies comm from?"

"N-no."

"From de knish"

"—*Knish?*"

"Between de legs. Who puts id in is de poppa. De poppas god de petzel. Yaw de poppa." (Roth 53)

David manages to connect this horrifying experience both with the dirty rats in the cellar and Luter's visits. After this, David's world falls apart; it becomes a dangerous trap. What is worse, he has nobody to talk to, nobody to share his fears with, not even his mother: "But she didn't know as he knew how the whole world could break into a thousand little pieces, all buzzing, all whining, and no one hearing them and no one seeing them except himself" (Roth 55).

The darkness of the cellar takes on new meanings. On his way back from school David sees a black car with a coffin: “The black carriage with the window. Scared. The long box. Scared. The cellar. No! No!” (Roth 64) David tries to ask his mother what happens after death. She says she does not know: “They say there is a heaven and in heaven they waken. But I myself do not believe it. May God forgive me for telling you this. I know only that they are buried in the dark earth and their names last a few more lifetimes on their gravestones” (Roth 69). The cellar for him thus represents not only sexuality but a trap, aggression and death.

However, the cellar can become a place of refuge. After an argument on the street David hits one boy who falls down and does not move. David is scared; he thinks he has killed him and tries to hide. He feels he cannot go home as Luter has come to visit his mother. The only safe place is the cellar. David sits in the darkness that is not still and quiet but noisy, with strange creatures squirming, moving and making strange noises.

This is one of the essential features of modernism: a concrete object acquires various meanings as a result of the constantly changing human consciousness. The main emphasis does not lie on the cellar as a concrete object, but on the way in which it is perceived. David sees it as a dangerous space full of danger, “unclean” sexuality, or death. Yet it can become the only safe place to hide. Other features typical of modernism, such as the subjective rendering of time and space, are also connected with the method of the flow of consciousness.

After some time spent hiding in the cellar David decides to run as far as he can so that the police cannot catch him. He does not know where he is running or how long for—the only indicators of time and space are telegraph poles.³

After some time the exhausted David realizes that he is lost and cannot find his way home. He—similarly to his father—has paranoid feelings that everybody knows what he has done and only pretends that nothing happened. For the first time he understands that he cannot believe all that is being said:

Trust nothing. Trust nothing. Trust nothing. Wherever you look, never believe. Whatever anything was or did or said, it pretended. Never believe. If you played hide’n’-go-seek, it wasn’t hide’n’-go-seek, it was something else, something sinister. If you played follow the leader, the world turned upside down and an evil face passed through it. Don’t play; never believe. The man who had directed him; the old woman who had left him here; the policeman; all had tricked him. They would never call his mother, never. He knew. They would keep him there. That rat cellar underneath. That rat cellar! The boy he had pushed was still. Coffin-box still. They knew it. And they knew about Annie. They made believe they didn’t but they knew. Never believe. Never play. Never believe. Not anything. Everything shifted. Everything changed. Even words. Words, you said. Wanna, you said. I wanna. Yea. I wanna. What? You know what. They were something else, something horrible! Trust nothing. Even side-walks, even streets, houses, you looked at them. You knew where you were and they turned. (Roth 102–3)

The outer world has thus become a place of vulgarity, death, violence and lies for him. David is not only a spoilt scared child but also a child hero on his way to initiation and

illumination. The only problem is that he does not know how to reach it. He is constantly torn between his desire to become one of the street boys who know where their fathers work and contempt for their vulgarity and simplicity. His feelings of imagined guilt gradually drive him away both from his mother, who cannot understand his confusion, and from the street that is full of death, violence and sex. He tries to escape this by trying to bring back his idyllic childhood in Europe.

In the second part of the novel, called "The Picture", this darkness is transmitted to his inner world. David hears a conversation between his mother and her sister Bertha. Genya starts talking about her past and her relationship with the organist. However, her narrative is so fragmented that it cannot be positively said whose son David really is. The important parts of the story are told in Polish and David cannot understand it. The only thing he knows is that he is somehow concerned and that the secret the women are talking about is sinister. He catches only two words, *benkart* and *organist*.

In the third part of the novel, called "The Coal," when David becomes acquainted with Jewish history, culture and religion, the cellar will acquire yet another meaning. When David hears the story of Isaiah, he cannot understand how dirty coal (which he associates with the cellar) could purify a foul mouth. He decides to become the Isaiah of the streets and starts searching for his light and purifying the coal around him, though he is scorned by the rabbi, who tries to explain to him that such light and purity is not of this world. Yet for him the Biblical stories are real and present a part of his life and experience.

"What The Thunder Said"

"Sleep is like a temporary death."

Bob Dylan, "Workingman Blues"

In the third part, David's mother tries to observe the rituals of Jewish cooking but she never goes to the synagogue. David thus has no knowledge of the Jewish tradition at all. Albert believes that David should learn Hebrew so that he could say *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead, for his father. That is why he sends David to the *cheder*, the Jewish school. David is scared and resentful. He has to stay in a dark room without his mother and listen to the rabbi. Yet he eventually starts enjoying his classes. As Šárka Bubíková remarks: "The theme of forgetting one's biological parents and turning to one's spiritual parent instead often appears in American literature in order to highlight the motif of hope situated in the future" (Bubíková 97). Unlike the protagonists of *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan and *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl* by Samuel Ornitz, who were both happy to leave the school and forget all about the religion of their ancestors, David sees Judaism and Hebrew as a way to light and purification. The Jewish tradition thus offers him a long-sought historical and social sense of belonging.

In the last part, called "The Rail," David tries to escape not only the outer world but his parents as well. He seeks consolation in religion, not only in Judaism but also in Christianity, which is especially attractive for him. Unlike Judaism, Christianity uses visible objects

of worship, such as rosaries or holy images, which he finds comforting and reassuring. Another appealing feature is the concept of God's mercy and purification of sins, which is what David seeks.

The duality and coexistence of these religions and cultures appears throughout the whole novel. It is even present in his name: David Schearl. In Hebrew David means "Beloved" and it refers to David, the King of Israel who fought against Goliath. According to Christian tradition, King David was an ancestor of Jesus; moreover, "Beloved" is used as a name for Jesus. The surname Schearl comes from Yiddish and means scissors.

Yet the role of different languages and cultures presented in this book is not so clear-cut and simple. As Hana Wirth-Nesher points out:

Yiddish is associated with his mother, but it is the language of the father as well. And although Hebrew signifies the language of Judaism and thus serves to reinforce his ties to his family, it is represented in the King James translation evoking Christian Western culture as much as it does Jewish civilization. In fact, the passage from Isaiah Roth cites is read in Christian hermeneutics as a prophecy of the coming of Christ, just as the Chad Goya song, with its link to the sacrificial lamb and the Passover seder, signifies both Jewish and Christian traditions. (9)

By admiring these texts, David is moving between both religions and cultures. Not only does he partially understand two other languages, English and Hebrew, he even accepts their respective heritages.

David so strongly desires the light that will save him from the darkness of sin that he is willing to do anything to get near it. He thinks that a blond, blue-eyed boy named Leo who comes from a Polish Christian family can and will protect him. Leo tells him about Jesus, light and miraculous healing. Both boys meet on the roof in a house to which David's family has moved. In this house there is no cellar, only stairs leading up.

David sees Leo as a happy angelic child. Leo is not scared; he does not have a father and does not see his mother, and moreover, he owns skates. Leo also has sacred talismans: pictures of the Virgin Mary, a crucifix and a rosary:

"Dintcha ever see dat befaw?"

"No."

"At's Jesus an' de Sacred Heart."

"Oh! What makes it?"

"Makes wot?"

"He's all light inside."

"Well'at's'cause he's so holy."

"Oh," David suddenly understood. "Like him, too!" He stared in fascination at the picture. "De man my rabbi told me about – he had it!"

"Had w'a'?" Leo drew abreast of him to look up.

"Dot light over dere!"

"Couldnda had dat," Leo answered dogmatically. "Dat's Christchin light – it's way bigger. Bigger den Jew light." (Roth 322)

Because of his ignorance of Judaism, David is willing to believe that Christian symbols can free him of his fear. Moreover, he is shocked when Leo tells him that the Jews are Christ-killers. So shocked, indeed, that he is willing to ridicule his own tradition. But his desire to be near Leo and keep his rosary leads only back to the cellar. Leo wants to visit David's cousins and have some fun with them. David is torn between his urge to have the magic rosary and disgust as he realizes Leo's intentions. Yet he eventually agrees to take him there and stand guard. They are caught by David's aunt and he feels even greater guilt.

He tries to find shelter in the *cheder*, where he tells the rabbi that his mother is dead and his father was an organist. After all this Albert is sure that David is not his son. Not only was he offering his cousins to Christians of Polish origin, to make things worse, he had a rosary in his pocket.

David feels that only God's light can purify him from his imagined sins and guilt (which are no less real to him). That is why he throws his father's milk dipper onto the rails. There is a lightning bolt followed by thunderous noise. David receives an electric shock and loses consciousness, looking as if he were dead:

Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 64)

In the Jewish tradition, thunder is often used as a manifestation of God's presence. The Law was given to Moses amid thunder and lightning (Ex xix, 16). In David's case it is not only the Lord, but also his father, who was associated with thunder. In Ezekiel 1 it is the Ofanim ("Wheeled [ones]"), a class of chariot angels who create thunder and lightning (Geoffrey 191). Moreover, the chief god of the Canaanites was Baal ("Lord/Master/Husband"), who was the God of thunder and fertility (Geoffrey 27).

When David lies on the ground, his subconscious is flooded by fragmented images from his outer and inner world: cellar, coal, father and mother. These images, which have both secular and religious meanings, are intertwined with various, diverse voices from the street. The English of the street is a mixture of English, German, Italian and Yiddish. The utterances of the people watching David contain Christian and Jewish elements and combine the secular and the sacred:

"Dere's a star for yeh! Watch it! Tree Kings I god. Dey came on huzzbeck! Yee! Hee Hee! Mary! Nawthin' to do but wait fer day light and go home. To a red cock crowin'. Over a statue of. A jerkin'. Cod. Clang! Clang! Oy! Machine! Liberty! Revolt! Redeem!"

Power

*Power! Power like a paw, titanic power,
ripped through the earth and slammed
against his body and shackled him
where he stood. Power! Incredible,
barbaric power! A blast, a siren of light
within him, rending, quaking, fusing his*

*brain and blood to a fountain of flame,
vast rockets in a searing spray! Power! (Roth 418–9)*

This passage represents a typical example of modernist writing. Roth uses rhythmical prose that formally overlaps with poetry. The final chapter of the book is a vortex of both *acoustic and visual* images whirling in the protagonist's mind.

In all modernist works, language plays an essential role in the novel. In *Call It Sleep*, the emphasis is put on the spoken word, on the sound. Roth tried to represent America through the complex, often cacophonous voices of people coming from different countries and speaking in various languages, such as Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew or distorted English. As Kolář observed: "The languages are linked with David's initiation into Jewish culture and with his fervent desire to be cleansed of his sins" ("Ethnicity" 76). As the novel is a modernist reflection of the child protagonist's mind, which is not yet able to understand the outside world, the representation of sounds was the only way of creating a full picture of the multicultural and hectic life of the city.

The sound is the bearer of meaning—as is true for the Jewish tradition, where the heard is more important than the seen. Moreover, the sounds also reflect David's way of thinking and hearing. Some of the sounds in *The Wasteland* "Twit twit twit/ Jug jug jug jug jug jug" (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 59) are reproduced in the immigrant English in *Call It Sleep*:

Sin melted into light...
Uh chug chug, ug chug!
– Cucka cucka ... Is a chicken...
Uh chug ug ch ch ch – Tew weet!
– No ... Can't be...
Ug chug, ug chug, ug – TEW WEET! (Roth 248)

Most of the visual images are coming from the outside, from the onlookers. Their words are important on both an acoustic level (they are speaking in broken English) and a visual one, as they provide cultural allusions unknown to the narrator. According to Werner Sollors, these objects "externalize his emotional dilemmas" (158). They represent the essential images from David's life, mixing Christian images of the Virgin Mary and the Three Kings with the Jewish Star of David. The red cock is an allusion to a famous sonnet by Emma Lazarus, "The Crowing of the Red Cock" (1882) that deals with the massacres of Jews in Europe in the 14th century and the fate of the Jews. In the last stanza Lazarus writes:

Coward? Not he, who faces death,
Who singly against worlds has fought,
For what? A name he may not breathe,
For liberty of prayer and thought.
The angry sword he will not whet,
His nobler task is – to forget. (Lazarus, *Dance* 52)

David does not want to retaliate; he is willing to face death and find purifying light and forgiveness. His state is described as sleep. David's consciousness, together with his reason, is asleep and he is freed from his fear. Only his subconscious is awake. As Eliot says in *The Wasteland*: "I could not/ speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither/ Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,/ Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 52). In the Jewish tradition the state of subconscious is connected with the number *three*, represented by the letter *gimel* (meaning return, wean, or camel in Hebrew, it is mainly associated with a blessing connected with the receiving of God's Light).⁴

During his "sleep" the contrasting images of the inner and outer world join in a whirling epiphany. Epiphany ("manifestation" in Greek) is, among other things, connected with the festival of the Three Kings. However, it is not experienced only by David but also by his father. When the doctor brings David, who is in shock, home, Albert realizes that he does not want to lose his son. He finally accepts him as his own and tries to be a good father. Still, the ending is open and reflects the last two lines of *The Wasteland*:

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. (Self-restraint, charity and mercy)⁵
Shantih shantih shantih (peace and silence) (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 73)

That, according to *Upanishads*, is what the thunder really means. The "thunder of spring" (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 64) is announcing a change, a new life, and urges all to restrain themselves, be generous to those in need and be compassionate. After David's incident, the whole family gains hope of a better future. David returns to his Father on both a symbolic and a literal level. He is finally becoming less dependent on his mother and is initiated into his new life—which, however, may not necessarily be better.

Notes

¹ For more on the function of child protagonists in literature see Šárka Bubíková, "Growing up and the Quest for Identity," in: *Growing Up in British and American Literature*, ed. Šárka Bubíková, et al. (Pardubice: Pavel Mervart/Univerzita Pardubice, 2008), 97–114.

² See e.g. Schwarz, Joyce 21.

³ The same strategy was used by Virginia Woolf in her short stories "The Mark on the Wall" (1917) and "The Kew Gardens" (1919), where the main indicator of time and space is a snail.

⁴ See the allusion to the Three Kings above. In Jewish tradition the number *three* is also associated with the Three Fathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Three Kings were riding on camels as well.

⁵ Three essential virtues in Hinduism: see "Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad," in *Upanishads*, trans. Suren Navlakha (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 124.

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Ethnic Encounters in 1930s Jewish American Childhood Novels of New York

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Abstract

A number of childhood novels by Jewish American writers of the 1930s, although disparate in terms of literary aesthetics – from Gold's openly "proletarian" Jews Without Money (1930) to Henry Roth's "ethnic" modernism in Call It Sleep (1934) – share a concern on how the autobiographical Jewish boy characters regard (and are regarded by) ethnic Others. This essay will trace "ethnic encounters" in three Jewish American novels of the period, highlighting passages which reveal popular notions and prejudices on ethnicity, as regards the "place" of Jews vis-à-vis Italians, Irish, or other immigrant Gentiles, noting paradoxical conceptualizations of the Jew's "whiteness" drawn from mainstream American culture.

Keywords: Childhood novels, New York, ethnic 'others', Jewish identity, immigrant neighborhoods, 'whiteness'

The portrayal of American cities as sites where characters become acutely aware of ethnic identity, due to the geographical proximity among neighborhoods of various ethnic, cultural or religious compositions, is a relevant feature of 1920s and 1930s American urban fiction, particularly in *Bildungsromane* or childhood novels with a strong autobiographical component. Such awareness was necessarily reinforced by the specific features of the immigrant process in turn-of-the-century America, whereby natives of Italian, Irish or Eastern European villages and towns relocated collectively to tenement blocks, streets and neighborhoods, thus configuring urban sectors which were homogenous in terms of language, culture and creed, but at the same time were in close proximity to sections which were entirely alien. Although this holds true for other novels of the period set in other cities, New York's Lower East Side, in literary and cultural terms, epitomized this American urban mosaic of ethnic variety in the first decades of the century (Gittleman 123–7).

This is particularly applicable to New York Jewish writers, such as Michael Gold or Henry Roth – writers who grew up in this neighborhood and, as the children of an immigrant generation, perceived their relationship to the city simultaneously as singular – given their population impact on the East Side – but also as necessarily shared with other immigrant ethnic groups, notably Italians and Irish. Even in certain novels which are not centrally about childhood or the East Side, such as Daniel Fuchs’ *Summer in Williamsburg* (1934), this awareness comes to the forefront in one of the storylines. Conversely, certain passages in these works occasionally reveal conflicting racial conceptualizations of urban Jews, derived from mainstream attitudes of the period, such as the attempt to “place” the Jew – as both ‘white’ and culturally ‘other’¹ – within the American preestablished discourse of black/white ethnicity, as noted by Eric Goldstein in his recent study, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity*.

From the beginning, both Gold’s *Jews Without Money* (1930) and Roth’s *Call It Sleep* (1934) highlight the contrast between David Schearl’s and Mikey’s Jewishness and that of other children they come in contact with in their neighborhoods. The ethnic divide is consistently seen along the lines of religious belief by non-Jewish characters – Jew vs. Christian – but not necessarily so by the Jewish children, whose perception of the multiethnic city operates also in terms of nationality, just as much as it does on the level of perceiving the Gentile as collective Other. Again, here, *Call It Sleep* is a more complex work, in the sense that even while it may show David as victim to anti-Semitic attitudes it also explores the potential of a friendship with a non-Jew, whereas in *Jews Without Money*, Gold conveys that there is no space for Mikey’s socializing beyond the world of his own Jewish family and gang².

In Gold’s novel, awareness of Jewish distinctiveness in the urban context is first brought to the forefront through the narrator’s hateful memories of school, specifically embodied by the anti-Semitic public school teacher who, the narrator implies, was unable to bridge the gap between her own, presumably WASP, milieu and the slum conditions of East Side Jewish immigrant life:

...it was a torture to you, Ku Kluxer before your time, to teach in a Jewish neighborhood.... I knew no English when handed to you. I was a little savage and lover of the street. I used no toothbrush. I slept in my underwear, I was lousy, maybe. To sit on a bench made me restless, my body hated coffins. But Teacher! O Teacher for little slaves, O ruptured American virgin of fifty-five, you should not have called me “LITTLE MIKEY.” ...Nigger banged you on the nose for that. I should have been as brave. It was Justice. (37)

Beyond the teacher’s anti-Semitism, the allusion to Mikey’s best friend as “nigger” is also indicative of a certain “inside” assimilation of Jews to a binary black/white racial discourse, which, as social historian Eric Goldstein has noted (43-5), was present in 1900s America through certain low-brow publications and pseudo-scientific treatises on race and physiognomy: Mikey later describes his school-mate, in tacitly Negro-like terms, as “squat and solid... [with] the contemptuous glare of the criminal and genius. His nose had been squashed at birth, and... his black hair and murky face made inevitable the East Side nickname [Nigger]” (42).

In a later chapter (“Jews and Christians”), which largely functions as an homage to his selfless immigrant mother, Gold acknowledges the reciprocal nature of ethnic prejudice in the ghetto: “my mother was opposed to the Italians, Irish, Germans and every other variety of Christian with whom we were surrounded” (163) and highlights her apathy toward a railroad accident because no Jews were killed³ (164). Gold roots his mother’s prejudices, however, in the experience of her youth in Hungary, and broadly speaking, the collective transmission of stories about Eastern European persecution and pogroms, combined with beliefs and superstitions regarding the cruelty of the Christian “other” (164). The rest of the chapter essentially rehabilitates her, as a woman always willing to leave these general assumptions aside and help out with the individual tragedies of gentile tenement neighbors, including an Italian woman whose husband is in prison or an Irish woman with a violent husband and a bed-ridden hydrocephalic child. As *Jews Without Money* was explicitly conceived by Gold as a ‘proletarian novel’, his mother’s attitude as a tough anonymous champion of the working classes,⁴ who does not hesitate to put aside ethnic prejudice in her defense of the vulnerable, aptly fits this novel’s aims, while implying also that the shared quality of socioeconomic penury in the East Side tenements should tend to dismantle, or make irrelevant, the processes of ethnic/religious ‘othering’.

One specific chapter, “Buffalo Bill and the Messiah”, explores very monographically the composite identity of the Lower East Side as an ethnic neighborhood. This chapter evinces the peculiar strain between the novel’s reportorial facet and its more personal autobiographical nature. Opening with the lines “What a crazy mingling of races and religions on my street... Germans, Poles, Russians, Armenians, Irish, Chinese; there were always a few of these aliens... among our Jews” (174), the opening five sections itemize Mikey’s memories of various ethnic and cultural presences in the predominantly Jewish Chrystie Street, ranging from the outlandish ultra-orthodox African Jew his father brings home one day, the gypsies who become temporary squatters in an empty store, or a gang of loud Chinese waiters who crowd a tenement flat.⁵ The reportorial part of the chapter reaches a climax with a reflection on the ‘anthropological layering’ of this New York district, from precolonial times to the present: “The red Indians once inhabited the East Side; then came the Dutch, the English, the Irish, then the Germans, Italians and Jews. Each group left its deposits, as in geology” (180). Such a reflection is only partially relevant to the following sections, in which Gold recalls scenes of the Lower East Side which involve confrontations between Jews and Protestants, Jews and Catholics, or even between Jewish atheists and believers, around sacred urban landmarks: a Lutheran Church, a Catholic Church, a synagogue. Gold’s focus here, as a Marxist writer, is not so much on ethnic variety in itself – as the opening paragraph suggests – but instead focuses on moving toward a critique of religious belief as another source of ethnic urban conflict within the neighborhood: “Religion was a fervent affair on the East Side. Every persecuted race becomes a race of fanatics” (181). These pages are all introductory to the crucial event of this chapter, Mikey’s quest into a Gentile street in section eight. Alone, away from his gang, and inspired by a heroic vision of the Buffalo Bill adventure books he reads, he decides to walk to Chinatown by way of Mulberry Street, “. . .the land of the hereditary enemy – the Italians” (186); in *Summer in Williamsburg*, Metropolitan Avenue is a territory envisioned by Davey’s Jewish gang as “the most vicious of all neighborhoods, the Italians” (106). Especially interesting about this section of *Jews Without Money* is Mikey’s appropriation

of the American settlers' pioneering myth in 'frontier territories' to imaginatively chart his route within the New York East Side: "I walked down Hester Street toward Mulberry. Yes, it was like the Wild West. Under the fierce sky, Buffalo Bill and I chased buffalo over the vast plains" (187). Although, as American spaces go, the Midwestern prairies are certainly far removed from the East Side of the 1910s, Mikey's vision is appropriate in that it evokes lawlessness, it represents the desire for the open often highlighted in *Jews Without Money*, and engages an American icon of frontier life.

Mikey enters the alien, *unkosher* Mulberry Street, where, at the Italian pushcarts, there are "strange vegetables [he] had never seen" (187) and, to his astonishment, "Christians [eat] oysters and clams" while "a pig's head [is] on exhibition in a butcher's window" (187). In *Summer in Williamsburg*, Fuchs presents a remarkably matching description, also from a defamiliarized perspective, of Davey's Jewish gang walking along Metropolitan Avenue: "The gang looked . . . into the strange windows of Italian grocery stores, where green odd-shaped cheeses hung from strings, cans of olive oil bore peculiar labels and pictures, and the vegetables appeared fascinatingly foreign."⁶ (107). In Gold's novel, Mikey, alone and unprotected, is soon surrounded by a gang of Italian boys, "whooping like Indians" (188) who expose him as a Jew from Chrystie Street, and, amid the general indifference of adults, pursue him and attack him at the "ancient cry...Christ-killer!" (188), the anti-Semitic indictment from medieval Europe. Although Mikey tries to envision his adventure in terms of the American pioneering hero ideal, the social reality of the East Side brings him down to earth, to the ethnic prejudice and racial hatred still passed on by immigrant generations. Significantly, the narration of his final, hair-breadth escape from the Mulberry Street gang – covered in muck, injured and bruised – is presented in terms akin to Exodus: "At last I came to the Bowery, and managed to cross it into my own Jewish land" (188): a far cry from Buffalo Bill myth. Inversely to Mikey's imaginative conceptualization of Chrystie Street as figurative Zion in New York, is Davey's more pragmatic realization of the diaspora in *Summer in Williamsburg*, when, learning about an imminent concerted attack on his boys, he directs the Ripple Street gang to join the "Havemayers" and seek "an alliance for the battle. After all, they were all Jews in Golus⁷ together" (200).

Although contacts with Italians are hardly present in Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, there is a brief scene in the novel which shares the conflictiveness of the Mulberry Street episode but is converse in terms of urban geography: now the Italian is in Jewish territory. On the first day of Passover, David Schearl joins a group of Jewish kids who are burning 'chumitz'⁸ over a street sewer, when an Italian streetcleaner approaches with a shovel, warning them off. The boys plead with him not to destroy the fire as it is sinful, but the Italian righteously continues with his job, shoveling the embers with the street trash. When a boy calls his father out, a Jewish butcher who tries to obstruct the cleaner, their verbal confrontation escalates into racism, in fragments of broken English, Italian and Yiddish: "Dey no makuh duh fiuh hea!... No? I ken't tell you, ha? Verstinkeneh Goy!... Sonnomo bitzah you! I fix!... You vanna push me? I'll zebreak you het... Vai a fanculo te! Come on! Jew bast!" (244). The fight is forestalled by the butcher's wife, who warns him in Yiddish that all Italians carry knives, a perception which replicates the Jewish gang's apprehension in *Summer in Williamsburg* that "[Italians] went out to hurt and maim... resorting unethically to knives and guns..." (106).

Although commonly broaching the issue of Jewish/Italian (Christian) antagonism, the two passages function in contrasting ways: the Mulberry Street episode in *Jews Without Money* implies an ethnic territoriality zealously possessed and guarded by the Italian kids, whereas in *Call It Sleep* a single, transitory appropriation of the street for a Jewish ritual is quickly overridden by an agent alien to that community, representing municipal priorities. On the other hand, rather than stressing a particular vision of the Lower East Side as a kind of ethnic mosaic of lawlessness – this is not Roth’s agenda – the streetcleaner episode has to be read within the recurring framework of subjectivity, misunderstanding, and cultural-linguistic gapping which influence character relationships throughout the novel (cf. Hana Wirth-Nesher, “Between Mother Tongue and Native Language in *Call It Sleep*”).

There are, however, two events in *Call It Sleep* which point, in more or less explicit ways, to David’s experience of anti-Semitism from other children in the Lower East Side. The first of these is David’s encounter with three Irish boys, covering only a brief chapter (8; Book 3) while the other, more complex and understated, is related to his friendship with a Gentile boy, the “Polish American” Leo Dugova, which Roth extends over eight chapters (7 to 14) of Book 4. The former episode is particularly enlightening as evidencing children’s un/awareness of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries in the East Side. David has been fantasizing at the East River docks, when he perceives three rough-looking boys coming to him from a heap of heavy metal junk nearby. Although they will only be fully identified as Irish when they start addressing each other by name, David’s perception gradually anticipates their identity in both territorial and physical terms: “Three boys, coming from Eighth Street⁹... wore caps cocked sideways, and sweater, red and green, smeared, torn ... Two were taller... wiry, blue-eyed, upturned noses freckled” (249). As they approach and he views them closely, the impression is reinforced by David’s awareness of their potential hostility to him as a Jew: “One glance at their tough, hostile faces... screwed up into malicious watchfulness was enough” (249). Thus far, nowhere is ethnicity actually stated or verifiable by any party, but Roth presents David’s perceptions and thoughts in a way that stresses that an alertness to it, an instinct of self-protection, now dominates his entire consciousness. When he is asked about his absence from school (it is Passover), he barely manages to withhold the truth: “‘Cause id’d, cause – ’. But something warned him. ‘Cause I – cause my brudder’s god measles’” (249). Conversely, the boys, who now begin calling each other by evident Irish nicknames (Pedey, Sweeney) are alerted to the significance of David’s hesitation. Having skirted the religious reference, he answers truthfully their next enquiry, falling into the much simpler trap of regarding proximity to home as a safeguard, naively unaware that it is precisely his address that will expose him as Jewish before the more streetwise Irish kids.

“W’ere d’yiz live?”

“Dere.” He could see the very windows of his own floor. “Dat house on nint’ stritt. My mudders gonna look out righd away.”

Pedey squinted in the direction David pointed.

“Dat’s a sheeney block, Pedey,” prompted the second freckled lieutenant with ominous eagerness.

“Yea. Yer a Jew aintchiz?” (250)

David is still able to deny Jewishness, gaining time with the skilful excuse that his parents are Hungarian janitors and even, when pressed for proof, fabricating a phrase in this language¹⁰. Although the scene seems to build up towards an aggression reminiscent of the Mulberry Street episode, this is in fact defused by Pedey's decision that "he's awri". Led 'im alone" (250), very probably because the cowering David is younger, weaker, and is no match for them. This is grounded in social history, and on evidence from a novel like *Summer in Williamsburg*, which often includes reflections of this kind. In a regular section of the *New Yorker* in the late 1920s, "A New York Childhood", Jewish contributor Joseph Gollomb recalled Irish kids' hostility to Jewish boys at the East River docks, and how this was partly conditioned by a 'coming of age': "So long as he still wore the sexless garb of the toddler no one on the riverfront troubled him... But as soon as he put on kneepants... the young of the wild Irish regarded his trespass differently. The first time thereafter that he showed up at the docks he came home minus kneepants and everything but grimy skin and a bloody nose" (29). Gollomb's memory of the dock area as "Irish territory" hostile to Jewish kids finds a striking equivalent in this description of the facing (Brooklyn) river bank in Fuchs' novel *Summer in Williamsburg*: "Underneath the Williamsburg Bridge there were some improvised playgrounds . . . An excursion here netted a black eye more often than a good time, for the local Irish boys resented sheeny invasion" (105).

Instead of being beaten, the terrorized David is led, under the suspicious promise of seeing "de magic" (250–251), "all de movies in the woil... and de angels" (252) across the metal junk yard to the 10th Street streetcar tracks, and bullied into throwing a strip of zinc between the rails to cause a short circuit. In the course of this anxiety-ridden expedition, Roth completes the contrast between the reserved David and the grossness of the Irish boys by focusing on their witty scatological references, as they joke with one another about "farting... against the law" (251) and pause to "take a piss" (251) a behaviour that causes David to inch away in disgust. Interestingly, the most hostile of the Irish kids, "Weasel", misreads David's refusal to join them in urinating as further proof of his Jewishness, tacitly assuming that David wants to hide circumcision: "'Ye see,' Weasel pointed triumphantly at the shrinking David, 'I tol' yuh he ain' w'ite.'" (251). Weasel's comment on David's "non-whiteness" again reveals his unwitting internalization of the reduction of Jews to the Black/White discourse of this era, a discourse which included notions such as equating Jews to Blacks in their being 'fiercer' and more sexually unrestrained than 'whites'. This is all the more ironic given David's propriety in contrast to the gross Irish boys, but a further underlying irony in Weasel's labelling stems from the notion that Irish immigrants had themselves been submitted to charges of 'non-whiteness' for much of the nineteenth century (Goldstein 43–5, 18, 35). On the other hand, as is characteristic of *Call It Sleep*, where the child's perceptions often exceed his ability to "translate" them effectively into his range of comprehension, David remains unaware of the ethnic implications of Weasel's comment: he is simply a well-behaved Jewish boy who uses the toilet. From beginning to end, the whole exchange of Book 3, chapter 8, becomes a very skillful representation of a conflict between two disparate ethnic outlooks: the inquisitorial, unimaginative worldliness of the Irish boys versus the social and cultural caution of the Jewish David, who is more intuitive but also far more naive.

The ability to transcend ethno-cultural borders within the neighborhood is precisely at the core of the friendship – eventually betrayed – that develops between David and the

Catholic boy Leo Dugova, a street neighbor who defines himself as “Polish American”. Roth sustains this relationship over eight chapters of Book 4, totalling almost sixty pages (299–358) and encompassing three overlapping stages: Leo’s individual appeal to David as a role model for a carefree life (chs. 7–8), David’s fascination with the ‘otherness’ of the Christian world Leo reveals to him (ch. 10), and Leo’s betrayal of friendship in using David to harass his cousin Esther (chs. 12–14). As the critic Mario Materassi has noted in his essay, “Roth’s Shifting Urbanscape”, which draws on Roth’s own comments regarding the accuracy of his representation of the Lower East Side, the inclusion of this character here as David’s street neighbor – an exceptionally extended rendering of a character outside David’s family life – might not be factual, but taken from the later period in the Roth’s life in the mixed, multicultural Harlem: “Many a time . . . [Roth] has insisted that he compounded the East Side with Harlem, creating an American microcosm and placing it in the middle of what he has repeatedly referred to in his interviews and in *Mercy [of a Rude Stream]* as a kind of ‘Jewish ministate’ . . . The available historical evidence neither supports nor flatly disproves Roth’s claim as to the homogeneity of his old neighborhood” (42).

David’s friendship with Leo develops from an unequal footing and will consistently hinge on Dugova’s innate ability to keep David fascinated with what he does and says. Initially, David sees in Leo what he lacks: the freedom to roam the city on skates, self-assurance and fearlessness, and a domestic space which he also dominates, there being no father and a working mother who is absent all day. Beyond this, however, David, who so far has been shown to have no bosom friends even among his Jewish gang, is also tantalized by the simple fact that Leo – and Leo’s home, the first domestic space David visits in the absence of adults – is accessible *in spite of* the difference in terms of religious creed. Leo is even willing to gratify his curiosity about the icons of a Catholic world David knows nothing about: the holiness of the Cross, the Virgin and child, the Sacred Heart (304, 305, 321–2), and to “enlighten” David on the traumatic heritage of Jews as the original “Chris’-killers” (323). In fact, initially their relationship can be read almost as a process of conversion, since parallel to his stern teaching of an apparently cherished Christian tradition runs “Leo’s debas[ing of] the Jewish sacred to the level of profanity” (Sollors 132), tolerated by David for the sake of acceptance in the eyes of his new friend:

And even when Leo had said of the “Mezuzeh” . . . “Oh! Izzat wotchuh call ‘em? Miss oozer? Me ol’ lady tore one o’ dem off de door w’en we moved in¹¹, and I busted it, an cheez! It wuz all full o’ Chinee on liddle terlit paper – all aroun’ and aroun’.” David had not been hurt. He had felt a slight qualm of guilt, yes, guilt because he was betraying all the Jews in his house who had Mezuzehs above their doors; but if Leo thought it was funny, then it was funny and it didn’t matter. He had even added lamely that the only thing Jews wore around their necks were camphor balls against measles, merely to hear . . . Leo’s derisive laughter. (306)

Significant to David’s interest in this friendship, and tragically signaling the extent of his loneliness, is the fact that despite his sensitivity, he chooses to disregard Leo’s blatant racism and complete disrespect for other cultures, voiced not just in his derision of Jewishness, but also more widely, as when he refers here to the Hebrew scroll as “Chinee on . . . terlit paper”, or his scattered references to “Irish mutts”, “lousy micks” (301) and

Italians as “wops” (320). Leo is streetwise, but not cosmopolitan: he evinces an instinctive provincial prejudice of the foreign, even though his own origins belong in the urban immigrant mosaic. Their relationship shifts into a somber mood for David at the end of chapter 10, when he unwittingly reveals the story of a visit to Bertha’s and being asked by his cousin Esther to watch over while she uses the toilet. Instantly alerted to the chance of sexual contact, Leo presses David into visiting his cousins: his true colors start to show when, before David’s instinctive reluctance and forebodings about this visit, he actually voices the cliché “stingy kike” and demands that David stop hanging around him (327). As David is leaving, Leo slyly calls him back with the bribe of an old rosary, “way, way holier” (328) than the scapular David has admired (and coveted) around Leo’s neck, which the Polish boy had earlier admonished was not for him, but only for Catholics (324). For all his assumed gravity on Christianity and contempt of Jewishness, Leo barter freely with the rosary for “a feel” of the “Jew-goils” (326, 327), and later, when David is finally coaxed into skating to Bertha’s with him, he pretends to speak Yiddish – under David’s reluctant cueing – in order to amuse Esther (342, 344): Leo thus actually exploits both cultures and creeds indiscriminately. His manipulative authority over both David and Esther eventually leads to crisis in chapter 14, when, after skating with the girl, the Polish boy orchestrates a visit to the cellar, luring Esther behind them and posting David as a lookout, giving him the bribe rosary in the semidarkness as he leads her into a secluded bin-room. Overawed by the distressing events, at this point David wills himself to recede from audible perception, focusing his thoughts only on the future preservation of the holy beads he is clasping. As Leo’s sexual harassment progresses, and Esther starts calling out in protest, they are discovered by the younger sister Polly, who immediately realizes what is happening. The terrorized David fails to materialize from the darkness as their alibi – as Leo had planned – and the situation becomes nasty as Polly threatens her sister with “telling” (357) and, reverting to ethnic stereotypes, twice calls Leo a “doity Crischin” (356, 357), an insult which reflects her assimilation of the general belief that Jewish families of the period maintained higher moral standards than those of “Christian America”, including Anglos and other ethnic groups: “commentators spoke at length about the purity and stability of Jewish home life... the image of the Jewish woman was sometimes employed to demonstrate that Jewish life had a strong moral side rooted in the home...” (Goldstein 40). Leo, who from the start has voiced his inbred prejudices, exits the scene (and the novel) on a sexist and racist rejoinder, shouting “...Yuh Jew hewhs... [*whores*] Sheenies! Brttt!... Sheenies!” (357).

As these novels show, childhood Jewish American fiction of the 1930s in New York can be said to evince a great awareness of ethnic or cultural contrast in the street life of Jewish boys coming into contact with other immigrant children. Such awareness becomes more complex from the perspective of the Jewish children, who view these urban neighbors both in terms of nationality and of the religious Other – the Gentile – who may alternatively command feelings of fascination but also a sense of victimization, in being more streetwise and more assimilating than the Jews within the American urban immigrant mosaic at the beginning of the century. From the opposite perspective, these novels also reflect the tendency of non-Jewish children to circumscribe Jewish boys within a popular – but artificially constructed – binary racial discourse (sometimes even adopted by the Jewish community itself) that gives rise to significant paradoxes. The most notable of these

is, of course, the inconsistent construction of ‘whiteness’ as a racial paradigm to define the Jews’ position within the multiethnic city, particularly taking into account that such a notion was a transference of the desire by mainstream (i.e., WASP) American society to collectively mark a distance from all *its* ethnocultural Others, whether Irish and Italian Catholics, Chinese, or African Americans.

Notes

¹ Socially and culturally, Jews shared traits with white Anglos for which they were favorably regarded, such as strict moral principles, the importance of family life, or a quintessentially American work-ethic. Yet their growing presence in Ivy League colleges, their unwillingness to discriminate against blacks, or their reputation for being money-driven made Jews destabilizing elements for ‘white’ mainstream America (Goldstein 35-50).

² In the novel, Gold grimly emphasizes ‘gang territoriality’ in the East Side to the point that there is even rivalry and violence among Jewish gangs from different streets (47-8). In general, his portrayal of the Lower East Side as a site of ongoing turmoil – usually as a consequence of ethnic, cultural and religious difference – is much more explicit than in Roth’s *Call It Sleep*.

³ The Judaic notion of “chosenness”, to the extent that the Gentile is excluded from Jewish mourning, has been satirized in a later Jewish childhood story, Philip Roth’s mordant “The Conversion of the Jews” (1959), where the boy Ozzie Freedman, trying to come to terms with Jewish tradition, is appalled to discover that his mother mourns only for the eight Jewish victims, out of 58, of a plane crash (102).

⁴ Gold’s 1935 introduction to *Jews Without Money* pays homage to his mother as the central figure of the book, describing her in the concluding paragraphs, as a “heroine”, “a brave and beautiful proletarian woman” whose life and example stand out in response to “fascist liars” (9-10).

⁵ In what emerges as a bitter irony on inner-city multiracialism, Gold includes “. . . even an American on our street . . . Mary Sugar Bum . . . from Boston”, a homeless woman who sells her body for whisky and is constantly taunted by the immigrant children (178-9).

⁶ They later see Italian men “with red faces and big bellies” sitting in cafés, where “calendars and murals [depict] ladies with big, overflowing breasts”, and a “festive-looking funeral [procession]” of a dead child marches by (107), an idiosyncratic Latin/Mediterranean fusion of the sensual and the transcendental.

⁷ *goles* (‘exile, diaspora’) in the *YIVO* spelling standard (*Yiddish Dictionary Online*).

⁸ The remains of the leavened bread, tied in a rag and burnt, to commemorate the beginning of the Passover days, where only *matzo*hs (unleavened bread) are baked, as when the Israelites were driven in exile from Egypt (*Exodus* 12:10).

⁹ Writing of historical New York, critic Mario Materassi notes “...10th Street, just one short block north of where young Roth lived... marked the boundary between two neighborhoods, one predominantly Jewish and the other predominantly Irish” (43). Eighth Street, to the south, would have been a Jewish quarter, so Roth may have wanted to convey David’s surprise at seeing them emerge from his own area.

¹⁰ “Abashishishababyo tomama wawa” (250). This apparently nonsensical utterance, may actually thinly encode David’s fears and maternal yearnings. Broken down in one way, the line reads “A bash is his. Have [*Yid. hab*] a baby[o] to mama.” Drawn out, ‘wa-wa’ onomatopoeically suggests crying noises.

¹¹ Leo's remark on his mother's removal of the *Mezuzah* stresses the ethnic homogeneity of the block as part of a Jewish neighborhood. Since the Leo Dugova section might actually be a fictional compounding from the Roths' later life in Harlem, the writer may have wanted to authenticate this section by stressing the exceptionality of Polish Catholics relocating to David's Jewish street (Materassi 42-4).

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The Health of the Nation in the Shadow of Modern Historical Trauma: Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*

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Abstract

This paper deals with the representation of the American national trauma of 9/11 in Art Spiegelman's comic book/graphic novel In the Shadow of No Towers. Although it points out analogies with Spiegelman's graphic novel Maus, it sees In the Shadow of No Towers as a unique artistic work whose difference from Maus is determined by the author's direct experience of the traumatic event. The paper discusses the most important symbols in the book, such as the recurrent image of the glowing Tower, the motif of falling men, and smoke. The paper emphasizes the strong anti-Bush tone of Spiegelman's work, which rejects the official presentation of 9/11 as serving the purposes of political and ideological propaganda. It shows how the traumatic event of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center is transformed into narrative memory, the result of the author's therapeutic acting out of the historical trauma. An important part of this paper is an exploration of the visual presentation of the globally witnessed tragic event and the function of Spiegelman's incorporation of classic cartoons and comic strip characters into his book, indicating the artist's elaborate work with intertextuality.

Keywords: trauma, 9/11, Art Spiegelman, comics, memory, national symbols, G. W. Bush, nationalism, health, therapy

It is evident that the health of the nation is determined not only by the physical condition of its citizens but also by their mind or spirit. This paper sets out to explore the psychological aspects of the nation's health as represented in American literature. The spirit of the American nation has been marked by numerous national traumas ranging from the genocide of Native Americans and the existence of slavery, through the fratricidal Civil War, to the involvement of American soldiers in military conflicts outside the United States. In

the 20th century alone, Americans witnessed such traumatic events as the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent internment of Japanese Americans in camps, the participation of American soldiers in both World Wars and armed conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan, the assassination of President J. F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and numerous domestic racial conflicts. To narrow our scope, we will concentrate on a modern historical trauma that happened at the beginning of the 21st century and that came to be called 9/11. This paper deals with the terrorist attack as represented in Art Spiegelman's book *In the Shadow of No Towers*.

The power of Spiegelman's graphic novels *Maus* (1986, 1991) and *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) consists in his ability to present historical trauma through the prism of family history, to link horrifying public events with his most intimate world. Both books address terrible events that resulted in the deaths of numerous innocent victims, although the magnitudes of the catastrophes are incomparable. Whereas *Maus* deals with the Holocaust and its tragic effects on Spiegelman's family, the subject of *In the Shadow of No Towers* (further referred as *No Towers*) is the terrorist attack on the buildings of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. In a way, *No Towers* can be approached as a loose sequel to *Maus* because, as Avid Hajdu says in *The New York Times Book Review*, "Spiegelman clearly sees Sept. 11 as his Holocaust (or the nearest thing his generation will have to personal experience with anything remotely correlative" (13). Kristiaan Versluys rightly sees the link of *No Towers* with *Maus* even in its title, since "[t]he children of Holocaust survivors often refer to themselves or are referred to as living *in the shadow* of the tragedy their parents were part of" (52, emphasis mine).

Yet in many aspects, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, "a meditation on traumatic seeing" (Hirsch, "Editor's Column" 1213), is a different book. Unlike the Holocaust, 9/11 became a globally witnessed event and thus more visible to the public, which in Katalin Orbán's view has influenced "the different visual strategies of the two books... So in *Maus* the work's main concern is how not to overwrite another visual archive of its subject; in *No Towers*, it is how not to be overwritten by it" (60). An even more important difference between the both books is the fact that the narrator-protagonist Art Spiegelman, as a resident of SoHo, the Lower Manhattan quarter close to the Twin Towers, was a direct witness to the terrorist attack, and though he did not see the first plane hit the tower, "they [together with his wife Françoise] *heard* the crash behind them while heading North" and he saw "the face of a woman heading South" (2), which is pictured with a terrified expression. In *Maus*, the Holocaust is mediated by Art's father Vladek, who in a series of interviews with his son tells the story of his survival of Nazi genocide. It is Vladek's experience, not Art's, and even if he appropriates his father's trauma and in some parts identifies with it (to such an extent that he has fantasies about Zyklon B coming out from the shower of his parents' bathroom) (Spiegelman, *Maus II* 16), he can only *imagine* all the horrific situations that his father and his mother Anja experienced. Contrary to *Maus*, in *No Towers* his senses are fully employed at the moment of the initial shock: he can *see* frightened people running chaotically through the streets, *hear* the roar of planes, *smell* the smoke of the burning towers.

On the other hand, we should bear in mind that *Maus* also presents Art's personal trauma. His experience illustrates the concept of intergenerational transmission of trauma. He inherits his parents' history so intensely that it shapes his own identity.

This internalization of the parents' or even grandparents' traumatic past is typical of the descendants of Holocaust survivors. In connection with the intergenerational transmission of trauma we can apply Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to Art's response to his parents' original trauma. According to Hirsch, this "postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated." It is "distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (Hirsch, *Family Frames* 22). Postmemory reflects the level of identification with the original recipients of trauma and is often characterized by the feeling of displacement, living in temporal and spatial exile, estrangement, and the experience of loss and absence which frequently leads to an identity crisis. Moreover, *Maus I* contains Art Spiegelman's genuine personal trauma in the comic-book insert "Prisoner on the Hell Planet", which records the artist's feelings of guilt after his family tragedy when his mother Anja committed suicide in 1968. The expressionistic graphic recreation of this personal trauma contrasts with Spiegelman's minimalistic presentation of the historical trauma of the Holocaust as the manifestation of his distance from the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, the experience of which was only mediated to him.

In the graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*, the traumatic repetition compulsion is manifested by the recurrent image of the glowing Tower. This image appears on each of the ten plates or pages which reflect Spiegelman's response to the terrorist attack; in fact the Twin Towers on the cover of his oversized book symbolize the national trauma experienced by Americans in September 2001. The fact that the burning tower introduces most plates in Spiegelman's book confirms the centrality of this image. The recurrence of this image corresponds to the obsessive nature of traumatic recollections. The narrator emotionally acts out the scene of the attack on the tower as if it were happening all over again. Thus he uses the present tense, which corresponds to Ruth Leys's assertion that "[t]he experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated traumatic present" (2). Moreover, in William Sargant's view, it may become a very important part of the curative 'present-tense' abreaction (Leys 201). As individual panels indicate, Spiegelman is fully possessed by the image of the incandescent tower before it collapses into itself. He sees the tower as "awesome" and has an apocalyptic vision because, as he confesses, at the moment of the tower's collapse "it felt like the world was ending" (2). Although he admits that he "never loved those arrogant boxes" (ibid), he feels the loss to which he responds with a certain nostalgic melancholia as a form of acting out. In his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra points to Sigmund Freud, who "saw melancholia as characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed, self-berating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is possessed by the past, faces a future of impasses, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object" (65-66). This possession by personal and collective history pervades the narrator's mind. In the fourth plate, Spiegelman, referring to himself in the third person (a manifestation of the crisis of his identity), concedes that he is trapped by the traumas of September 11, 2001, which he is incessantly reliving, and admits that "his memories swirl and events fade, but he still sees that glowing tower when he closes his eyes" (4).

Although Art suggests that he was more a “rootless cosmopolitan” (4) than a strong patriot before 9/11, the loss of the Twin Towers has become painful for him since he has obviously developed an affection for New York City. He knows he cannot be indifferent to the familiar streets of his home SoHo, and he is aware of his inability to leave his beloved city. Thus he calls himself a “rooted cosmopolitan” after the terrorist attack, suggesting his emotional attachment to the locale. Furthermore, his personal trauma helps him to empathize with the historical trauma of his Jewish ancestors when he says: “I finally understand why some Jews didn’t leave Berlin right after Kristallnacht!” (4).

However, there is another image that is symbolically associated with the 9/11 tragedy—the image of falling men. The prominence of this image is reinforced on the back cover of Spiegelman’s book which shows a variety of people and comic-book figures falling in different positions. Here it is worth mentioning that the famous photograph of a man falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Center plays an important role in Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and also gave the title to Don DeLillo’s book on the tragic events of 9/11. The image of the falling bodies of people who jumped in despair from the Tower to avoid death in fire and smoke is embedded in Art’s mind, as he says in one of his panels: “He [Art Spiegelman] saw the falling bodies on TV much later... but what he *actually* saw got seared into his skull forever” (4). Further he openly alludes to the photograph taken by the Associated Press photographer Richard Drew when he describes himself as “haunted now by the images he didn’t witness... images of people tumbling to the streets below... especially one man (according to a neighbor) who executed a graceful Olympic dive as his last living act” (6). The photograph aroused controversial reaction; on the one hand it was much praised for its aesthetic qualities, on the other it was criticized from the ethical point of view. Spiegelman was aware of this controversy, and this was the reason why he pictured the SoHo street with voyeuristic paparazzi who are immune to the tragedies of dying people and are attracted only to its sensational aspects. In one panel he drew a street artist for whom the crumbling towers are just a model which he is painting without excitement.

From *Maus* we know that Spiegelman has a liking for graphic and verbal puns, and this is also evident in *No Towers*. To introduce the motif of the fall, he inserted an old comic strip “Etymological Vaudeville”—which humorously plays with the English idiom “dropping the other shoe” or “waiting for the other shoe to drop” in the meaning of waiting for something bad to happen. He pictures this idiomatic expression in its literal visual form as a giant shoe falling on the crowd of terrified New Yorkers. This graphic motif recurs in the last plate, which underscores the circular composition of Spiegelman’s book. However, this panel depicts a different time, the second anniversary of the 9/11 attack in 2003. Now the crowd of New Yorkers, in the form of comic-book figures including mice,



Richard Drew: Falling Man. http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP_FALINGMAN

is endangered by the cowboy boots falling on their heads at Ground Zero. This is an overt reference to the George W. Bush administration and the forthcoming elections, in which “Tragedy is transformed into Travesty” (10).

Although two years after the tragedy New Yorkers seem to have returned to normal and “to have picked up the rhythms of daily life” (9), Art exhibits symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, suffering from insomnia and anxiety. In one picture he wakes up having the impression that “the sky is falling” (9), which indicates the end of the world. He also confronts the banal atmosphere of an ordinary party held in Tribeca a few days before the events of 9/11 with the depressing reality after the terrorist attack, imbued with the feeling of displacement. Nothing has order here, everything is topsy-turvy. Spiegelman graphically represents this feeling through the dislocation of various items that have replaced the artist’s head. Instead of his head he has a lampshade, the head of his cat, his hand grasping a cigarette, a shoe and a mask of a mouse, one of the numerous allusions to his previous graphic book, underlining the connection of the inherited trauma of the Holocaust with the present trauma of 9/11. The displacement is also expressed by the removal of the Statue of Liberty from its pedestal in the presence of Uncle Sam, who has the look of George W. Bush. Art is unable to distinguish his neurotic depression from well-founded despair that stems from his awareness of the repetition of historical mistakes; the tragedy of the destruction of the World Trade Center has its roots in “the twin towers of Auschwitz and Hiroshima” (8). Being overwhelmed with loss, he feels like an “obsessive and paranoid monkey” (ibid) and experiences paranoia and alienation from himself. His awareness of loss is enormous and comprises the loss of the previous lifestyle, certainties and of his faith in the United States, symbolically expressed by the loss of a cigarette.

Another recurrent motif in *No Towers* is smoke. Again the reader can register the connection of this book with *Maus* in the captions where Art, pictured as a mouse, remembers his father Vladek who tried to describe to him the smell of the smoke in Auschwitz. According to Art, “the closest he got was telling me it was... ‘indescribable’ ” (3). He comes to the conclusion that this is exactly the word for his experience of the air in Lower Manhattan after the attack on the World Trade Center. The parallel between Auschwitz and 9/11 acquires an ironic meaning when Spiegelman pictures himself with a cigarette from which grey smoke is emanating. In addition he inserts an old Mars Attacks card published by TOPPS GUM, Inc. showing the building of Congress in Washington, DC in flames. Ironically this card anticipates the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11. The representation of Art as a mouse indicates that in the rendition of his traumatic memory, he takes over the role of Vladek. In Orbán’s view, “the unrepresentable smell draws attention to traumatic memory as both close and out of reach, far from the father’s failing powers of description, but close to somatic experience... and it exceeds the powers of description offered in either book. This connection between the two events and stories marks both crises as cases of traumatic memory in a multigenerational chain of remembering, transmission, and reenactment anchored in the body” (58).

Since the terrorist attack in September 2001 has become a national trauma for America, it is not surprising that Spiegelman employs various national symbols—which, however, acquire ironic meanings. The use of irony enabled Spiegelman to convey his critical distance from the official presentation of 9/11. For him, American political propaganda after the tragedy was “nothing less than a betrayal of the true meaning of 9/11” (Versluis

50). Although in the introduction to *No Towers*, he claims that he has never wanted to be a political cartoonist because of the transience of political caricature, his distaste for the machinery of government made his graphic novel highly politicized. In his view, “brigands suffering from war fever have... *hijacked* ” (4) the tragic events of 9/11, and he feels “equally terrorized by Al-Qaeda and by his own government” (2). A bald eagle with spread-out wings carrying George W. Bush and Dick Cheney makes it clear whom Spiegelman means by these “brigands”. This national symbol of the United States appears already in the 2nd chapter which shows Spiegelman wearing the eagle around his neck, an apparent allusion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. Art, tormented by the destruction of the terrorist act which can be compared to a modern curse, is, similarly to the ancient mariner, doomed to loneliness in his fierce effort to tell the story of 9/11, however his acting out of the trauma meets with unconcern. He has the compulsive idea that the sky is falling, which he ascribes to his post-traumatic stress disorder. He depicts himself as a broken man who has lost his sense of reason. Above his head there is a poster announcing that Spiegelman’s brain lost in Lower Manhattan is missing. Its shape resembles the smoke of the Tower.

Spiegelman’s irony also ridicules an enormous wave of nationalism, in his eyes jingoism, which is symbolized by the image of the American flag. The stars and stripes, a symbol of the unity of the American people, is perceived as a war banner. In Spiegelman’s *No Towers*, the American nation after the 2000 election is divided by color (blue Democrats, red Republicans). The author documents this division by statistical data and the red-blue map of the USA. Overall the whole graphic novel expresses a distinctive anti-Bush message stemming from the way in which George W. Bush came to power. Spiegelman plays with colors to capture the atmosphere of fear, accompanied by various degrees of terrorist attack alert.

The critique of the political situation in the United States finds its visual presentation in the captions where the world is pictured upside down. Spiegelman was obviously inspired by the old classic comics “The Upside Downs of Little Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo” by Gustav Verbeck, where the first half of the strips becomes the second half after turning the page round by 180 degrees. The author here depicts a campaign against Iraq led by a cowboy, another allusion to the American president of that time, George W. Bush. Spiegelman refuses to participate in the national euphoria over the dubious victory in the war in Iraq and ironizes this nationalism through a parody of the classic Frederick Burr Opper comic strip “Happy Hooligan”. In Spiegelman’s rendition, however, we see a “hapless hooligan”, a misfit who is interviewed by the mass media trying to get his answers confirming the uniqueness and exceptionality of America. A “hapless hooligan” subverts all these patriotic myths instead, and his answers are so “un-American” that he must be kicked away in the last frame of this comic strip. Furthermore, Spiegelman points out the commodification of 9/11 showing the sale of kitsch connected with the tragic events. An analogous motif also appears in *Maus II* where the author criticizes the commercialization of the Holocaust, or what Norman G. Finkelstein named “the Holocaust industry”, in the scene in which a businessman is showing an advertisement for a *Maus* vest.

In *No Towers*, Spiegelman presents America as a sick country, and he himself feels like a patient who suffers from paranoia and depression. However, his acting out of the New York tragedy in the form of comic testimony is the first step to restoring his health, which

has undoubtedly therapeutic effects. It transforms the artist's trauma into a narrative memory "that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one's own, and others', knowledge of the past" (Caruth 153). The fragmentary character of his graphic novel is determined by the inaccessibility of the original trauma and mirrors "the author's scrambled state of mind" (Versluys 64). However, Spiegelman's ironic stance testifies to his distance from the traumatic past and present reality, which is a necessary precondition of another stage of a healing process—working through. Frequent allusions and the use of intertextuality support this ironic stance. For example in the 10th chapter, the author alludes to W. H. Auden's poem "September 1, 1939", whose verse "The unmentionable odour of death offends the September night" (10) acquires new, unexpected connotations in the context of *No Towers*.

Considering Spiegelman's artistic orientation, it is understandable that his graphic novel contains most frequent references to comic books. They serve as a source of escape from traumatic reality and function as therapy in the healing process of his wounded psyche. As Art says, "Right after 9/11/01, while waiting for some other terrorist shoe to drop, many found comfort in poetry. Others searched for solace in old newspaper comics" (10). Spiegelman even includes a special appendix, "The Comic Supplement", in his book; the appendix provides a useful overview of the history of comics published in Sunday newspaper supplements at the turn of the 19th century, particularly in the newspapers of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. By happenstance, the journalistic competition between these "twin titans of modern journalism" took place in close vicinity of Ground Zero, so Spiegelman revived "the ghosts of some Sunday Supplement stars born on nearby Park Row about a century earlier" (8) like the Yellow Kid, Little Nemo, Maggie and Jiggs from *Bringing Up Father*, or, last but not least, Krazy Kat.

The comic strips helped the pessimistic Spiegelman, who saw "glasses as half empty rather than half full" (8), to ease his mental health problems after the trauma of 9/11. It results from his need to return to old values that compensate for the loss of certainties and faith. In the introduction to "The Comic Supplement" he clarifies his escapism as follows: "The only cultural artifacts that could get past my defenses to flood my eyes and brain with something other than images of burning towers were old comic strips; vital, unpretentious ephemera from the optimistic dawn of the 20th century" (*In the Shadow*, "The Comic Supplement", unpagged).

More importantly, in these comic strips that were supposed to have a short life Spiegelman finds surprising parallels with the 9/11 events. For example in George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*, Jiggs has a panic fear of the collapse of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the selected part of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* depicts his heroes climbing down the New York skyscrapers, reminding us of the vain efforts of people trapped in the World Trade Center to save their lives by descending the towers. As has been said already, Spiegelman also incorporates these old cartoon figures into his own story of 9/11 or creates his own versions of the classic comic strips, setting them in a new context. This is the case with the already mentioned "A Hapless Hooligan", which appears on a page where the panels are graphically arranged in the shape of the twin towers. Furthermore, Versluys characterizes the introduction of old cartoon characters as a distancing device and as "an expression of the city's unquenchable high spirits. They stand for the raucousness and rebelliousness of the New Yorker. They embody the vernacular

protest against self-important official rhetoric” (66). If the Republicans, headed by Bush, transformed American tragedy into travesty, Spiegelman achieves a similar effect by using postmodern parody or pastiche of the comic strips. After all, for the same reason he created a palimpsest in which he confronts the headlines linked with the terrorist attack on 9/11 with the reprint of the newspaper articles from September 11, 1901, which reported on the arrest of the anarchist Emma Goldman—who was accused of plotting to assassinate American President William McKinley—and on the President’s health.

Spiegelman’s graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*, but also both volumes of *Maus*, demonstrate that the health of individuals is closely connected with the health of the nation. They reflect the conversion of traumatic history into narrative memory. Although the collective trauma of 9/11 has contributed to the process of forming national identity, Spiegelman is aware of the danger of this process, criticizing the false patriotism of Americans after the tragic events and the abuse of the events by the government. Both works, however, articulate a “complex intersection between identity, the past, memory, and culture and, centrally, they concern the process by which identification takes place and then is



<http://homepage.mac.com/merus-sell/iblog/B835531044/C31175526/E763591778/index.html>

developed” (Eaglestone 81). There are still some questions left. How has the author managed to come to terms with the trauma? Has he, in his obsessive reenactment of overwhelming events, remained at the stage of ‘acting out’, or has he ‘worked through’ the trauma? Has paranoia affected only individuals or the whole American nation? The first three frames of *No Towers* give a partial answer to these questions. Even if the American nation, represented by a drowsing family in front of the TV, has returned to normal, it has been profoundly changed, which is symbolized by the figures’ hair standing on end.

What Spiegelman’s books make clear is the fact that forgetting or the repression of memories, conveyed through silence, *is not* an effective way for an individual or nation to achieve recovery. They confirm Hillary Chute’s assertion that the most important graphic narratives present “a traumatic side of history” but they “refuse to show it through the lens of unspeakability or invisibility, instead registering its difficulty through inventive (and various) textual practice” (459). After all, Spiegelman’s entire work

evidences his deep social commitment, his urge to voice his opinions that manifest his sense of responsibility for the state of this world. Regarding his artistic nature, in comic books/graphic novels he has found the most appropriate medium to do so.

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Finding Identity through Trauma

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Abstract

The following paper focuses on the analysis of traumatized characters in Jonathan Safran Foer's novel Everything Is Illuminated (2002) by means of trauma theory. The analysis of traumatized characters in this novel has confirmed the assertion that identity can be divided or damaged by traumatic experiences. Furthermore, the disruption of identity caused by either surviving, witnessing or even perpetrating traumatic events can be transmitted onto other generations. The role of postmemory has proved to be an extremely important tool in reinforcing repressed identity. The articulation of trauma through writing has shown the role which literature plays as a healing factor in trauma resolution.

Keywords: trauma, identity, Jewish American, transmission, transgenerational, postmemory

According to Howe, “tradition seemingly discarded can survive underground for a generation and then, through channels hard to locate, surface in the works of writers who may not even be aware of what is affecting their consciousness” (13). Howe’s allusion to the return of tradition in Jewish American writing has proved to be a correct prognosis, despite his initial prediction that Jewish American literature had accomplished its process of assimilation into the mainstream American literature. However, the resurrection of tradition in Jewish American literature has also brought back some unresolved historical or personal traumas which seem to be significant for the assertion of post-modern Jewish American identity. Trauma and memory, and their impact on the assertion of ethnic and personal identity, have become an important part of recent postmodern interdisciplinary research, especially in the area of literature. The narratives of the survivors, witnesses and perpetrators of trauma and their relation to memory have gained a tremendous importance in resolving various forms of traumas. As LaCapra points out, “the memory lapses of trauma are conjoined with the tendency compulsively to repeat, relive, be possessed by, or act out traumatic scenes of the past [...] in this sense, what is denied or repressed in a lapse of

memory does not disappear; it returns in a transformed, at times disfigured and disguised manner” (10).

Since trauma is rooted in individual as well as collective forms of identity, it may affect the process of both collective and personal identity formation. The complexity of Jewish identity is examined from the perspective of a generation that has no firsthand experience of persecution, the Holocaust or the difficult process of immigration. And yet, as we will demonstrate in our analysis, all of these themes occur in contemporary Jewish American literature from a second-hand or vicarious perspective. The study of identity has become a crucial subject of research in the last two decades. Sociologists initially focused on examining how interpersonal communication forms the individual ‘self’, however the research of the past decades has focused more on the definition of ‘collective identity’. Various sociological constructs have attempted to address the notion of ‘we’ and the notion of ‘ness’. Jenkins states that much contemporary writing about identity treats it as something that simply *is*. This pays insufficient attention to how identity works or ‘is worked’. Understanding these processes is central to understanding identity. Indeed, identity can only be understood as a process, as ‘being’ or ‘becoming’ (Jenkins 5). London and Chazan define identity as the point of intersection between the individual and other people, the sense of self simultaneously as an individual and as a member of a social group. They assert that identity is a synthesis of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements (56). However, none of the above definitions are capable of delineating what Jewish identity is. Inability to determine whether Jews should be considered in terms of religion, ethnicity, race or culture indicates that identity is formed in specific historical and cultural circumstances, dependent on the social and discursive factors that bring it into being (Grauer 271). Kugelmass claims that to this day Jewish textuality, whether religious or secular in orientation, constitutes a collective meditation on a changing and strikingly amorphous entity, a meditation that focuses on the questions “Who we are and why?” (5). He states that such queries are uniquely poignant for a group that retains a national consciousness while existing as a diasporic people with considerable historical depth (ibid). The historical depth which Kugelmass emphasizes is basically the traumatic past of the Jews, which is still present in contemporary Jewish American fiction. The connection between trauma and identity therefore offers a stimulus when attempting to define contemporary Jewish identity.

The following text examines traumatized characters in J. S. Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) and the transmission of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma that causes disruption in identity formation. When discussing the differences between intergenerational and transgenerational transmissions of trauma, Atkinson suggests it would be more appropriate to refer to intergenerational trauma as “trauma passed down directly from one generation to the next, while transgenerational trauma would be trauma transmitted across a number of generations, for example from a grandparent, through to a grandchild” (180). In “Trends in Literary Trauma Theory,” Michelle Balaev writes that a central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity (149). This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma (ibid). Furthermore, Balaev argues that when stories of one generation are transmitted to another through various texts, personal trauma may become “transhistorical trauma”

and thus “defines contemporary individual identity, as well as racial or cultural identity” (ibid.). Transhistorical trauma creates a parallel relationship between an individual and the group, and “indicates that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristics of traumatic experience and memory” (ibid.). However, the analysis focuses not only on those characters who struggle with Jewish identity, but also on those whose identity is Gentile but who have, nonetheless, been confronted with the suffering of Jews. In the analysis of Gentile and Jewish relationships, we aim to demonstrate how anti-Semitism is also generationally transmitted, how it increases in life-threatening situations such as war, and how it can destroy even the strongest ties between Gentiles and Jews.

The transgenerational transmission of trauma is particularly significant in the novel *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) by Jonathan Safran Foer. The novel deals predominantly with transhistorical trauma. As Caruth notes, this form of literary trauma theory makes several important claims about trauma, stating that traumatic experience is repetitious, timeless, and unspeakable (*Unclaimed* 4). The massive trauma suffered by a particular ethnic, racial or gender group can be experienced by single individuals decades after the event. It is also asserted that this process of the transmission of trauma can also work in reverse, and that an individual trauma can be passed to others who share the same social or biological similarities (Balaev 149). The experiences of the three generations portrayed in the novel demonstrate Caruth’s assertion, and they draw attention to how continuity in memory, and its reinforcement, repetition and subsequent recording, can contribute to finding and strengthening one’s own cultural, ethnic or personal identity. Foer points out how attempts to hide or bury missing pieces of the traumatic past do not erase the trauma itself, but only prolong it and transfer it to other generations. Foer’s purpose is to show the continuity of trauma in the lineage of two particular families, from its roots in the pre-war *shtetls* to its impact on contemporary life in both the Ukraine and America. The author himself has explained that his work was originally planned as non-fiction, but once he started writing, he realized that a great deal of information would always be missing in an imagined personal history. As he was writing, he realized that many memories were not his own memories, but in fact those of his grandparents (Foer, “Interview”). This is the well-known concept of postmemory, studied by Marianne Hirsch. She states that the term “postmemory” can be used to describe the relationship that subsequent generations have with the experiences of forebears who directly witnessed cultural or collective trauma, experiences which later generations “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up (107). Hirsch goes on to explain that these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively that they seem to constitute memories in their own right:

Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment projection, and creation. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly,

by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. (107)

In the novel, both grandsons, first Jonathan and later Alex, have no direct memory of *shtetl* life, but have instead absorbed the memories of their grandparents. The character of Alex's grandfather thus serves as a mediator between the past and the present. As Caruth asserts, trauma is not manifested in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way in which its largely unassimilated nature (the failure to fully comprehend the event in the first instance) returns to haunt the survivor in the future (*Unclaimed* 4). The grandfather's delayed reaction to his traumatic past is an excellent illustration of Caruth's assertion. In terms of trauma theory, the character of the grandfather is simultaneously a survivor, a witness and a perpetrator. In order to emphasize the complexity of the character and his own inability to articulate his trauma, Foer delegates the task of explication onto the character of his grandson Alex, who learns about the traumatic past through the observation of his grandfather's behavior, and contributes towards its resolution. Furthermore, as a consequence of helping to resolve his grandfather's trauma, Alex is able to confront his own trauma of identity. By delegating the narration onto the grandson, the author's purpose is to emphasize the "unspeakability" of one's own trauma as well as the fact that trauma is unlikely to be resolved without the assistance of others. Towards the end of her first introduction to *Trauma: Explorations of Memory* (1995), Caruth explains that trauma is not only a form of absence or "departure," but also a call to survival through new forms of contact with others: "The final import of the psychoanalytic and historical analysis of trauma is to suggest that the inherent departure, within trauma, from the moment of its first occurrence, is also a means of passing out of the isolation imposed by the event: that the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another" ("Trauma" 10).

Theorists of trauma acknowledge the long-recognized phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of PTSD can be easily identified in the character of the grandfather on several levels. The most significant is the recurring dream which the character experiences every time he falls asleep in the novel. On each occasion, his grandson has to remind him that the dream is not real:

He did not know where he was.

"Anna?" he asked. That was the name of my grandmother who died two years yore.

"No, Grandfather," I said, "it is me, Sasha."

He was very ashamed. I could perceive this because he rotated his face away from me. (34)

However, the recent death of his wife is not the major traumatic event which causes the grandfather to show signs of PTSD. As the story unfolds, both Alex and Jonathan are repeatedly confronted with the grandfather's increasing outbursts of unexplained anger. When the grandfather learns about their journey to former *shtetls*, whose destruction he himself had witnessed, he is suddenly reminded of his trauma and immediately refuses to take part in the journey, exclaiming: "I do not want to drive ten hours to an ugly city to

attend to a very spoiled Jew” (7). Furthermore, when he learns that he needs to drive an American Jew to the place of his forgotten past, he is terrified. The trauma he suffered as a witness to the extermination of the Jews of his village is suddenly reawakened. When he recognizes the woman in the old photograph which Jonathan has brought to Ukraine, his fear of confronting his seemingly forgotten past is intensified and he realizes that he will finally be forced to face his personal history. Yet despite his acceptance of the inevitability of the situation, he continues to deny any connection with the place or the woman in the photograph. His neurotic, aggressive, vulgar and anti-Semitic behavior reflects his inability to come to terms with the haunting past which he has been trying to hide from his family. After losing his wife and later acknowledging his total failure as a father and a grandfather, he gradually reveals the cause of his behavior.

In the grandfather’s case, pointing at his best friend Herschel in order to avoid being shot together with his wife and small baby represents a borderline situation, though it is an event which was not unusual during the war period. Threats by Nazi soldiers were an effective weapon for intimidating people into betraying not only their best friends, but also their closest family in order to save their own lives. The consequence of such a terrifying decision causes a serious traumatic disorder, the resolution of which is impossible even after a long period of time. In the grandfather’s account of the terrifying event, it is possible to imagine the dreadfulness of the situation and the impossibility of making a right decision. The grandfather’s act represents a universal ethical dilemma which is undergone by individuals in borderline situations. Even though the grandfather in Foer’s novel tries to explain the sacrifice of his best friend in order to save his own family, he realizes that such an act can never be justified. The grandfather’s long account of this event is presented in the form of a stream of consciousness which continues uninterrupted and without punctuation for more than six pages in the novel. This genuine monologue is the only part of the grandfather’s narrative which extends beyond his usual one-sentence statements. The volume and intensity of this narrative is the highlight of the novel in terms of how the denial of trauma suddenly explodes and releases the accumulated feelings of guilt and pain which had previously been inexpressible. By articulating his trauma—of which he is a survivor, a witness and a perpetrator in one—he initiates his own journey towards healing and forgiveness, yet it is a journey which ultimately results in his suicide:

...the General shothiminthehead and said I am becoming tire of this and he went to the next man in line and that was me who is a Jew he asked and I felt Herschel’s hand again and I know that his hand was saying pleaseplease eli please I do not want to die please do not point at me you know what is going to happen to me if you point at me do not point at me I am afraid of dying I am so afraid of dying I am soafraidofdying Iamsoafraidofdying who is a Jew the General asked me again and I felt on my other hand the hand of Grandmother and I knew that she was holding your father and that he was holding you and that you were holding your children I and so afraid of dying [...] and I said he is a Jew ... and Herschel embraced my hand with much strength and he was my friend my best friend [...] and I pointed and for him that Herschel was murdered that I murdered Herschel... (250–251)

According to LaCapra, in the case of unmastered trauma, the victim is often “haunted” by the original event and caught up in its compulsive repetition. The grandfather is totally unable to initiate the process of working-through, since his feelings of guilt haunt him to such an extent that he is unable to forgive himself. His inability to come to terms with the traumatic events is all the more pronounced because he feels guilt not only for sending his best friend to his death, but also for having witnessed the massacre of people he had known, an experience which makes him feel as haunted as any other survivor or witness of the event: “Just because I was not a Jew, it does not mean that it did not happen to me” (246). As LaCapra further asserts, victims who are acting out the past are caught in it as if it were an eternal present, compulsively repeating actions related to the crisis, forever revisiting the site of trauma (149). However, the grandfather tries to avoid undergoing the process of acting-out, and obstinately refuses to revisit the site of his trauma. Instead, he pretends that he does not know such a place even existed and intentionally prolongs the journey to the site—actions which demonstrate that he is not prepared to resolve his trauma. It is apparent that his process of acting-out is too abrupt, with the result that his working-through is unlikely to be completed, and indeed it is during this process that he takes his own life. Suicide is perhaps not the most fulfilling method of resolving trauma; however in preventing the transmission of transgenerational trauma it seems almost inevitable for the grandfather. Surprisingly, the tragic outcome of his resolution of trauma results in a positive development for his grandson. The grandfather’s abrupt resolution of his trauma by taking his own life accelerates Alex’s development as a character.

At the beginning of the novel, Alexander Perchov is portrayed as a carefree, superficial teenager who is mostly interested in music, girls, pornographic magazines and anything American. Foer masterfully employs humor in order to both describe the superficiality of the character and to indicate that he will undergo a profound development. Alex lives with his parents and younger brother Igor in Odessa, where he occasionally assists his father at Heritage Tours, their small family business which takes Jewish Americans to visit the villages of their ancestors. His ignorance of his own country’s history as well as his own family history is apparent on his first meeting with an American who also “happens” to be a Jew. Jonathan is the same age as Alex, but he does not share his typical teenage interests; moreover he seems rather serious and enigmatic. During his journey to the former *shtetls*, Alex also undergoes a journey towards the discovery of his own identity. When Jonathan announces that they will start their search for a woman from a photograph taken in a *shtetl*, Alex has no idea of what the word means despite the fact that prewar Ukraine was home to the fourth largest Jewish community in the world, the Jewish population of Odessa alone numbering 45,000:

“And the shtetls weren’t only Jews, so there should be others to talk to.”

“The whats?”

“Shtetls. A shtetl is like a village.”

“Why don’t you merely dub it a village?”

“It’s a Jewish word.”

“A Jewish word?”

“Yiddish.” (60)

Alex's ignorance of the history of his own country is not entirely his fault. Foer here indicates how some sections of history can be adapted or even erased to suit the purposes of particular political regimes. The Ukrainian complicity in the genocide of Jews was a historical fact which had been erased from history books; therefore Alex never had a chance to learn anything about it, despite the fact that his own grandfather had both witnessed and survived these atrocities. Because of his grandfather's unwillingness to discuss the events due to their traumatic nature, Alex only learns about these facts by meeting a complete stranger from America. In learning about both the erased parts of his country's history and the vanished *shtetls* themselves, he is then more able to comprehend the behavior of his grandfather and subsequently the behavior of his own parents.

From the beginning of the novel, Foer emphasizes Alex's desire to emigrate to America together with his younger brother Igor. At first, this wish appears to be the understandable longing of a teenager to experience all the familiar aspects of American life. He also claims that this is the main reason why he is trying so hard to learn English. However, his wish to emigrate to America indicates his subconscious desire to escape from the verbal and physical abuse to which he and his little brother are subjected by their alcoholic father. Alex conceals this personal family trauma by creating the impression of a cool and confident young man. After returning from the journey during which he learns about his grandfather's past, he is able to reinvent himself completely. If his grandfather's behavior before the journey had appeared to him to be "melancholy," he now sees that his grandfather is no longer able to hide his sadness. In one of his many letters to Jonathan, he describes how he notices his grandfather crying over the photographs that were in the box from Augustine or Lista, the mysterious woman in Jonathan's photograph who he believes saved his grandfather. In understanding his grandfather's trauma, he is able to see how that trauma has been transmitted to his father and his brother, but perhaps even more onto himself. The suicide of his guilt-ridden grandfather is the first step towards breaking the vicious circle of transmitted trauma in the family. The grandfather secretly acknowledges that his own catharsis lies in his death. Through his suicide, his guilt is inherited by his grandson who feels remorseful and wishes he could have dealt with his grandfather's trauma earlier. Instead of accepting the transmitted guilt of his grandfather, he also decides to take action and continues to break the circle of trauma by sending his abusive father away. The climax of Alex's reinvention of his identity lies in his effort to understand the trauma of his grandfather, and in his decision to deal with the long-term abuse he has suffered at the hands of his father. The final part of the novel portrays the character of Alex as a transformed man who has broken free from his obsession with America and who has become a contemplative writer; perhaps more importantly, he has managed to prevent the transmission of family trauma onto his younger brother.

The Jewish approach to history and memory is best expressed in the character of Jonathan. Jonathan's obsession with finding his own identity through the history of his grandfather is evidence of the transmission of trauma through three generations of his family, a situation comparable to that of Alex's family. This fixation on memories can be a result of the constant threat of being erased from history, but it can also lead to a much deeper preservation of one's cultural heritage. An obsession with the past is also evident in the character of Augustine or Lista, who stores hundreds of artifacts from the now vanished Trachimbrod. The hundreds of shoes, spectacles, and photographs that she has preserved

in her boxes are the only testimony to the Nazi destruction of the *shtetl*, an event which the grandfather had tried so hard to forget and which had been erased from the history books of Alex's generation. It is not typical for a twenty-one year old man to decide to set out on a journey from America to the Ukraine in order to search for the roots of his grandfather, a survivor of the Nazi genocide. Jonathan also confesses to Alex that he likes to collect anything which can later remind him of the places he has visited.

We would expect that the trauma of Jonathan's family would be more serious and would require a more urgent resolution, caused by the terrible losses suffered in the Holocaust. However, Jonathan learns nothing of his own family history, and instead invents his own memories of pre-war life in the *shtetls*. Paradoxically, the central trauma becomes that of the grandfather, who was both a witness and, to some extent, a perpetrator of the event. Thus, Foer turns our attention from a Jewish perception of the trauma to a Gentile perspective. As Caruth asserts, history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, and it is through history that we are implicated in each other's traumas (*Unclaimed Experience* 24).

Jonathan carries with him many copies of a single photograph of a woman whom he assumes had saved his grandfather from the genocide. This photograph is apparently the only evidence of his grandfather's connection to the place, and even that photograph is eventually responsible for changing the identity of Augustine to that of Lisa. As Hirsch asserts, photography is a primary medium of the transgenerational transmission of trauma. She claims that the phenomenology of photography is a crucial element in the conception of postmemory as it relates to the Holocaust in particular:

To be sure, the history of the Holocaust has come down to us, in subsequent generations, through a vast number of photographic images meticulously taken by perpetrators eager to record their actions and also by bystanders and, often clandestinely, by victims. But it is the technology of photography itself, and the belief in reference it engenders, that connects the Holocaust generation to the generation after. Photography's promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power, makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable. And, of course, the photographic meaning of generation captures something of the sequencing and the loss of sharpness and focus inherent in postmemory. (107)

In Jonathan's case, the photograph of Augustine initiates the process of writing, a process which is later taken over by Alex. The narratives of the trauma of both grandsons imply the healing effect of fiction, not only for the writer but also for the reader.

To conclude, our initial assertion that identity can be divided or damaged by traumatic experience transmitted from one generation onto another has demonstrated how by articulation of trauma, such identity can be successfully reinvented and how fiction plays an important role as a healing factor in trauma resolution. The result of such transmission is that contemporary Jewish American literature often shows a desire for a restoration of traditions, in addition to a resolution of long-term traumas. Despite the fact that the writer is temporally detached from the traumatic events of his ancestors, such as the pogroms in the *shtetls*, the Holocaust, persecution or exile, he returns to such themes in his contemporary writing in order to reinforce his own identity.

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Bonding, Separation and Identity in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*

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Abstract

In contrast to Merle Hodge's suggestion that the novels of Jamaica Kincaid "are a genre unto themselves" (Hodge 53), the article discusses Annie John as a variation of the Bildungsroman genre. Engaging both the traditional and the more recent scholarship on the genre, the article places the novel in the context of the Bildungsroman and analyzes its typical generic elements (such as conflict with parents, sexual awakening, or leaving home) as well as those elements specific to the process of growing up in the postcolonial situation (such as reinterpretation of history).

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Annie John, Jamaica Kincaid, Caribbean childhood, homoeroticism, identity formation, reinterpretation of history

Jamaica Kincaid's short novel *Annie John* (1983) tells the story of a young girl's growing up in Antigua. The main aspect of Annie John's maturation process is her painful separation from her mother and her gradual realization that her home does not offer her options that she would like to explore. The novel follows its protagonist from the age of ten to her late teens and includes most of the typical milestones of coming-of-age—realization of death in the opening chapter, conflict with parents, in this case with her mother, questioning of authority (both parental and school authority, standing for the authority of the colonial power), sexual awakening, and leaving home at the very end of the narrative.

A novel concentrating on the development of the protagonist from childhood to adolescence and young adulthood is traditionally labeled a Bildungsroman, a literary genre that grew out of classical heroic narrative; its plot is derived from quest and initiation motifs, or, in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, from the "idea of testing" (16). The Bildungsroman's main theme is the "image of man in the process of becoming" (19) and thus the Bildungsroman is "the novel of human emergence" (21). While the Bildungsroman originated at a

specific point of history and as such can be viewed as a product of a certain paradigmatic shift, it has proved capable of migrating both in time and space. The Bildungsroman was traditionally understood as a narrative of white male development. However, even though its existence was not fully recognized until the second wave of feminist criticism, the novel of female development¹ is not new, and “does not rise out of a vacuum” (Feng 10); its tradition similarly goes back to the eighteenth century. Eve Tavor Bannet sees the emergence of the female tradition of the Bildungsroman in close connection with the rise of the novel (195–227), and Rita Felski considers the genre’s contemporary popularity as resulting from the opening up of opportunities for women to study and to pursue a career, and also as a parallel to the decline of the traditional male Bildungsroman happening at the same time (131–148).

In the 1980s, the decade that saw the publication of *Annie John*, Barbara Anne White even considers the female Bildungsroman “the most popular form of feminist fiction” (195). We can justly conclude that in the second half of the twentieth century, the female ethnic Bildungsroman became a very popular literary form allowing the exploration of issues of gender and cultural identity, cultural expectations of girlhood and femininity, ethnic and postcolonial identity formation. Thus when Keja Valens claims that *Annie John* only “appear[s] to conform to the conventions of the Bildungsroman” and that it subverts it by bending it “into a narrative of desire between girls,” a narrative that “Caribbeanizes and queers the straight white lines of the Bildungsroman” (123–124), she in fact points to the general characteristics of the more recent development of the genre, its female and ethnic tradition. Because I do not limit my understanding of the genre only to its white, male, eighteenth-century origins but instead see its tradition as rich and diverse—including novels focusing on the coming-of-age of female and, more recently, also ethnic protagonists—I view *Annie John* as in fact conforming to the conventions of the female ethnic Bildungsroman which creatively engages in alterations, subversions and expansion of the white male variant of the genre.

As Martin Japtok has so powerfully demonstrated in his seminal study, the Bildungsroman, although seemingly a genre focused on individuality, “is well suited for the exploration of the meaning of ethnicity because it focuses on the relations of the protagonist with the wider environment” (21) and because “an assertion of individuality makes sense in the face of a denial of individuality, or even humanity, because of one’s group affiliation” (24). Although *Annie John* grows up in an environment where she is no longer exposed to open racism, the colonial past still casts its long shadow over her life—if not in political terms, than undoubtedly in cultural ones. Thus Annie needs to negotiate her identity against the norms of the white mainstream (the former colonial power). The novel, similarly to Kincaid’s novel *Lucy* even if less explicitly, “examine[s] the ideological indoctrination of the colonized people with the colonialist culture and educational system which affects the values and way of thinking of the colonized subjects” (Kolář 113).

In *A Small Place* Kincaid expressed her anger both at the colonial power for imposing its culture and educational system on the island and at the Antiguanans for not being able to fully achieve their independence, to build their own educational institutions (or even a library) to better their lot (Kincaid, *Small* 9). Some of this anger and ambiguity towards the Antiguan culture is felt in *Annie John*.

As mentioned above, the relationship between Annie and her mother is tense, although the novel opens with lyrical descriptions of the deep mother-daughter bond and the ensuing happiness. The happiest time Annie experiences with her mother is during vacations when she does not have to go to school and, free of any duties, she simply “spen[ds] the day following [her] mother around and observe[s] the way she did everything” (Kincaid, *Annie* 15). She admits: “How important I felt to be with my mother” (15). The intimacy of the mother-daughter relationship is symbolized by the baths they take together. Annie clearly adores her mother; she loves to watch her in conversations with her father because: “When my eyes rested on my mother, I found her beautiful” (18).

But the most precious time for Annie and her mother is their ritualized habit of the occasional thorough cleaning of a large trunk which stores “things that belonged to me, starting from just before I was born” (20). These are very special and very intimate moments shared by the two women. As Annie’s mother airs each item in the trunk, she explains its purpose, places it in Annie’s personal history and retells a story connected with it. In this way, the mother creates Annie’s identity and confirms her personal story and her place in the family history. Contrary to Adlai H. Murdoch’s suggestion that the trunk functions as a metaphor for “the mother’s enclosure, containment, limitation, possession and direction of her daughter’s life and identity” (Murdoch 330), it can more appropriately be seen as combining the function of the chest and of the wardrobe, as identified by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*. According to him, chests are connected with secrecy and intimacy, while wardrobes (and the trunk is in fact a wardrobe of Annie John’s baby clothes) function as centers of order preventing the house from falling into disarray (74–82). Thus the trunk can be seen as a metaphor for the orderly and intimate days of Annie John’s early childhood, which was marked with the happiness of the openly expressed mother’s love and with the generally supportive, albeit somewhat distant, relationship with her father.

The fact that Annie requires her mother to go through the trunk’s contents, that she needs the ritual as a reminder of her identity, of who she is, implies that her self is not yet fully autonomous and mature. She needs her mother for her own self-expression because she cannot yet see herself but through her mother’s eyes. As Merle Hodge points out, the novel’s focus is almost exclusively on the protagonist/narrator and “there is no attempt at complete and detailed characterization in the case of the other actors in [Annie’s] life story” (52). For that reason the reader is left with very little textual support for Murdoch’s claim that the mother “possesses” her daughter’s life. In fact, Annie John’s mother is the one who initiates the loosening of the tight bond between them, who tries to set her daughter on a quest for autonomous individuality. There is no suggestion that the mother would discourage her daughter from leaving home and seeking a new life in Europe; it is she who in fact initiates the plan, as Annie complains at the end of the narrative: “Why, I wonder, didn’t I see the hypocrite in my mother when, over the years, she said that she loved me and could hardly live without me, while at the same time proposing and arranging separation after separation including this one?” (Kincaid, *Annie* 133) It is Annie who still, at the novel’s close, understands love in possessive terms, and would like to possess and be possessed by her mother. Thus, if Annie could make a choice, she would remain forever a child living in a well-functioning family immersed in her mother’s love. But Annie, too, must grow up—and that includes developing her own independent self.

Annie's journey to maturity begins, it seems, all of a sudden when she turns twelve and her mother refuses to have their dresses made out of the same cloth as they always used to be, explaining: "Oh, no. You are getting too old for that. It's time you had your own clothes. You just cannot go around the rest of your life looking like a little me" (26). And to symbolically wean her extremely dependent daughter, Annie's mother refuses to go again through the things in the old trunk: "Absolutely not! You and I don't have time for that anymore" (27). Annie perceives her mother's rejection as betrayal, because until that moment everything seemed to confirm that Annie *was* to be defined by her mother and to simply *be* a 'copy' of her. Annie even has the same name as her mother, which adds to her difficulty in self-identification. Murdoch rightly concludes: "Annie's ability to recognize herself as a subject is circumscribed severely; in seeking the truth of herself through the image of the (m)other, with whom she identifies, she is alienated both from herself and from the world around her" (331).

Annie is told that she is becoming a young lady and that she needs to adopt new ways of conduct, which she rebelliously rejects. From that moment on, Annie John's relationship with her mother grows increasingly tense and more ambivalent, as Annie seems to hold her growing up against her mother in a very child-like manner. She is jealous of the fact that her parents love one another and she cannot cope with their sexuality. Annie withdraws into her world of daydreaming and of intense emotional peer relationships. "To an American, conditioned against blatant displays of intimacy, the behavior of Annie and her friends [...] might imply a degree of abnormality, almost a borderline lesbianism" (LeSeur 176). LeSeur further explains that "women in the West Indies seem to be uninhibited with their friendships with each other yet somewhat reserved when it comes to handling their children" (177). As much as this is culturally true, in the novel the intensity and intimacy of the girls' mutual friendships seem to make up not only for the gradual weakening of the mother-daughter bond but also for the lack of male presence in their lives. In Annie's life, apart from her father, hardly any other men appear. Her school is girls-only and generally the world she lives in seems to be separated along gender lines.

However, Keja Valens sees Annie John's relationships as clearly homoerotic and thus considers the novel a story of lesbian coming-of-age. In fact, Annie never looks for a heterosexual relationship; she does not dream of marriage and a standard family life. On the contrary, in her dreams she always lives with the girl she is currently in love with. During her early school days, she feels secure and appreciated in her class and declares: "I looked at these girls surrounding me, my heart filled with just-sprung-up love, and I wished then and there to spend the rest of my life only with them" (Kincaid, *Annie* 45). Annie first develops a close relationship with her classmate Gwen, then, as a symbol of her rebellion against propriety and lady-like behavior, she starts to see a girl she nicknames the Red Girl. Annie's mother disapproves of the Red Girl as "dirty" (57) but Annie sees her as "beautiful":

Her face was big and round and red, like a moon—a red moon. She had big, broad, flat feet, and they were naked to the bare ground; her dress was dirty, the skirt and blouse tearing away from each other at one side; the red hair [...] was matted and tangled; her hands were big and fat, and her fingernails held at least ten anthills of dirt

under them. And on top of that, she had such an unbelievable, wonderful smell, as if she had never taken a bath in her whole life. (57)

Although the narrator/protagonist openly states that she loves other girls and her classmates are said to understand everything (46), there is no explicit treatment of the issue that goes beyond infatuations with girls. Interestingly enough, *Annie John* does not contain the so-called coming-out, a typical element of the gay variant of the Bildungsroman. Gregory Woods even sees the “coming-out novel” as “the gay equivalent of the Bildungsroman” and he claims that it “almost inevitably, almost invariably” contains “an account of the move away from the family—a move which, if not literal and physical, is at least psychological and in that respect irreversible” (Woods 346). *Annie John* never openly names the protagonist’s sexual preference and thus leaves her homoerotic or possibly lesbian orientation only implied. However, just as “one of the stock images in gay literature is that of a young man striving to leave his (small-town) family for a bigger world, never to return” (175), as Roman Trušník states, *Annie John* can be seen as a female variation of the same stock image: Annie leaves her (small island) family for the opportunities of the bigger world of Great Britain, and no possibility of return is suggested at the novel’s close, when in fact Annie mentions her “never-see-this-again feelings” (146).

The conflict with a parent often functions in the Bildungsroman as a vehicle for uncovering and pointing out various issues. One of them is, naturally, the struggle for individuation, for establishing the individual self. While Annie at the novel’s opening lives in an almost ideal pre-Lapsarian harmony with her mother, it is only a temporal identification that must be cast away in order for Annie to grow up². When she begins to realize that she and her mother are in fact two separate beings, she focuses on their difference instead of on their similarity. Suddenly, she sees in her mother features she has not noticed before. Murdoch summarizes:

[It] gives rise to a new perception of the mother as being both racially and culturally different. The mother’s creole Dominican past becomes opposed to Annie’s Antiguan cultural formation, so that the mother’s cultural separateness and ‘foreignness’ are interpreted as a form of racial difference. This idea of racial difference as a subset of ‘foreignness’ thus initially terminates the primary stage in which Annie seeks her identity through the (m)other. (325)

But compared to other ethnic female Bildungsromane, there is very little discussion or even explicit concern for ethnicity and racial identification. While Annie struggles with the separation from her mother and with the loss of their original emotional closeness—which is a necessary prerequisite for developing her own personal identity—her alienation from her mother, according to LeSeur, “becomes a metaphor for a young woman’s alienation from an island culture that has been completely dominated by the imperialist power of England” (181). However, this metaphor is somewhat ambivalent, because although Annie might in fact be alienated from her original culture by the imposition of Victorian ideology, she does not seek her ethnic roots in order to find herself and her position in the world, but instead runs away to England, which can offer her an education and a career. For Annie, this is a far preferable alternative to the gender role assigned to her at home—there she

would be a wife and a mother. So paradoxically, while the Antiguan home culture is still embedded in the imposed Victorian gender role division, the society of the former colonial power itself has already entered a process of re-defining these roles resulting in a much greater freedom of life choices for women. While Annie is still sent to piano and courtesy lessons in order to become “a lady,” in post-war Britain these skills would already be a somewhat outdated class marker and a sign of gender appropriateness.

Interestingly enough, in her rebellion against her prescribed path, Annie follows in the footsteps of her mother. Annie’s mother also rebelled against her parents and resolved her conflict with her father by packing her trunk and leaving her home in the Dominican Republic forever. Réjouis thus concludes that the story Annie hears during her childhood many times forms an important narrative center:

The mother’s story is the hagiography of which the trunk is a relic, a relic that now binds a family together. [...] The mother is a saint, someone who has suffered and therefore should be better loved and obeyed, because, rather than compromise her principles, she has renounced her home and native island [...] Her saintly status is further established because her decision to leave home was followed by her miraculous survival (along with her trunk) of a hurricane in which others perished. This hagiography gives the mother infinite power and authority. (217)

Being a young West Indian girl makes Annie struggle with the discrepancy between her British-based education and the “native” attitude to history. Annie has a very ambivalent relationship to British culture. She comments with contempt on many aspects of British culture she experiences first hand. “For instance, the headmistress, Miss Moore. I knew right away that she had come to Antigua from England, for she looked like a prune left out of its jar a long time and she sounded as if she had borrowed her voice from an owl”(36). She agrees with her mother that the English people “smell as if they had been bottled up in a fish” because “they didn’t wash often enough, or wash properly when they finally did” (36). However, it is Europe where Annie places her dreams of fulfillment. She dreams of living in Belgium, a place she “had picked when [she] read [...] that Charlotte Brontë, the author of my favorite novel, *Jane Eyre*, had spent a year or so there” (92). Finally, Annie leaves Antigua for England.

While critical of British history and of some aspects of British culture, Annie nevertheless (and perhaps somewhat paradoxically) sees Europe as her promised land. She finds role models in canonical English literary texts, she prefers English to her mother’s creolized language, and she connects her future with England rather than Antigua. Although Valens warns that this aspect of the novel must not be read as privileging Europe nor as suggesting that the protagonist “accedes to the colonial supposition that ‘culture’ and progress belong to the ‘mother’ country” (143), Annie John is nevertheless attracted to Europe because of liking English novels (culture) and because of wanting to improve her economic prospects in life (progress).

In *Annie John*, reinterpretation of history is certainly an important motif and an element of Annie’s growing up that she must face and learn to cope with. Naturally Annie reflects on history during her school years, when her postcolonial situation makes her aware of both sides of history. Christopher Columbus functions in the book as a very

useful example of the reinterpretation of history. Out of all her history-book pictures of Christopher Columbus, Annie particularly likes the one depicting Columbus fettered in chains when he was sent back to Spain. To the great shock of her teacher, Annie uses a quote from her grandmother's letter describing her grandfather's condition and writes it under the Columbus's illustration: "The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go" (78). Annie enjoys seeing the symbol of the European expansion to the Caribbean powerless: "How I loved this picture – to see the usually triumphant Columbus, brought so low, seated at the bottom of a boat just watching things go by" (77–8). Columbus stands here metonymically for the whole history of colonial presence and the slave history of the Caribbean—even if, compared to other historical figures such as Christopher Codrington, his was not the most damaging impact on the island's peoples and culture.

Yet as much as Annie John is aware of the painful parts of her island's history and is upset by some of the facts of the European discovery of America and the European presence in the Caribbean, she is certainly not a role model for ethnic (or cultural) tolerance. In fact, she has many harsh comments on the English and even does not hesitate to bully another girl particularly for being English: "Ruth I liked, because she was such a dunce and came from England and had yellow hair. When I first met her, I used to walk her home and sing bad songs to her just to see her turn pink, as if I had spilled hot water over her" (73). Kincaid here presents the unfortunate long-lasting effects of colonialism and white dominance, effects known in various forms from other cultures subjected to a domineering other—the internalization of the power dynamics and of the idea of racial hierarchy. Although Annie no longer sees her own race as inferior (as the colonial power had seen it), she is still using the former oppressors' means of racial hatred and dominance and inverts it.

Thus, although Annie seems to have a sense of historical wrongdoings, she is ready to use the power of her talents and intelligence in an almost parallel way to the criticized colonial power. She understands the unease felt by one of her classmates during history lessons: "Perhaps she wanted to be in England, where no one would remind her constantly of the terrible things her ancestors had done; perhaps she felt even worse when her father was a missionary in Africa" (76). Annie is sure that her people would never do such terrible things: "But we, the descendants of the slaves, knew quite well what had really happened, and I was sure that if the tables had been turned we would have acted differently" (76). She imagines this alternative history with a beautiful degree of naïveté, creating a tourist alternative to colonization:

I was sure that if our ancestors had gone from Africa to Europe and come upon the people living there, they would have taken a proper interest in the Europeans on first seeing them, and said, 'How nice,' and then gone home to tell their friends about it. (76)

At the same time, though, she dreams of destroying ships of tourists and enjoys the image: "At night, we would sit on the sand and watch ships filled with people on a cruise steam by. We sent confusing signals to the ships, causing them to crash on some nearby rocks. How we laughed as their cries of joy turned to cries of sorrow" (71).

Thus, unfortunately, there is not much in Annie's behavior and attitude to other people to support her illusions of herself as behaving much better should the course of history have run differently. She is, in fact, a very manipulative and power seeking girl, self-centered and ready to abuse those who love her. LeSeur puts it rather mildly when she states: "Kincaid presents a very strong character whom the reader finds intriguing; yet Annie's strength seems to have turned her into a cold human being" (178). Annie truly acts as a spoiled only child, intelligent and clever, but incapable of empathy and emotionally (on occasion even mentally) unstable. Upon leaving Antigua, Annie still distances herself from her mother as she had done during her teens, "as if the ground had opened between us, making a deep and wide split" (Kincaid, *Annie* 103), and she does not respond to her mother's affirmation: "It doesn't matter what you do or where you go, I'll always be your mother and this will always be your home" (147). When exchanging smiles with her mother, Annie admits "the opposite of that was in my heart" (147).

Annie John thus can be seen as an open-ended Bildungsroman, one where the protagonist's maturation is not complete at the end of the narrative and the reader is left to imagine what the next chapter in her life could bring. Annie's coming-of-age is unfinished, her leaving Antigua does not resolve the conflicts and pains of growing up. Quite the contrary: rather than gradually coming to terms with her family of origin, her ethnic background and her gender (and possibly her lesbianism), Annie runs away from it to start anew somewhere else. But all these issues will have to be addressed eventually in order for Annie to truly enter adulthood. She has not yet completed the process of negotiating her ethnic, cultural and even personal identity.

Notes

¹ For a list of female Bildungsromane in English see Laura Sue Fuderer, *The Female Bildungsroman in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. New York: MLA, 1990, 34–43.

² In her article on *Annie John*, Roni Natov applies Lacanian theory and interprets the close relationship in terms of the pre-Oedipal stage. See Roni Natov, "Mothers and Daughters: Jamaica Kincaid's Pre-Oedipal Narrative." *Children's Literature* 18 (1990): 1–16.

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***The Tempest* on the Screen of the Eighties**

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Abstract

*The assumption of my article follows Anthony R. Gurnatne's claim that the Shakespearean movie is influenced by, but especially influences, the development of cinema: its genres and its forms. Well-known adaptations of *The Tempest* on the screen of the eighties are considered here as cases in point. While the American Mazursky's movie is faithful to Hollywood conventions, Jarman's and Greenaway's adaptations contribute to the vanguard auteur trends of the European movies of the eighties and plunge Shakespeare's text into a passionate debate, mainly within the fields of Film Studies and Adaptation Studies, on the relationship between the screen and the theatre, and the screen and the other media (intermediality).*

Keywords: The Tempest, Shakespeare movie, the eighties, Hollywood, British auteur cinema, intermediality

1. The wonder of *The Tempest*. Adaptation as a cultural process

Derek Jarman's 1979 *Tempest* and Peter Greenaway's 1991 *Prospero's Books* position themselves neatly at either end of the eighties, a *fin-de-siècle* decade crucial for the new world order (or we might say loss of order). The years of Reaganomics and of Mrs Thatcher's regime foreshadow the fall of the Berlin Wall, the decline of the Soviet Union and the reconfiguration of the European Warsaw Pact countries. The end of the post-war 'balance' between opposite ideological systems was to mark the unhindered triumphant affirmation of a world market economy based on and hastened by the new information and communication technologies, in particular the world wide web. The eighties witnessed a more and more tumultuous *sea-change* which was to plunge the planet into the future.

One of the reasons why Shakespeare's last play was so often translated onto the screen during that decade is that *The Tempest* is associated with a paradigm of motion and transformation. The British film adaptations of *The Tempest* by Jarman and Greenaway, on the

one hand, and the American *Tempest* by Paul Mazursky (1982), on the other, testify – this is the contention of this article – how far apart the answers of the European cinema and the Hollywood movies of the eighties were with regard to that change (Guneratne).

Until the eighties British cinema had not enjoyed a great reputation. François Truffaut had despisngly qualified the British as “notoriously unvisual, unartistic, and uncinematic” (Wollen 36). Britain’s isolationism had prevailed both in neoromantic post-war movies which (as in the case of Lawrence Olivier’s *Henry V*) tended to relieve the country after the sufferings of the war, or in the local realism of the film adaptations of the theatrical works of the Angry Young Men. Except for the short avant-garde experience of the *Close Up Circle* in the 30s, British cinema had eschewed the European New Wave (started in France), centred on the role of the *auteur* and on the primacy of the image over the written word.

In the 80s, though, a significant number of filmmakers – Jarman, Greenaway, Terry Gilliam, Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureishi among others – gave rise to a British New Wave. The rebirth of a British visual culture finally placed Britain in the mainstream of the *engagé* European cinema. But the primary source of this rebirth was not just the influence of the European *maestri* (Pasolini and Eisenstein for Jarman, Bergman for Greenaway); it was also anticipated by the success of British pop art, which combined an interest in popular consumer culture with the avant-garde tradition. Pop art entered British culture in 1956 with the exhibition *This is Tomorrow*, surprisingly introduced by an explicit reference to *The Tempest*: at the entrance, in fact, a giant Robbie the Robot, a character from the American sci-fi adaptation of Shakespeare’s play – Fred M. Wilcox’s *Forbidden Planet* (1956) – welcomed the visitors (Wollen). This reference to *The Tempest* almost at the origins of the British New Wave (Cartelli and Rowe) is, I maintain, more than accidental. First of all, Hollywood will keep privileging sci-fi adaptations of *The Tempest*, with cult movies such as *The Lawnmower* (Cavacchi and Vallorani), but, more significantly, what looks like an insignificant detail may suggest that *The Tempest* has played a necessary rather than accidental role in the development of British cinema. The choice of that text by two leading filmmakers of the British New Wave did not mean just relying on a written theatrical text, but recognizing a cultural paradigm of the Elizabethan stage which, with its practices and politics of representation and communication, had given origin to modernity. Orson Welles’ famous aphorism, that Shakespeare wrote for the cinema without knowing it, is more than just a joke. *The Tempest*, among Shakespeare’s plays, is, in fact, the most spectacular and the most metatheatrical: the wonder of the play is the illusionistic and manipulative power of the scientific artist, which is also the enchantment of the cinema. Paradoxically, in the end, the movie adaptations of *The Tempest* in the eighties made, as we will see, the so called uncinematic British cinema aware that its culture was founded on the most radical visual tradition.

2. Visual culture and Brave New World

In the process of its interpretations and adaptations¹, the ‘newness’ (‘O brave *new* world, That has such people in ’t!, V, I, 183–4, emphasis mine) inscribed in *The Tempest* has produced two main different, though not exclusive, perspectives on what is meant by modernity and its foundations in the early modern age (Albanese). One is a geopolitical notion of modernity, privileged by radical postcolonial and historicist readings: the discovery of

America – the New World – starts reshaping a world where a Europe of conflicting nation-states establishes its hegemonic dominion over the rest of the globe. The other identifies modernity with the instauration of the New Science, whose metaphor in *The Tempest* is Prospero's 'so potent Art' (V, I, 50), the power of his magic. In this case modernity has, in some ways, more temporal than spatial connotations: the manipulative power over nature of the modern 'studious artizan'² – the Prosperos, the Leonardos, the Galileos – steers humankind towards an irreversible and infinite process of tempestuous change whose ultimate outcome is our post-modern condition where the boundaries between mind and nature, human and artificial, real and virtual, medium and message are more and more rapidly on the verge of merging (Schiavone).

Both Derek Jarman's and Peter Greenaway's movies feature Prospero's science/magic at their centres. Greenaway explicitly admits that the technologies with which he so enthusiastically experiments in his electronic *Last Tempest* are the legacy of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution. Jarman thought Shakespeare familiar with the occult philosophy of Agrippa, John Dee, Giordano Bruno: "Ten years of reading in these forgotten writers together with a study of Jung [...] proved vital in my approach both to *Jubilee* and *The Tempest* (Jarman 190). In a 1982 interview, he admitted "the masque, that's what I love, and the magic", but when David Bowie once called him "a black magician", he protested: "the film is the magic, the dark art, not its maker" (Walker 230).

"The masque, that's what I love": not only Jarman's *Tempest*, but also *Prospero's Books* are masques. Both film directors chose exclusively this metadramatic and illusionistic genre to re-present Shakespeare's play for a number of reasons: they intended to preserve the festive atmosphere of fun and entertainment of the celebrative occasion for which the play was written (as everybody knows: the Protestant wedding of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, with the Palatinate Elector), and they also must have thought of themselves as the heirs in the movies of the well-known dispute between Jonson and Jones – the first to adopt and elaborate masques in England – over the reciprocal roles of the word, with its appeal to thought, and of the visual, the technologically elaborated setting, able – as it was – to fascinate the eye. "The settings of Shakespeare films always clash with the language: spirit turn to icy matter and falls like hail," Jarman states, "For the *Tempest* we needed an island of the mind, that opened mysteriously like Chinese boxes: an abstract landscape so that the delicate description in the poetry full of sound and sweet airs, would not be destroyed by any Martini lagoons" (184).

But the aesthetic emphasis the two British filmmakers give to images and innovative technologies of representation is not in contrast with their radical adaptations of the Shakespearean play, which both turn out to be, though in different ways, firm and savage critiques of the Thatcher regime.

3. The three movies

The platitudes of Mazursky's New York bourgeois comedy contrast sharply with Jarman's punk camp and Greenaway's electronic-oriented adaptations, making the similarities of the two British movies much more visible than their too often acknowledged antithesis.

Mazursky's domestic drama is an exemplary lesson in Hollywood disengagement: it is the stale contemporary case of the psychological breakdown of Prospero/Phillip (John

Cassavetes), a rich and successful New York architect, who finds a refuge from his mid-life crisis and conjugal dissatisfaction on a Greek island. There he lives an Arcadian life with his impatient teenage daughter, Miranda, his divorced mistress Aretha (Susan Sarandon), who resents Phillip's never-explained choice of celibacy, and Kalibanos, a local goatherd, who unsuccessfully tries to seduce Miranda, unexpectedly enticing her by his Sony TV. Phillip's 'enemies' (his wife, Antonia, an actress, and her lover, Alonso, played by Vittorio Gassman, an unscrupulous real estate entrepreneur), sailing on a luxurious yacht together with Alonzo's teenage son Freddy, and various members of Alonso's entourage, including two buffoons, Trinc and Sebastian, caught by a tempest, accidentally shipwreck on Phillip's island. Here, in the end, Miranda and Freddy fall in love without Phillip's intervention, and the previous married couple seems to get together again before going back to their old lives in New York – which does not seem to suggest a Brave New World at all.

The Shakespearean relation between the Old and the New World is, in a way, recon-verted: America seems, in this case, the point of departure, while a Greek island of the old (actually ancient) world becomes the destination. But Mazursky's odyssey is neither a journey for discovering new lands nor a classical *nostos*. Prospero/Phillip moves in a world where the only possible journey is the globalized movement of mass tourism. The Greek island is, in fact, a natural oasis and an Arcadian dream only in the self-deceiving imagination of the 'innocent' American: "Nature says the truth, why doesn't man?", Phillip declares. On the contrary, Greek islands are already caught in the web of mass tourism and communication, as Caliban's TV testifies. In Mazursky, the Renaissance Magus is reduced to an impotent escapist New Yorker.³ Phillip/Prospero's position is best represented by the opening scene, where the slow landing on the island is prepared by a long shot of a perfectly calm Mediterranean: the omission of Shakespeare's *Tempest* incipit – the storm – clearly metaphorizes the disengagement of the average American of the eighties who does not get involved and does not take sides. That position is largely reflected and encouraged by Hollywood. Mazursky's loose and contemporary adaptation, in fact, follows on the whole the Hollywood linear pattern of narration which supports confidence in progress and faith in ultimate ends (either metaphysical or human), and the notion of a stable and fixed heterosexual identity based on gender opposition. That pattern of representation creates the observer's passive gaze which – according to Laura Mulvey's lesson – ratifies gender hierarchy. The American domestic adaptation is, in fact, concerned primarily with recovering the stability of the heterosexual married couple.

Opposite concerns hold the centre of Jarman's and Greenaway's *Tempests*: their discontinuous and fragmented narrations break with the constitutive elements of Hollywood cinema to convey their radical political and aesthetic positions.

"[Jarman's] *Tempest*" – Paola Colaiacomo dryly points out – "is northern, anticlassical, anti-Roman and anti-Greek" (149, my translation). "I sailed as far away from tropical realism as possible" (184), the film maker himself acknowledges. The film is set, in fact, in the northern part of Warwickshire in the old aristocratic mansion of Stoneleigh Abbey; this choice reflects Jarman's main preoccupation with the contemporary condition of England at the dawn of the Thatcher Era when the optimism of the sixties was rapidly changing into the bleak despair of the punk generation. "What was basically changed for everybody is that the expectation, the belief that everything is getting better, has given way to the knowledge that everything is getting worse", George Melly bluntly claimed in the *Evening*

Standard, 18 October 1976. This proves true only if *Tempest* is considered in close association with Jarman's previous movie *Jubilee*, 1977. The two films form a diptych: the first a utopic, the second a dystopic adaptation of the Shakespearean text. *Jubilee* – written on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the start of Elizabeth II's reign – features an Ariel who, conjured up by the magician John Dee, will show Elizabeth I 'the shadow of this time'. The bleak representation of a contemporary corrupted London ravaged by a self-referential, violent young generation with no faith and 'no future' is, in this way, presented as the outcome of the premises and of the promises of the Elizabethan age, especially challenging the modern idea that history is a teleological narrative of progress. (The same actors shift roles in the two films.) To this sombre vision of the outward world in *Jubilee*, Jarman's *Tempest* opposes a warm internal setting. Stoneleigh Abbey was for Jarman a particularly suitable setting to connect with the Elizabethan age because at its entrance a real portrait of Elizabeth, James I's daughter, was hanging on the wall.

The setting was a crucial element for Jarman as a film maker. "The settings of Shakespeare films always clash with the language: spirit turns to icy matter and falls like hail" (184), Jarman claimed. Jarman's *Tempest* is a highly poetic work which succeeds in creatively



and harmoniously combining Shakespeare's words with bodies moving in enchantingly designed settings. The film maker builds the set through a series of *tableaux vivants* or moving pictures, which is pure cinema. His shooting technique is almost amateurish, and this is what most distinguishes his filmography from Greenaway's. "The film is constructed extremely simply with masters, mid-shots, and close-ups. The camera hardly ever goes on a wander. This is deliberate, as I have noticed that if one deals with unconventional subject-matter, experimental camera work can push a film over into incoherence" (Jarman 194).

The shipwreck in Jarman is presented as Prospero's dream. The filmmaker shot the storm in externals in the fashion of a documentary movie and gave it an oneiric dimension through the use of blue filters. The same colour pervades the external spaces of the island where Prospero's enemies move as if in a submarine dimension which hinders their movements and understandings. So, the tempest in Jarman's case is an internal dimension which is then

projected onto the outside. The breath of the dreamer combined with electronic sounds is its soundtrack. In this way, Prospero becomes at the same time agent, spectator and victim of the storm. The dreaming magician's words, 'we split, we split' may allude both to the cry of the shipwrecked and to Prospero's nervous breakdown.

Jarman openly welcomes the Shakespearean theme of forgiveness: "'the rarer action is in virtue, than in vengeance'. The concept of forgiveness in *The Tempest* attracted me; it's [...] almost absent in our world. To know who your enemies are, but to accept them for what they are [...] is something we sorely need. After the chill wind that blew through *Jubilee* came the warmth that invaded *The Tempest*" (Jarman 202). This declaration would be enough to deny the frequent, and sometimes moralistic, definition of Prospero as a sadistic tyrant. But when Prospero brutally stamps on Caliban's hands (to take the most often-quoted example), his action may be read more as a parodic sign of a weak magician than of a brutal master. In the film, on the whole, the prevailing mood is the festive, joyous and playful atmosphere of a masque, 'the sense of fun' of a group of actors/friends were having, playing and working together echoing what should have been the enthusiasm of an Elizabethan company of players. That is what gives the film his special camp flavour and his avant-garde homosexual radicalism.

The actors/characters wear costumes which refer them to different periods of time: a young Prospero, in Robespierre-like clothes, recalls the French Revolution; Miranda – the popular punk singer Toyah Willcox – wears punk dreadlocks, but also, at the wedding, a nineteenth century lady's dress; the time-weary Ariel is in a contemporary worker's white overall, the sailors are homoerotic mariners who wear real uniforms of the British Navy. Past and present, high and low merge in the enchanting settings where a Venetian eighteenth-century fireplace burns in a room full of hay and logs to chop. The discontinuous narration is paralleled by the representation of identities that are discontinuous and uncertain about what time, or even what sex or what generation, they belong to. The audience's gaze too is split: Ferdinand's body which, Venus-like, rises naked and blue-filtered from the waves of a cold North Sea, is the sexualized object of desire of the film. The spectator's eye is contradictorily directed both towards Ferdinand's male body and to Prospero's controlling point of view on Miranda. David Hawkes' synthesizing remarks may, at this point, be entirely agreed with:

Jarman's treatment of *The Tempest* (1979) exemplifies his view of the connections between the early modern theatre and the postmodern cinema. By drawing out those aspects of the play – its homoeroticism, its overall concern with sexual dynamics and power relations, and its juxtaposition of narrative with spectacle – which are also pertinent concerns of the cinema, Jarman affirms a kinship between his own work and the early modern theatre, and thus distances the audience from the conventions of narrative cinema. (Hawkes 107)

The final wedding masque is a true camp coup-de-theatre: in the presence of all the characters in a banquet hall the crew of the sailors – mechanically, but also tenderly – perform a kind of Russian dance in a ring-a-ring-o-roses, when the famous blues singer, Elizabeth Welch, playing the wedding goddess in a saffron dress, erupts onto the scene under a shower of tinsel petals performing a memorable interpretation of 'Stormy Weather'. Her

caressing voice and her soft gestures help establish an aura of final reconciliation and reparation, a feeling of a recovery of a lost sense of community. But this feeling of a conquered Utopia does not lack irony. The song is, after all, a smart parody of the tempest: through Elizabeth Welch's extraordinarily sweet smiles, the song keeps repeating that 'it rains all the time'. The final masque roused the audience's enthusiasm at the premiere of the film at the Edinburgh Festival (August 14, 1979): it is not by chance that the movie enjoyed success in Europe, but it proved a failure in America. In an interview almost at the end of his life Jarman explained that *The Tempest* is too wild a text for the American taste.

The film closes round in a circle: as in the beginning Prospero's eyes are closed, his face is calm while whispering perhaps Shakespeare's most celebrated lines:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
and, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV, I, 148–157)⁴

Jarman prefers 'sleep' to 'free' (which ends Shakespeare's epilogue) as the final word of his *Tempest*; in so doing, he gives to its ending a centripetal energy, an inward and backward circular movement which once again challenges the 'progresses' of consumer cinema.

To the centripetal thrust of Jarman's movie, Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* opposes a strongly centrifugal energy. The two *auteurs*, both educated at art academies and both painters, share an aesthetic fascination with visual arts. If in Jarman's *Tempest* the narrative developed in a discontinuous series of *tableaux vivants*, *Prospero's Books* is an outburst and infinite proliferation of phantasmagorical images. But in Greenaway, words, oral and written, feature on the same footing as images: the twenty-four books (*The Tempest* being one of them) hold the centre of the film. They are the texts with which Gonzalo 'had furnished' Prospero when, chased by his dukedom, he, together with his daughter, were left adrift.

Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom (I, ii, 166–168)

These lines – either voiced by the Shakespearean actor, John Gielgud, or written on the screen, or on pages in a precious seventeenth century calligraphy, or as words overlapping other images – keep haunting the film. The film maker explicitly makes this point: "[...] a project that deliberately emphasizes and celebrates the text as text, as the master material on which all the magic, illusion and deception of the play is based. Words making text, and

text making pages, and pages making books from which knowledge is fabricated in pictorial form – these are the persistently forefronted characteristics” (Greenaway 9).

In his movie Greenaway establishes a centripetal and centrifugal relationship with the Shakespearean text. On the one hand, we see Prospero/Gielgud/Shakespeare, sitting in his cell – Antonello da Messina’s Saint Jerome’s study – engaged as an author in writing *The Tempest*. Immediately after writing, he reads the lines aloud. The lines give origin to the performance of the play where Prospero figures as an actor. In this case, Greenaway’s adaptation sounds almost like a theatrical kind of Shakespearean movie. On the other hand, *The Tempest*, together with the other books, explodes in an unrestrainable flux of images, rich in cultural and iconographic associations, identifiable as the archive of European Renaissance knowledge. All of them – objects, architectures, spirits, characters of the play – form a continuous stream which moves in the labyrinth spaces of Michelangelo’s Laurentian library which Prospero has reshaped as his ‘island’. The images are presented in layers of frames, in frames within frames (suggesting the Shakespearean practice of *the play within the play*), written over or written about. Such a quantity of images justifies Greenaway’s detractors, who accuse him of formal bulimia. The spectator, in this adaptation, is in fact faced not just with a discontinuous narration, but he is plunged into an almost infinite stream of associations and combinations where he/she is free to surf. In Greenaway’s hands Shakespeare’s text changes into a hypertext.

But Greenaway is more than a vacuous and narcissistic formalist. The filmmaker, the twentieth century Prospero, creator and manipulator of forms and meanings, recognizes anxiously that he occupies a threshold in a tempestuous process of change, which started with the Gutenberg revolution in Shakespeare’s times and led to the contemporary electronic technologies of communication and reproduction (Donaldson). In his *Last Tempest*, in fact, Greenaway starts eagerly and anxiously experimenting with new forms of technological manipulation of images: the paintbox and infography.



From this perspective, if the written text is presented as being that upon which everything depends, it is, at the same time, very far from being a fixed and stable originator of signs and meanings meant by an author. If the 24 books give Prospero, the seventeenth-century magician/scientist, the knowledge and the power to raise the tempest, they too are presented as involved, transformed, even torn by and drowned by it.⁵ At the end, Prospero sensationally throws the books into the channel of the Laurentian library where only the Shakespearean Folio, with the ‘last tempest’, will be

rescued by Caliban. It might mean the last rescue. Greenaway’s adaptation, rather than celebrating the books, announces their end at the threshold of a technological revolution which will especially concern the systems of representation, consumption and conservation of the text.

In the cultural process of reception and adaptation, *The Tempest* seems, we may conclude, to occupy a particular position in early modernity as well as in our contemporary age. It points both to an ending and to a transformation configuring itself as a paradigm of metamorphosis. In the giant Robbie the Robot (an echo of the Ariel of Fred M. Wilcox's *Tempest – Forbidden Planet*, 1956), Shakespeare's play announces the postwar movie revolutions: it lends itself both to Hollywood metaphors and to the magical and technological recreations of two of the most 'excessive' and still unsurpassed British auteurs of the eighties.

Notes

¹ What is meant by adaptation is all the acts of manipulation of the text in time (Cartelli and Burt).

² John Milton in *Paradise Lost* qualifies Galileo in this way.

³ The review of the movie in *The New York Times* was not indulgent (Vincent Canby, "'Tempest' opens with Nod to Shakespeare", August 13, 1982): "It's even more depressing to suspect that the film maker sees the Prosperos of our time as being nothing much more than overachieving, middle-class neurotics. It would have been better if Mr Mazursky and Leon Capetanos, who collaborated with him on the screenplay, had kept the source of their inspiration to themselves and written a comedy to stand on its own."

⁴ All the quotations from *The Tempest* are in *The Arden Shakespeare* (Frank Kermode ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

⁵ *The Book of Water*, which is the first to appear on the screen, is animated; its pages are strongly shaken by winds and showers, on its soaked pages images of storms and shipwrecks overlap with images of the shipwrecked enemies of Prospero.

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The Logic of the Paradox – Self-Inventing and Popular Culture in Nicola Barker’s *Clear*

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Abstract

Nicola Barker’s Clear (2004) was inspired by David Blaine’s endurance stunt “Above the Below”, during which the illusionist fasted for forty-four days confined in a transparent box suspended above the Thames, starting on September 5, 2003. This article focuses on how the theme of self-fashioning through the texts of popular visual culture is explored in the novel and how Barker renders some of the central paradoxical principles that generate these texts’ meanings. It also argues that rather than being documentary fiction, Clear represents a novel of ideas because it dramatises some of the recent theories of postmodern popular culture and identity formation.

Keywords: identity, self-invention, self-fashioning, postmodern popular culture, visual culture, intertextuality, interculturality

For meanwhile the aforementioned change in public interest had set in; it seemed to happen almost overnight; there may have been profound causes for it, but who was going to bother about that; at any rate the pampered hunger artist suddenly found himself deserted one fine day by the amusement-seekers, who went streaming past him to other more-favored attractions. (Franz Kafka, “A Hunger Artist”)

Nicola Barker is arguably one of the most distinctive, original and audacious narrative voices among the younger generation of contemporary British novelists. The work that made her name was her third novel, *Wide Open* (1998), which won the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2000 where it defeated works by much more acclaimed writers such as Toni Morrison, Ian McEwan and Phillip Roth. In their comments on the novel, the judges praised it as “word perfect, witty and ironic”, possessing a “manic energy and taut

eloquence worthy of a large, serious and global readership”.¹ In 2003, *Granta* placed her on its list of Best Young British Novelists under forty. Barker’s sixth novel, *Clear* (2004), was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize; her subsequent novel, *Darkmans* (2007), was shortlisted for this prize and won the 2008 Hawthornden Prize. Because of her interest in the grotesque, deranged and difficult she has been repeatedly compared to such authors as the young Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Saul Bellow.

The most defining aspect of Barker’s writing is that her works are always peopled with characters somehow at odds with both society and their own place within it. In life as well as art, she is “instinctively drawn to the marginal, the outcast and the frankly unhinged” (Hickling), which is why her protagonists tend to be eccentrics, losers, outcasts, unsettled lost souls, deranged individuals, criminals; abusers as well as the abused. “Barker strives to be alternative, to champion whatever is unpopular or alternative” (Rustin). She explains her concern for the underdog by the paradoxical combination of their uncontrollable destruction and their unceasing struggle for self-preservation: “It fascinates me, seeing how people deal with tragedy or adversity. There’s something beautiful about them. [...] I don’t seek perfection in people or life. Struggle makes everything more explosive and brilliant. That’s why I write difficult books” (Ramaswamy). Another characteristic feature of Barker’s fiction is that her stories are full of many unlikely twists of fate which trigger a ripple effect of accidental encounters and bizarre conflicts through which the fates of the individual characters intertwine. This, in effect, makes them curiously close, yet at the same time insurmountably remote for readers. Her loners are willing to do anything to protect the fragile shell of their self – they lie, deceive, murder as well as care, protect and love.

Barker’s fictional world is a largely heterogeneous one whose mundane gothicness defies rational interpretation. Entering it compels the reader “to almost certain confusion, definite disorientation, a hefty dismay and slew of words, ideas and images” (Clark). The charm of her stories consists in the absence of explanations, causes and motivations behind her character’s acts, attitudes and utterances on the one hand, and the abundance of puzzlement, misconceptions and misunderstandings on the other. She exposes her readers to characters whose every single move is unpredictable and often inexplicable, as their thinking and impulses rarely overlap with the readers’ own life experiences. These characters embody the ultimate otherness of another person and the consequent feeling of isolation in a society of virtual sociability and economic affluence. Her novels thus confidently render all of the (un)thinkable traumas, frustrations and pathologies that postmodern civilization has ever conceived.

Clear occupies a specific position within the corpus of Barker’s work as it is, unlike the elaborately invented plots of her other novels, directly inspired by a real-life event. Barker refers to *Clear* as her “first truly ‘realist’ novel” (Thwaite) – in which realism is not systematically integrated with fantasy. On September 5, 2003, the 30-year-old American illusionist and endurance artist David Blaine entered a transparent plastic box suspended 30 feet above the south bank of the Thames, the area between City Hall and Tower Bridge, for a 44-day period of fasting on a mere 4.5 litres of water per day. “Above the Below”, as it was called, immediately became the top media event of that time. The site was recorded by camera 24-hours-a-day by Sky TV and Blaine invited his film-maker friend Harmony Korine to make a documentary about the stunt. The reactions of the media and the public

were diverse and often inconsistent, ranging from praise and admiration to the utmost hostility and spitefulness. Newspapers reported that various objects such as eggs, vegetables and water bottles had been thrown at the illusionist and the police had to intervene when a man attempted to damage the water supply to the box. Barker, herself keen on the stunt, was so enraged by the incivility and hatred of the people gathered underneath Blaine's box that she decided to write a novel about the entire sensational event. The immediacy of the impulse was reflected in the very process of writing the novel – it took her only three months, during which she even interrupted her work on the ambitious *Darkmans*.

Even though the cast of characters Barker introduces in *Clear* is not as freakish as, for instance, in *Wide Open*, they are extraordinary and eccentric enough that the reader easily forgets the oddity of a multimillionaire starving himself almost to death on public display. Adair Graham MacKenny, the main protagonist and narrator of the story, is a 28-year-old fashion-obsessed civil servant, a smart-mouthed, but often also a too quick- and big-mouthed, narcissist who makes use of the chaos in the vicinity of Blaine's box to pick up girls. He suffers from an inferiority complex because of his hyper-successful, sharp-witted, good-looking, multi-talented Ghanaian radical intellectual flatmate Solomon Tuesday Kwashi. Adair's life changes when he encounters the enigmatic Aphra Behn, a migraine sufferer with a fetish for extravagant second-hand shoes who comes to watch the illusionist sleep at night, with a plastic bag of Tupperware always in her hand and who, due to her exquisite sense of smell, used to work as a perfumery sniffer. And then there is Hilary, a sacked clerk turned fortune teller, or Brandy Layland, the dying knowledge-thirsty Australian wine tycoon and Aphra's husband. Against the background of Blaine's stunt, Barker knots together the fates of all these individuals in "a wonderfully sharp, sassy and knowing comedy of metropolitan manners" (Tonkin).

On her motivation for the novel Barker says: "[I]t's so much a book about London and her prejudices, at that very particular moment in time. [...] In many respects it's a savage attack on the shortcomings of the English race, but I have a nagging suspicion that our shortcomings are pretty much universal" (HarperCollins). *Clear* is a novel of ideas but is also Barker's most comic novel as well. Even though it originated as a reaction to a specific cultural phenomenon, it addresses an entire spectrum of burning issues and idiosyncrasies of contemporary urban life, including the omnipresent feeling of alienation inside a crowd, the fragility and instability of one's identity, the power of the media and commercial culture, the effects of hyper-consumerism and the consequences of the obsession with appearances, all of which make its scope much more universal than many critics have been willing to admit. The aim of this article is to explore how Barker treats the theme of modern city dwellers' self-fashioning, the continuous re-inventing of their identity together with the role popular culture can play in this process.

The conceit/deceit of self-invention

Self-invention and self-fashioning shape the production of every individual's identity. The split between the public and the private side of a persona has been reflected in social encounters since the birth of modernity and has grown markedly apparent with the rapid development of visual media, advertising and entertainment industries during the twentieth century. Every act of self-invention is ambiguous and paradoxical in many respects. Its

playfulness gives space to imagination and creativity and further reinforces the anonymity and impersonality of most of our social encounters. Assuming a made-up identity thus might represent an alluring game containing an element of irresponsibility, adventure and excitement. However, the awareness that everyone is inventing themselves makes us skeptical concerning the reliability of our interpretation of what we see and hear, and, in consequence, immune to any emotional content or manifestation, no matter how convincing it may seem. The most striking paradox consists in the irresolvable conflict between our desire to be original and distinctively unique and the simultaneous necessity to maintain a coherent, reliable and authentic self – as this is what assumptions of trust and reciprocity in a functioning society rest on.

Identity is therefore a shifting and shapeable category, a kind of discursively produced commodity designed by diverse, sometimes contradictory, narratives. Thinkers such as Erving Goffman, Roland Barthes and Stephen Greenblatt acknowledge society not as an expression of inherent human drives or remote external forces, but as a construct based on our capacity to act out and invent ourselves. Such a construct, however, is prone to instability because regardless of how convincing our self-conscious performance might appear, we cannot control how others will see us. Even the most carefully prescribed rituals are thus marked by our omnipresent insecurity and fear of failure and embarrassment, the malicious foundations of contemporary social life.² Also, as a majority of our daily encounters are derived from various social hierarchies, our self-enacted image has to equip us for these negotiations of inequalities and an imbalance of power, and so we imagine ourselves in the tension between the internal and the external, the regulations of the imposed social codes and our sense of what our personality really is. The frustrations connected with self-inventing derive from the circular logic that our bifurcated self is compelled to follow: self-identity is a pliant discursive practice embedded in cultural and linguistic conventions, but the key to these conventions is to act as if a stable personal identity existed, transcending the moment (Finkelstein 116).

Contemporary popular consumer culture does its best to present and disguise the process of self-fashioning as an ultimately pleasant and rewarding one by appealing to the participant's latent narcissistic desires: "Some of the pleasures of the moment rest with seeing ourselves mirrored in the actions of others and by being flattered by them. There is a sense of authority and pleasure to be extracted from such moments and it is easy to conclude from these instances that personal identity is a conceit rather than deceit" (Finkelstein 68). The mass media have added a new, virtual dimension to our everyday life and the immediacy of this scopic hyperreality has caused identity to collapse into and be repeatedly reconstructed from fragmentary visual signs and images.³ Like most manifestations of post-technological, cybernetic civilization, media-infused popular culture is ultimately ambivalent in its production of meanings. On the one hand, it surfeits its consumers with superficial voyeuristic pleasures in a hyperreal universe of signs without referents, in which vision is presented as a trustworthy source of knowledge. On the other hand, popular culture can be seen as a functioning instrument and guide for forming identity that prepares us for the realities of social life. As these are rarely under our complete control, and as lies and deceit condition the unwritten rules of sociality, popular culture anticipates this tendency by unfolding the multiplicity of realities, the manifold layers of social life. It is understandable to blame popular culture for distracting people from more serious and

higher forms of art, but it is also legitimate to appreciate it for making them aware of the complexity and diversity of modern social life. “Popular culture is not simply diversionary; it circulates ideas and brings complex questions to our attention” (Finkelstein 24), namely those addressing subjectivity and identity.

John Fiske emphasises the necessity of understanding popular culture as a process which produces meanings only in social and intercultural relations. “The meanings of popular culture exist only in their circulation, not in their texts; the texts, which are crucial in this process, need to be understood not for and by themselves but in their interrelationships with other texts and with social life, for that is how their circulation is ensured” (Fiske, *Reading* 3). The meanings of popular culture are context-based and to a large extent completed by the consumers, which can only be done when these meanings have some relevance to their everyday life. Popular culture is thus pre-fabricated by the culture industries but practically realised by people. The texts of popular culture are always incomplete, contradictory, ephemeral and unstable, with only potential relevance to the social situation of the reader, who can actualise it by filling the texts’ gaps with his or her own expectations and experience. Popular readings are therefore often undisciplined, selective, episodic and spasmodic, treating the text “with profound disrespect. [...] Popular texts must offer not just a plurality of meanings, but a plurality of ways of reading, of modes of consumption” (Fiske, *Understanding* 144-5). The very inconsistency and lack of literality of popular texts effectively generate a multiplicity of meanings, representing one of the central paradoxes at the foundations of popular culture.

Nowhere else does self-invention and self-fashioning assume so many forms and thrive under so many influences as in the bustling contemporary city, where encounters with strangers compose the majority of daily social interactions. City life is the most dominated by rules of politeness, self-control and the conventions of public domain manners. The city is also the most natural milieu where the texts of popular culture operate. City dwellers are permanently caught in the lines of force of popular culture production, meaning that the realisation of one’s self “slips into the construction of an image, a style, a series of theatrical gestures. [...] The individual constructs her or himself as the object of street art, as a public icon: the body becomes the canvas of changing urban styles” (Chambers 11). In this process, the signifiers devised by the popular culture industries are released from their original context and are open to the consumer to attribute new referents to them; thus they exert some degree of control over the cultural production of meaning. One of the effects is that inhabitants tend to perceive their city as imagined rather than seen, employing the re-enchanting prism of nostalgia, desire and fantasy instead of a solely rationalist one.⁴ Michel de Certeau understands the city as a discursive network, as a huge and immensely dense text, a system consisting of spatial practices for disciplining meaning and life. These disciplinary mechanisms are, however, never entirely successful: by reading/inhabiting them, city dwellers turn them into freed signs which they infuse with fresh meanings.⁵ Popular culture can thus be understood as, simultaneously, the weaponry with, and a battlefield on which, an incessant struggle for gaining control over the production of meanings and identities is led.

And he was Adair Graham MacKenny

Adair Graham MacKenny, consciously or not, embodies all the qualities and character traits of a pop cultural consumer – vanity, self-centeredness, self-delusion and self-importance. All these, together with his belief that they can be successfully disguised during short-term encounters with strangers, make him an exemplary case of a person whose public self has been transformed into a continuous series of acts of self-inventing and self-fashioning. His very narrative voice is, in fact, a kind of verbal recording of his capacity for the permanent reshaping and readapting of his identity. Therefore, it is by no means surprising that the self-image Adair creates by his narration is anything but a consistent and credible one. “I don’t make the rules, okay? I’m just a dispassionate observer of the Human Animal” (2), he says at the beginning of the story – a phrase that could hardly be further from reality as his narration is very emotive if not affected, consisting prevaingly of his feelings, judgements, speculations, arguments, moralizations, protestations and self-excuses. His second peremptory statement about himself, “I have an agenda. You really need to know that. I mean all this isn’t just *arbitrary*” (12, emphasis in original)⁶, also departs from truth as it is arbitrariness that crucially conditions his multiple identities, which are always flexible enough to suit the incidental and unpredictable stimuli of London life. As proof, Adair gives the example of his father, “fundamentally a very genial, affable, easy-going creature” (12), who only a few lines later turns out to be a racist, a petty-bourgeois xenophobe, whose “only” flaw is his passionate hatred for illusionists because of his childhood traumatic disappointment with an illusionist. This, however, appears to be sufficient reason for Adair to hate all magicians and illusionists too. “And it isn’t (no it *isn’t*) just opportunism. It’s so much more than that. It’s a moral crusade. It’s righting the wrong. It’s fighting the good fight – *sniff!* – for my trusty old *dad*” (18), a justification absurd enough even without the clichéd wording and pathetic nostalgia.

Lying and deception determine the construction of Adair’s public self and he is well aware of the fact, saying that “hyperbole” is his middle name (53). Arbitrary though the stimuli of the city streets are, when an opportunity occurs he is promptly able to become very systematic and focused in his identity scheming. When the publicity around Blaine’s stunt daily brings numerous spectators to a spot within easy reach of his office, he creates a taxonomy of the girls in the crowd according to their attitude to the illusionist, including a suitable strategy of approaching and picking them up. He labels his “project” “Above the Pillow”, indicating thus the playfulness and noncommittal nature of his enterprise. In terms of Zygmunt Bauman’s typology of postmodern identity patterns, Adair represents an effective combination of the stroller and the player⁷: at first, hidden in the anonymity of the crowded street, he observes and inspects the people around him, ingeniously projecting their characters, feeling as if he were a powerful director of their fates in order to subsequently transform himself into a self-confident, pragmatic player who takes life as a slightly, yet not very, risky game in which other people are pieces and social interaction is a move depending on a random event such as a roll of the dice. And so when Aphra disrupts his picking-up-girls game by calling him a pimp, he acts out of character, stricken with such confusion that his elaborately constructed identity shatters like a house of cards: “So what do I do? Avoid? Approach? Mollify? *Threaten?* Be cute? Make a joke? Get

sarcastic?” (66). Yet, symptomatically, he feels not so much offended as fearful that he might lose the his public self, his “street credibility” (77).

Adair is a ridiculously pitiable person, and Barker treats him deservedly as such by making him childishly keen on Jack Schaefer’s classic western novel *Shane*. He sees himself in its hero so much that he cherishes an idealised image of himself as a mysterious stranger whose tranquility and evenness make his every single gesture dangerously appealing and teeming with meanings. He also admires Schaefer’s construction of the character which places him alongside the novel’s inexperienced child narrator. Adair’s “I am putty – literally *putty* – in Schaefer’s hands. [...] I just love this feeling. I do. To be manipulated, to be led, to be *played*, and so artfully” (5) more than echoes little Bob’s reaction when Shane’s eyes first meet his: “[h]is glance hit me, dismissed me, flicked over our place” (Schaefer 3). Barker drives the irony even further by having her narrator uncritically adore Schaefer’s economical, emotionless, straightforward style, his “huge balls” and “no-frills writing at its *very best*” (1, 4), while his own narration is the exact opposite – affective, repetitive and periphrastic (“[h]arping’s my trademark”, 3). The style is a metaphor of his identity: while Shane’s is assumed to be inherent, Adair’s must be repeatedly invented, re-defined and verbalised, and as such is externally shaped and therefore rather ephemeral. His love for the dark mysterious gunman can be taken as a subconscious wishful longing for a lasting, coherent self.

The magic of the popular

Clear shares Fiske’s theory concerning the formation of meaning in texts of popular culture. Blaine’s endurance stunt is evidence that the illusionist is perfectly aware of the mechanics of not only the production and consumption of popular culture, but also of its modes of signification. The essential principle of his performance is to satisfy the scopic regime of postmodern culture by presenting his audience with a spectacle based on the amalgam of “passivity and raw emotion” (54). By this combination he seemingly reduces his stunt, and himself along with it, into a simple gesture, a transparent sign deprived of referents to anything outside itself. This proves unsatisfactory for most of the spectators as it stirs them to get to know more about what so “inexplicably” attracts them, and they eventually succumb to the urge to find out information, reveal connections and attribute a meaningful explanation to the act. This, however, forces them to enter the machinery of Blaine’s popular culture industry – his biography, website, press interviews and public statements, all the places where he, as if by pure coincidence, hints at diverse cultural, religious and historical sources of inspiration and potential frameworks of interpretation of his performances, such as his Jewishness, implied Christian symbolism or the writing of Franz Kafka and Primo Levi.

It is this deliberate void between the surface effect and reality that invites people to fill in and thus consume the popular culture text of David Blaine. As Jalisa, the educated and cultured ex-girlfriend of Adair’s flatmate, concisely observes, “[t]he fact is that it’s this playful *gap* which Blaine is most interested in. It’s what he exploits. It’s where his power resides. His strength, as a performer, lies in this confusion. But he calls it ‘mystery’ [...] What *lives* in that gap between appearance and fact? You can call me cynical, but I’m not entirely convinced that it’s necessarily a *good* thing...” (294–5). What resides in

the gap are the latent mechanisms of meaning production of popular culture in which, as Fiske demonstrates, the consumers participate, if only in an undisciplined, selective manner of reading. Jalisa's worries are understandable from the very ambivalent character of popular culture – although people are not mere passive recipients of ready-made meanings imposed on them by the popular culture industries, it is very doubtful whether all these consumers would harbour meanings and intentions without potentially harmful consequences for other people. No text of popular culture is neutral as it is always embedded in wider social and discursive contexts that allow it to be infused preferentially with some meanings rather than others.

Through the multifarious cast of her characters, Barker opens her narrative game of readings of the “blank” Blaine text. Aphra is the only one who does not read it in a broader social and cultural context and sees Blaine's night-time ease and motionlessness as the quintessence of humanity, being exposed to which brings an effect that transcends the mundaneness of the everyday, finding in him what she misses most in her own life – equanimity. Barker mischievously involves the intellectual Solomon in her game by making him attracted by the Blaine spectacle and having him propose a misled interpretation. Solomon projects his ethnic radicalism onto Blaine and reads the stunt as an expression emphasising the illusionist's blackness (imprisoned symbolically in a white transparent box), the heart of his argument being that only people of colour are truly able to embrace and understand a spectacle. Jalisa, on the other hand, though she maintains a slightly disparaging detachment claiming that Blaine has been “completely neglecting to research into the likely consequences of the things he's doing” (88), offers a more feasible interpretation – that he aspires to impress Korine and to create serious art. For her, the Blaine text is a cry directed elsewhere than to its readers/spectators: it is a static sign, and possibly an artifact, pointing mainly to itself/the performer, and as such cannot be judged in terms of like or dislike: “You don't get angry with the sign itself, or love the sign. That'd be kinda inappropriate” (90). What she appears to disregard at this point is that the texts of popular culture can easily be appropriated by anyone, no matter whom their originators intended them for, just as appealing only to underground and avant-garde artists would hardly have made Blaine a multimillionaire.

Ironically, the character whose reading of Blaine is most complex and challenging is the always underrated and non-assertive Bly. She is the first to understand the significance of the non-determinedness for the free play of signifiers of meaning of a popular culture text, and she resolutely dismisses Adair's attempts to find out the truth about Blaine's social, cultural and religious background: “But does it really matter *what* Blaine's background is? [...] Surely the important thing is what he chooses – consciously or otherwise – to ‘represent’, and how people respond to it” (209). Any ambitious text of global popular culture must, from its very essence, offer as universal and all-comprising a ground for identification as possible, one which reflects the collective human experience. Bly points out to this when identifying the signs of suffering and mystery as trademarks of Blaine's stunts: “Fortunately (for him) *all* religions, all nationalities, all cultures can relate to those things in some way or other. His work has a universal application. It's not about any particular *denomination*, but about the trials of humanity” (210). Texts of popular culture are therefore subversive not in any particular message they formulate, but in the limitless number of possible readings by which the consumers can complete their meaning. As these

readings tend to be selective, eclectic and disparate manifestations of the readers' self-projections, they can subvert the conventions and presuppositions of the homogeneously normative society, most frequently in the form of a release of negative emotions and frustrations, as Bly explains to Adair: "[Blaine]'s a blank canvas. He's transparent. He's *clear*. So when people look up at him they don't hate what *he* is. They project everything they're feeling on to him. [...] And it works exactly the same way for the positive people. [...] He's like a mirror in which people can see the very best and the very *worst* of themselves. That's the simple genius of what he's doing. That's the *magic*" (311). Blaine's success (and any success of popular culture in general) consists in his (its) ability to produce texts that invite the consumers to read them by simultaneously reading them back in order to satisfy their narcissist desires.

The most exemplary case of a "laboratory rat" left exposed to a perpetual dosing of Blaine popular culture is Adair – who, through Barker's ironic treatment, undergoes a noticeable evolvement from a frustrated and insecure proto-metrosexual self-fashioner to a self-consciously complacent consumer of popular texts. His initial frustration, bordering on hatred for the illusionist, is not caused by his inability to understand the mechanics of the stunt's production of meaning but rather by his inability to assume an unequivocal stance towards it. Like Jalisa or Bly, Adair is capable of a probing sociological and psychological analysis of different attitudes people adopt toward Blaine, as for instance when he explains that Blaine's success rests in his ability to cater to the increasing hunger for firm points in the "liquid" or "runaway"⁸ postmodern world of relativised values and transient certainties: "Seems like the need for real 'truth' [...] has – at some weird level – become almost a kind of modern mania. Perhaps without even realising, this loopy illusionist has tapped into something. Something big. A fury. A disillusionment. A *post-disillusionment* (almost). He personifies this sour mood, this sense of all pervasive *bafflement*" (62). However, he himself is a victim of this need for finding out "the truth", and consequently prey to the Blaine text when his contradictory feelings evoked by the absence of any apparent meaning to the stunt drive him to complete it from other sources.

From the perspective of Barker's toying with the character of Adair, *Clear* follows Finkelstein's persuasion that texts in popular culture, rather than copying everyday life, devise a multiplicity of alternative realities by which they also circulate complex ideas and lay them before the consumers. Thanks to the publicity Blaine and his PR people make around "Above the Below", Adair is drawn into wider textual and cultural contexts, from popular to serious ones. He visits numerous related websites, including the spiteful "wakedavid.com" designed to organise people who plan to keep the illusionist awake at night in order to make his endurance more difficult. He also reads Blaine's autobiographical reference book to illusionism and street magic, *Mysterious Stranger: A Book of Magic* (2002), an excellent example of well-considered self-invention, where he strives to collect the cleverly scattered, and mostly further unexplained, hints of why Blaine does what he does. Barker confronts her protagonist with his favourite type of a hero – a mysterious dark stranger – but unlike his beloved Shane this one is fashioned in a much less straightforward and lucid manner. At first Adair explores the Christian trajectory of the Blaine discourse, derived from the feeble parallels with the trials of Jesus in the wilderness, but supported by the image of a tattoo of Salvador Dali's "Christ of Saint John of the Cross" which covers his back. Then the indicia from the text set him off for the Jewish

trajectory on which he learns about the inspiration from Harry Houdini, himself the son of a rabbi, discovers the similarities between the details of “Above the Below” and Kafka’s famous short story “A Hunger Artist” (1922), and even reads Primo Levi’s autobiographical account of his one-year imprisonment in the Auschwitz concentration camp, *If This Is a Man* (1947), prompted by Blaine’s forearm tattoo of the identical digits Levi was given in Auschwitz. Adair credulously falls for this interpretation not only because it fills the meaning void behind Blaine’s stunt, but because it also appears to compose a coherent, and therefore trustworthy, narrative. When Jalisa points to the incongruity between the Christian and Jewish readings of the Blaine text, he shows how desperately reliant he is on a consequential explication: “He’s a Jew! [...] Because that’s what makes *sense*. That’s how it all adds up. Because I *like* him Jewish. I understand him better as a Jew, *and* the hostility he’s generating” (197). Barker thus demonstrates another paradox around the texts of popular culture: they bring complex ideas and questions to their readers’ attention, but they do not equip these consumers with sufficient instruments to understand them and make sensible connections between them. As their readings are episodic and random, so are their interpretations – set in contexts yet fundamentally de-contextualised, lured by a convenient story disguised as an inherent truth.

Postmodern self-fashioning

There are various systems of public signification that shape and determine the processes of socialising as these are firmly embedded in the discourses and practices that are produced by the systems. As a result, self-fashioning reflects extrinsic social and cultural norms, rules and conventions and blurs the borderline between one’s personality and the imposed demands of the social environment. In modern societies, self-fashioning “is linked to manners or demeanor, particularly of the elite; it may suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony; it suggests representation of one’s nature or intention in speech and action” (Greenblatt 3), and, as far as literature and other cultural texts are concerned, “self-fashioning derives its interest precisely from the fact that it functions without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life. It invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one’s own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one’s control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (Greenblatt 3). Cultural production, especially its popular forms, represents one of the most influential systems of public signification in contemporary hyper-consumerist Western urban civilizations as it incessantly fabricates new patterns for identification, from fashion items to cyberspace identities, which are presented as a seamless extension of a consumer’s self.

In his study of the interplay between culture and individual identity in Tudor England, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), Stephen Greenblatt lists a set of governing principles common to most instances of self-fashioning. Even though Greenblatt formulates them specifically to explore the Renaissance re-inventions of selfhood, almost all of them can be easily adapted to help elucidate the mechanics of self-fashioning in contemporary visual culture. For the purpose of this argument, we can note the most crucial ones: self-fashioning involves submission to some power or authority outside the self; self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile; the alien is

perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic, lacking order, or that which is false or negative, parodying the order, and consequently the alien is always constructed as a distorted image of the authority; when one authority or alien is destroyed, another takes its place; if both the authority and the alien are located outside the self, both submission and destruction are always already internalised; self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language; the power generated to attack the alien in the name of the authority is produced in excess and threatens and undermines the authority it sets out to defend (Greenblatt 8–9). What makes it partly problematic to apply these generalised principles to the conditions of (post)modernity is the absence of any manifest absolute authority in the globalised world, be it geopolitical or institutional.

Having been daily affected by crisis and the gradual breakdown of traditional power authorities such as the state, the Church and the workplace, postmodern people have learnt to adopt the politics of the personal in which loyalty to oneself has gained primacy over other bonds and responsibilities, as in many cases it has remained the only long-term obligation they are willing to accept. If someone has benefited from this widespread distrust of political, religious and social institutions, then it is the media and popular culture industries, which have readily and remorselessly taken over the role of moral arbiters and monopolised the formation, validation and enactment of ethical and aesthetic norms and values. The ephemeral and temporal character of the products of media and popular culture means that flexible self-fashioning has become a necessity; one of the vital conditions of living. Such self-fashioning is not only incited by the popular culture industries but also, as a specific instance of consumption, helps perpetuate them. In order to keep this circular process continuously going, popular culture needs to provide its consumers with the essential conditions for self-fashioning. This leads to another paradox of popular culture – it acts as the authority but simultaneously fabricates the alien.

In *Clear*, Barker demonstrates how skillfully David Blaine exploits this paradoxical principle behind the texts of popular culture – through his “Above the Below” stunt and the publicity around it he offers his (both admiring and hating) audience a range of opportunities for self-fashioning. On the one hand, Blaine presents himself as a knowing authority, a talented magician, illusionist and entertainer who is rich and successful yet remains friendly, humble and somehow clumsy in dealing with the public and the impacts of his popularity, a mysterious person whose performances speak about the limits and potentialities of humanity and thus invite identification. On the other hand, he is not afraid to provoke and exasperate the public by challenging the customary routines of Western lifestyle. Adair articulates this irritation precisely: “What makes *us* so angry (we puffed-up, sensitive, Western *ticks*) is seeing all the aspirations of capitalism degraded by the man who has pretty much everything (this young, handsome, charming, multi-multimillionaire). He has it all – everything we yearn for – and yet he casts it casually, haughtily – *publicly* – aside... *Well*, for the princely sum of five million dollars... The ultimate Capitalist gesture of *Anti-Capitalism*. No *wonder* we’re so pissed off” (143–4). Blaine thus simultaneously represents both an authority for identification and the alien, strange or even parodic violation of the values that enabled his authority to come into being. Once the authority and the alien are produced and circulated by processes external to the consumers’ self and therefore beyond their control, the imposed texts are naturally subjected to the recipients’ inherent tendencies to either submit to them or attack them, depending on how relevant

to their everyday experience they find them. Blaine's endurance thus has its admirers and haters, the insiders and outsiders, the indifferent as well as those who are still in the process of self-fashioning themselves into one of these categories. The novel also shows that self-fashioning is always carried out in language – although Blaine's stunt seems to be a wordless gesture, it is in fact aided discursively by numerous texts and intertextual references; Adair reads these texts in order to “grasp” the stunt and establish his position in this matter; the haters and critics verbalise their feelings in various places, such as the internet or newspapers.

It is also logical that one alien or public enemy cannot function forever, and must be precisely temporally defined in order not to tire the short attention span of popular culture consumers, but also to grant them the prospect of the act's imposing completion. And so Blaine's starvation ends at a given date and time, accompanied with a spectacular show of intense emotions. When Adair is crossing Tower Bridge the day after, he nostalgically notes that “there's just this huge hole in the sky” (344), becoming a victim to popular culture's grand deception about each of its texts' authenticity and irretrievability, despairing that the hole will never be filled again. Greenblatt's last condition of self-fashioning is very specific under the above mentioned circumstances: as popular culture deliberately produces both the allied norms to be assumed and the enemy alien to be attacked, the energy generated for this attack might undermine the norms the alien ostensibly challenges. The underlying logic of the circle in popular culture, however, is in operation here yet in another paradox: popular culture updates and thus perpetuates itself by the revitalising process of selective self-destruction – the authority which proves outdated or difficult to accept must be removed. The polymorphism and plasticity of the media and popular culture industries assure that the undermined authority, which was originally tailored as a temporary authority anyway, will be immediately replaced by another one. “Above the Below” will for some time sustain its impact by nourishing people's nostalgia, but as soon as it becomes commercially exhausted, a new form of authority must take its place. *Clear* renders this defining contradiction of popular culture: subverting itself as a necessary condition for its successful functioning.

Transparent obscurity

Nicola Barker is a writer sincerely interested in the modes of operation of popular culture industries and the distinct ways in which their texts generate meanings. She admits to being fascinated by various reality shows as extreme instances of self-inventing: “I'm fascinated by people, and the ways they present/re-invent themselves” (Thwaite), and is well aware of the importance of the signifying gap between appearance and fact where the consumer completes the text's meaning by finding relevance between one's own experience and the seemingly free-floating textual and cultural signifiers it offers. “The most powerful forces (creatively/commercially/artistically) in modern culture tend to achieve that power by employing a whole range of religious/transgressive/historical signifiers” (HarperCollins). Barker also shows that even though the texts of popular culture (and the self-fashioning they inspire) do invite subversive readings (and practices), these seldom break free of the control of the mechanisms that actually initiated them. Popular culture, and the texts it produces, functions according to a circular logic which is paradoxical⁹,

inherently contradictory and inconsistent, and so are the acts of self-fashioning and the fashioned identities it incites – stressful yet exciting, irksome yet rewarding. Barker, like Finkelstein, believes that the various identity patterns people form and assume in this process prove beneficial rather than harmful as they help them cope better with the multiple realities and ever-changing demands of the hyperreality of contemporary city life.

A very distinctive feature of Barker's novel is its narrative voice, a "quickfire patter of gags, allusions and one-liners" (Tonkin), a "sardonic, snappy, down-and-dirty urban patois" whose energy and rhythm "reflect the cacophony of urban life" (Bedell). *Clear* not only dramatises some principles of popular consumer culture but does so in the very language this culture speaks – the language of advertising: it is exuberant, inconsistent, tautological, periphrastic, superficially allusive, repeatedly stressing its selected aspects. Naturally, it can be distracting, ridiculous or even irritating, but it captures the spirit of popular culture more authentically than any detached (meta-)commentary. Some critics considered *Clear* too much tied to one concrete pop cultural event, claiming that it had nothing more to offer than what had already been said about it in the media.¹⁰ This perspective, however, is simplistic because it ignores the novel's complex and universal layers of meaning reaching far beyond Blaine's September 2003 stunt, which enable one to read it as a playful yet thoughtful contemplation on the texture of the cultural and social condition of postmodern urban civilization. Barker's fictional world of popular culture and self-fashioning is a consistently deceptive and spurious one, disguising the visible as the real, but all the more enticing to explore. *Clear* is ironically subtitled "a transparent novel" and its true delight is to be found in allowing its readers to disclose whatever its transparency might conceal.

Notes

¹ All of the judges' comments can be found on the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award website: <<http://www.impacdublinaward.ie/judges2000.htm>>.

² Finkelstein refers particularly to Goffman's *Strategic Interaction* (1970), Barthes's *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981) and Greenblatt's *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2004).

³ In his introduction to *Visual Culture*, "The Centrality of the Eye in Western Culture", Chris Jenks notes that Western thinking is guided by a visual paradigm despite the paradox that besets any social theory of visuality: on the one hand, vision is given priority among other senses as wholly autonomous, free and pure, but, on the other hand, visual symbols are experienced as mundane and embedded, and, consequently, their interpretation is regarded as contingent.

⁴ James Donald explores this idea in "The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces" (in *Visual Culture*), comparing the distinct imaginable cities as rendered in selected modernist and postmodernist cinematographic representations.

⁵ See de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Part III: "Spatial Practices".

⁶ Barker uses italics repeatedly as a part of her narrator's unique voice – all the italicised words in my quotations from the novel are in the original.

⁷ Bauman distinguishes two more identity patterns, *the tourist* and *the vagabond*, which, together with those of *the stroller* and *the player*, compose the personality of a postmodern person.

For further analysis of these metaphors see Bauman's *Life in Fragments. Essays in Postmodern Morality* (1995).

⁸ These are terms proposed by Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens to characterise the ultimate elusiveness of late modernity/postmodernity – see *Liquid Modernity* (2000) and *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (1999).

⁹ An in-depth study of the paradoxical nature of contemporary Western hyper-consumer society can be found in Gilles Lipovetsky's *Le bonheur paradoxal (Paradoxical Happiness)*, (2006).

¹⁰ For instance Alfred Hickling's "Box of tricks" in *The Guardian* or Natasha Tripney's review on readysteadybook.com.

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Lawrencovo setkání s Whitmanem

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Abstract

Tato studie komentuje Lawrencovo vášnivé čtení Whitmanovy poezie. Lawrence tvrdí, že Whitman udělal stejnou chybu jako před ním Ježíš Kristus: chtěl soucítit se všemi 'en block'. Lawrence tvrdí, že takovýto soucit je neautentický, a tón Lawrencova textu dává tušit, že z podobné chyby viní i sám sebe. Lawrencova báseň „Nové nebe a země“ svědčí o jistém procesu léčby, kterou si Lawrence naordinoval: po ukřižování se rodí znovu a svůj vztah ke světu rekonstruuje. Lawrencův pohled na soucit studie dále rozvíjí ve srovnání s pojetím protestantské teoložky osvobození Dorothee Sölle. Analýza Lawrencova „Whitmana“ vrhá světlo i na Lawrencovu poetiku jako celek: osciluje mezi poslušností „vnitřním božstvům“ a buberovským setkáním.

The paper discusses D. H. Lawrence's passionate reading of Whitman's poetry. Lawrence claims that Whitman made the same mistake as Christ before him – he strove for universal sympathy. Lawrence argues that such sympathy is inauthentic; the tone of the essay hints that Lawrence blames himself for having committed a similar mistake. Lawrence's self-ordained cure is apparent in his poem 'New Heaven and Earth', where self-crucifixion brings re-birth and a sound relationship with the outside world is re-established. Lawrence's views on sympathy are further discussed with reference to the Protestant liberation theologian Dorothee Sölle. The analysis of Lawrence's "Whitman" sheds light on Lawrence's poetics as a whole: they oscillate between fanatic obedience to the "inner gods" and Buberian encounter.

Klíčová slova: Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence, Dorothee Sölle, sympatie, znovuzrození, teologie, neposlušnost, jinakost, situační etika, pozornost

Keywords: Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence, Dorothee Sölle, sympathy, re-birth, theology, disobedience, alterity, situational ethics, attention

„Odpověď Whitmanovi“
 A kdo kráčí kilometr s falešným soucitem,
 kráčí na pohřeb lidského pokolení.

„Odpověď Ježíšovi“
 A kdo se snaží milovat všechny,
 zplodí vraha ve vlastním těle.¹

– D. H. Lawrence (*Collected* 653)

I.

Lawrencova stať o Waltu Whitmanovi uzavírá slavné *Studie z klasické americké literatury*, které poprvé vyšly v roce 1923 v USA a existují i v českém překladu. D. H. Lawrence se v nich prohlašuje „za porodní bábu“ americké literatury a formativní vliv textu na americký kánon nepopírá ani přesná kritika Lawrence jako literárního kritika z pera René Welleka. Celé studie jsou apodiktické a hluboce osobní. Lawrence zde tvoří svou použitelnou minulost, každý esej je vášnivým setkáním s autorem, kritickou distancí Lawrence pohrdá. Celé *Studie* lze označit jako angažovaně teologické: Lawrence se vyrovnává s dědictvím amerického puritanismu a s Amerikou coby religiózní avantgardou dějin: Pravá svoboda začne teprve tehdy, až Američané objeví ONO² [angl. „IT“]³ a až přistoupí k JEHO naplnění. ONO je nejskrytějším, *celistvým* lidským já [...] Proto Otcové poutníci přišli do Ameriky a proto přicházíme i my. Hnání JÍM [...] ONO nás řídí a rozhoduje za nás. Jsme svobodní jen tehdy, jsme-li poslušní (17), stojí hned v úvodní kapitole nazvané „Duch místa“. I ve studii o Whitmanovi, na exponovaném posledním místě knihy, splývají Lawrencovi Whitman, Kristus, Sv. Pavel a nakonec i duše Ameriky v jedno. Náš text sleduje dynamiku Lawrencova textu o Whitmanovi v širším kontextu jeho tvorby, v druhé části pak i ve světle myšlení feministické teoložky Dorothee Sölle.

Podobně jako i jiné kapitoly ze *Studií*, má i esej „Whitman“ vypjatou výstavbu. Od samého počátku Lawrence čte Whitmana jako básníka smrti, který popisuje rozklad těla po smrti, a interpretuje jeho poetiku jako „jakési upířské přetrvávání“ (159), jako zahnívající mrtvolu. Následně Whitmana srovnává s lokomotivou, která dělá „PUF, PUF, PUF! / PU-U-U-U-PUF!“ (160) a mluví o hrůze Whitmanovy identifikace se vším: „Jakmile Walt nějakou věc *znal*, okamžitě s ní přijal Jednu Totožnost. Pokud věděl, že Eskymák stojí v kajaku, už tu byl malý, žlutý, umaštěný Walt sedící v kajaku“ (162). Lawrence záhy obviní Whitmana z „abstrakce“ (Lawrencovu obvinění z „bílého jedu mentální abstrakce“ však obecně unikne jen málokdo) a následně Whitmana usvědčí nad tlumenějším – a (skrytě?) homosexuálním oddílem *Stébel trávy* „Rákosí“ – a potvrdí nad ním svůj ortel: Whitman je básník smrti, básník postmortálních efektů: „Whitman je velký básník konce života. Velký básník posmrtných přechodů duše, jež ztrácí integritu“ (166). Posměšného tónu postupně ubývá, Lawrence zvažní a záhy volá: „Whitman, ten velký básník, pro mě znamenal mnoho.“⁴ Whitman, jediný muž razící cestu vpřed. A jedině Whitman“ (167). A jedním dechem Lawrence dodá, že Whitman byl „moderní americký Mojžíš“, „velký moralista“, který „proměňoval krev v tělech mužů“ (167) – což je jedna z největších pochval, kterých

se autorovi u Lawrence může dostat – a vzápětí vysekává Waltovi další hlubokou poklonu za to, že vrátil duši zpět do těla: „Tam zůstaň. Zůstaň v těle. Zůstaň v údech, ve rtech v břichu. Zůstaň v prsou a v lůně“ (168). Následuje klíčová analýza Whitmanovy „chyby“ vis à vis jeho chápání jeho hesla „sympatie“, u níž se zastaví i tento text.

Lawrence rozlišuje u Whitmana dva druhy „sympatie“: „sympathy with“ a „sympathy for“.⁵ „Sympathy with“ má blízko „empatii“, tedy vcítění, vpravení se do vnitřního pocitu druhého člověka: „Setkávat se s ostatními poutníky na cestě. A jak? Jak se s nimi setkávat a jak je mít? Se sympatií, říká Whitman. Sympatie. Neříká láska. Říká sympatie. Soucit. Soucíťte s nimi stejně, jako oni soucítí s vámi. Když je míváte, zachyťte vibraci jejich duše a těla. To je nové učení. Učení života. Nová, ušlechtilá morálka“ (168). Druhý pojem, „sympathy for“, už má s pravou sympatií pramálo společného. Je to afekt, který se neváže na konkrétní prožitek. Podle Lawrence bohužel tato druhá „sympathy“ Whitmana pohltila. Poněkud delší následující citát Lawrenceovo chápání Whitmanovy fatální chyby doloží:

Dejme tomu, že cítil opravdovou sympatii k černošskému otrokovi. Měl by s ním *soucítit*. Sympatie – soucit – což znamená účast na rozvášněném citu v duši černošského otroka.

Co cítila ta černošská duše?

„Ach, jsem otrok! Je špatné být otrokem! Musím se osvobodit. Moje duše zemře, pokud se neosvobodí. Moje duše říká, že se musím osvobodit.“

Přišel Whitman, uviděl otroka a říká si: „Ten černošský otrok je člověk jako já. Sdílíme stejnou totožnost. A jeho rány krvácejí. Ach, což nekrvácejí i ty moje?“

Tohle nebyla *sympatie*. To bylo splynutí a sebeobětování. „Jedni druhých břeмена neste“, „Milovati budeš bližního svého jako sebe samého“, „Cožkoli jste mu učinili, mně jste učinili.“

Kdyby Whitman skutečně *soucítit*, řekl by: „Ten černošský otrok trpí otroctvím. Chce se osvobodit, jeho duše ho chce osvobodit. Je zraněný, ale to je cena za svobodu. [...] Budu-li schopen mu pomoci, udělám to – nevezmu na sebe jeho rány a jeho otroctví. Ale pokud o mou pomoc stojí, pomůžu mu v boji s mocí, která ho zotročuje, když chce být svobodný, protože mu vidím na tváři, že svobodu potřebuje. Ale i když bude svobodný, i tehdy bude mít jeho duše před sebou ještě mnoho pout po otevřené cestě, než bude svobodná.“

O nevěstce by však řekl:

„Pohleďte na tu nevěstku! Její mentální chtíč po prostituci ji učinil hříšnou. Ztratila duši a ona sama to ví. Ráda připravuje muže o duši. Kdyby se pokusila připravit o duši mne, zabil bych ji. Kéž by mohla zemřít.“

O jiné nevěstce by však řekl:

„Pohleďte! Uchvátila ji priápská tajemství. Pohleďte, priápské mravy ji brzy k smrti vyčerpají. Taková je cesta její duše. Ona si to tak přeje.“

O syfilitičce by řekl:

„Pohleďte! Chce všechny muže nakazit příjící. Měli bychom ji zabít.“

A o jiné:

„Pohleďte! Má hrůzu ze své příjice. Jestli se na mne podívá, pomůžu jí, aby se mohla vyléčit.“

To je sympatie. Duše sama zvažuje a uchovává si svou integritu.

Ale když ten muž ve Flaubertovi nahým tělem objímá malomocného, když si Bubi z Montparnassu vezme holku, o které ví, že má syfilis, když Whitman objímá

hříšnou prostitutku, to není sympatie. Hříšná prostitutka netouží po objetí z lásky, takže kdybys s ní soucítíl, rozhodně bys ji s láskou neobjímal. (172)

Krutě, repetitivně, vtipně, apodikticky a zpřímá tady Lawrence Whitmanovi vyčítá, že si přikázal milovat všechny, i ty, kteří si to nepřejí. Vyčítá mu apriorní „sympatii“ – která právě tím, že je *a priori*, musí být falešná, protože sympatie se může rodit jen z konkrétní situace. Vyčítá Whitmanovi absenci empatie, vyčítá mu porušování integrity vlastní duše. Lawrence odmítá tento ustavičný přející afekt – tuto *poslušnost* imperativu milovat – z důvodu, že není v lidských silách a vede k tomu, že na Whitmanovi ulpívá cosi nuceného, nezdravého, „posmrtného“. V ranější verzi studie tuto Whitmanovu tendenci explicitně pojmenovává: Whitman se příliš často „samovolně afektuje“: „Too often he deliberately, self-consciously *affects* himself. It puts us off, it makes us dislike him“ (Lawrence 1973, 844). Jinými slovy: Sympatii – tedy přejícímu pocitu k druhému – musí vždy předcházet empatie, která vychází z vnímání, spontaneity a setkání. Sympatie musí být autentická, není možné se do přejícího vztahu k druhým tlačit. Apriorní a povinný křik superega či evangelia, „sympathy for“, povinný soucit s někým, „sebeukřižování“, sebeobětování, splývání („merging“) Lawrence odmítá. V Lawrencových očích je Whitmanův soucit falešný, protože se jeho velké „já“ v poezii pohybuje jako „lokomotiva“, „parostroj“ (160). „V temnotě tohoto světa řídil auto s naplno rozsvícenými světlomety po cestě fixní představy“ (163). Když přejícně sympatizuje, uvažuje Lawrence, jak to, že se na chvíli nezastaví? Proč ve svých verších neposečká aspoň chvíli u jednoho člověka nebo jednoho obrazu?

Jak vyplývá z citovaných úryvků, Whitmanovým omylem je pro Lawrence právě falešná morálka, která Whitmana odvedla ze správné cesty jeho „hesla Sympatie“. Za Whitmanův thanatos může podle Lawrence právě tato „vyježděná kolej“ křesťanské tradice: „Pak udělal Whitman chybu. Chybu v interpretaci svého hesla SYMPATIE. Pořád ji směřoval s Ježíšovou LÁSKOU a s Pavlovým MILOSRDENSTVÍM. Whitman byl stejně jako my všichni na konci velké emocionální dálnice Lásky. A protože si nemohl pomoci, pokračoval po své Otevřené Cestě, po jakémisi prodloužení emocionální dálnice lásky až za Kalvárii. Dálnice lásky však končí pod Křížem. Není žádné za. Byl to jen beznadějný pokus prodloužit dálnici lásky“ (169).

V závěru studie se však Lawrence Whitmana zastane a „očistí“ jej:

Co má duše miluje, miluji.

Co má duše nenávidí, nenávidím.

Je-li má duše dojata soucitem, jsem soucitný.

Od čeho se má duše odvrací, odvracím se i já.

To je *pravá* interpretace Whitmanovy víry: pravé zjevení jeho Sympatie.

Moje duše se vydává otevřenou cestou. Potkává duše, jež jdou kolem, jde vedle duší, které jdou jejím směrem. A ke všem má sympatii. Sympatii lásky, sympatii nenávisti, sympatii prosté blízkosti, všechny ty křehké projevy soucitu, nevypočitatelné duše, od nejtrpčí nenávisti k vášnivě lásce.

Já svou duši nevedu do nebe. To mne vede má vlastní duše po otevřené cestě, po které šlapou všichni lidé. Proto musím přijmout její hluboké projevy lásky nebo nenávisti, soucitu, odporu nebo lhostejnosti. A musím jít tam, kam mě vede, neboť

mé nohy, mé rty i mé tělo jsou moje duše. To já se jí musím podřídít.
To je Whitmanovo poselství americké demokracie. (172n)

Po všech invektivách tedy nakonec dává Lawrence svému Whitmanovi zazářit v plné slávě. Není – do jisté míry – tento text sám velkým textem o sympatii, o pomoci příteli Whitmanovi, o podané ruce velkému předchůdci, velké duši? Dává Lawrence s Whitmanem vstát z mrtvých i nové, neinstitucionální, podobě křesťanství, Kristovi a potažmo i Americe? Nasvědčovaly by tomu věty o poselství americké demokracie a o lásce muže a ženy jako o „poznání duší a společenství věřících“ a o demokracii jako o „poznání duší na otevřené cestě a zjevení velké duše v její velikosti, jak pěšky putuje mezi ostatními po obyčejné cestě života“ (173). Odpovídá tak Lawrence v poslední kapitole na otázky položené v úvodu knihy, na otázky po Americe coby náboženské avantgardy dějin, po Americe ve smyslu Winthropova majáku, na nějž jsou upřeny oči celého světa? (A také zemi, kde si za rukopis *Synů a milenců* koupil ranč, kde zakládal utopickou náboženskou komunitu Ranim a kam nakonec jeho žena Frieda přemístila Lawrencův popel.) Obraz „amerického vzkříšení“ nalezneme ovšem ve *Studiích* i jinde, silný obraz je v kapitole o Crèvecoeurovi:

Crèvecoeur říká, že zastřelil tyrana královského, který pojídal jeho včely. Otevřel mu vole a vytáhl obrovské množství včel, jež jako malí demokraté poté, co minutu nebo dvě omráčené ležely, se na slunci zvedly, znovu ožily, načechraly svá křídla a nenuceně odkráčely jako Jonáš na břeh moře, či jako praví Yankeeové, které vyvázli z volete evropského tyrana královského.

Je mi jedno, jestli je to pravda, nebo ne. Ten obraz se mi líbí a vidím v něm podobnost amerického vzkříšení. (36)

A co se týče jiných Lawrenceových textů? Stejně svobodně a nevybíravě, jako s Whitmanem, ale nakonec se smířením a se slávou pak Lawrence zachází i s postavou Ježíše Krista v jednom ze svých posledních textů, původně pojmenovaném *Utečený Kohout* (The Escaped Cock), který ale nakladatel přejmenoval na *Muže, který zemřel* (Man who Died):⁷ Hned v prvních řádcích textu čteme o Kristu do krve pomláceném, který vstává z hrobu – zda opravdu zemřel nebo byl jenom v bezvědomí, nechává Lawrence zřejmě naschvál nejasným. Kristus tak konečně nemusí již kázat, nemusí programově „soudit s bližními“. Kristovská postava se následovně pomiluje s kněžkou v chrámu bohyně Isis, se kterou zplodí děti, ale nakonec ji opustí, neboť „Zítra je další den“ (62)!

Přibíjí se, umírá a vstává z mrtvých i Lawrence sám: jde o úběžník jeho autorské mytologie. Joyce Carol Oates upozorňuje na „Nové Nebe a Zemi“ (New Heaven and Earth, 1917), přímo emblematickou báseň o autorské resurekci, vyjadřující přímý protiklad unio mystica: Lawrence se zde probouzí z jednoty do mnohosti, z Já k Ty, od egomanie k pluralitě. Od tezovitosti „mentální abstrakce“ k rozlišenému vnímání, od existujícího non-sensu „onoho“ (*il y a*) k tomu i těm, „kteří existují“, v pojmosloví Emanuela Lévinase. Celá tato komplikovaná báseň, která v první části zůstává u abstrakce plurálu, je pro Lawrence klíčová a snad mu pomáhá k návratu k jemnému vnímání od „zla abstrakcí“. Prosvítá z ní zpráva o hluboce vnitřní, kruté a temné, polemice s vnitřním „Whitmanem“

a abstrakcí „sjednocování“. Musí se Lawrence nejprve zabít, aby mohl vnímat? A tedy aby mohl autenticky *sympatizovat*?

Byl jsem tak vysílený světem
Bylo mi z toho špatně
všechno bylo polepené mnou
nebesa, stromy, květiny, ptáci, voda,
lidi, domy, ulice, vozy, stroje
národy, armády, válka, mírová jednání,
práce, odpočinek, vláda, anarchie,
všechno bylo polepené mnou, všechno jsem to znal,
protože všechno jsem to byl já sám [...]
Byl jsem milenec, líbal jsem ženu, kterou jsem miloval,
a Bože hrůz, líbal jsem taky sám sebe.
Byl jsem otcem a ploditelem dětí,
a ach hrůzo hrůz, plodil jsem a byl počítím sám sobě. [...]

Já, ve sraženině černé hrobky, sešlapán k absolutní smrti
Jsem vystrčil svou ruku do noci, jedné noci, a má ruka
se dotkla čehosi, co jsem už opravdu nebyl já,
opravdu jsem to nebyl já.
A já byl náhlý plamen
náhlý, hořící oheň!
Tak jsem vystrčil svou ruku dál, ještě o kousek dál,
a pocítil, že to nejsem já,
opravdu jsem to nebyl já,
určitě jsem to nebyl já,
ale neznámo. [...]

Můj Bože, můžu jenom říct
Dotýkám se, cítím neznámo!
Jsem první příchozí!
Cortes, Pissaro, Columbus, Cabot, oni jsou nic!
Já jsem první!
Já jsem objevitel!
Našel jsem druhý svět! (Lawrence, *Collected* 256)

II.

Jádro Lawrencova uvažování snad nejzřetelněji vystupuje ve světle teologie evangelické teoložky osvobození Dorothee Sölle. V knize *Fantazie a poslušnost*, Sölle nejprve vrší argumenty proti poslušnosti: odmítá strnulou poslušnost církevním dogmatům, kritizuje křesťanský masochismus spojený se ztrátou vlastní vůle a vlastní osobnosti v poslušnosti církevním dogmatům: „Je-li poslušnost považována za hodnotu o sobě, je-li cílem ztráta vlastní vůle, mohou takto porobené duše dosáhnout dokonce jistého stupně masochistického sebeuspokojení. Je jim pak docela jedno, proč poslouchají i koho poslouchají“ (34). Odpor k poslušnosti dogmatům, ať už církevním či společenským, Lawrence (samozřejmě

spolu s Whitmanem) se Sölle sdílí. Sölle s Lawrencem sdílí i smysl pro zápletku a chuť provokovat, když hned zkraje cituje z paměti člověka, který se hlásil k tomu, že byl už jako malý chlapec bezvýhradně poslušen vůli dospělých: cituje z paměti Rudolfa Hösse, velitele koncentračního tábora v Osvětimi.

Sölle se ale přibližuje Lawrencovi nejen v odmítání poslušnosti dogmatu, ale i v pojetí povinné apriorní lásky, tedy „soucitu“ ve smyslu „sebeobětování“. V klíčové kapitole celé knihy, Sölle interpretuje povídku Bertolda Brechta „Die Unwürdige Greisin“⁴⁸ – sama citace z literatury je mimochodem taky další spojnici, oba přistupují k literatuře bez odstupu, u Lawrence ani u Sölle napadne ani zmínka o v naší zemi donekonečna diskutovaných fikčních světech! – o stařeně, která celý život žila velice spořádaným životem, vychovala kupu dětí a nikdy si nic nedopřála, až pak na stará kolena začala chodit do hospody a začala hrát karty s „bláznivou holkou“ ze sousedství. Příběh Sölle komentuje takto: „Vžitá poslušnost, zdánlivě samozřejmá oběť, život hrdinně strávený u dětí či v kuchyni – to vše by byl možná jakýsi mravní rekord. Ale možná že by těm, kteří z toho měli mít užitek, bylo lépe posloužilo, kdyby toho odříkání bylo méně. Neboť žena, která sedmdesát let žije způsobem sobě „nevlastním“ a potlačuje svá vlastní přání, vytváří kolem sebe – ať chce či nechce – prostředí naplněné nesvobodou. [...] Poslušnost a nedostatek štěstí spolu souvisejí“ (59).

V tomto přemýšlení o poslušnosti u Sölle souzní i Lawrencova kritika Whitmanovy poslušnosti imperativu „milovat“, povinně přát, povinně se obětovat. Zcela v lawrencovském duchu pak Sölle i v tomto odhaluje masochismus: „Obecně řečeno: ochota k oběti (chápaná jako ztělesnění ctnosti, jako životní úděl neodvolatelně provázející některé role – např. roli ženy či matky) je zhoubná a smrtelně nebezpečná. Průvodním jevem takové oběti je psychický masochismus, zvláštní zalíbení v utrpení. Masochismus může ovšem vyvážit jen sadismus, neboť povědomí člověka se musí pomstít za všechno, čím se mu ublížilo“ (60). I zde je paralela s Lawrencovým „uhníváním morku“ zjevná:

„Jed“

Co zabilo lidstvo – protože lidstvo je z většiny mrtvé –
jsou lži:
to hnusné lživé předstírání, že jako by cítíme, co necítíme.

„Příkázání“

Když Ježíš přikázal, abychom milovali bližního,
nutil nás buď žít velikou lží, nebo neuposlechnout:
neboť nemůžeme milovat někoho – bližního či nebližního – na rozkaz,
a z padělané lásky nám uhnul morek. (*Collected* 654)

Pro Sölle je štěstí podmínkou empatie i sympatie a i to s ní Lawrence sdílí. Proč se pro jednou neopřít o biografii? Kdykoli se vyostří Lawrencův vztah s manželkou Friedou, promítá se to do jeho poetiky: píše například román *Opeřený had* (*The Plumed Serpent*), kde jsou hlavními hrdiny diktátoři, kteří se rozhodli v Mexiku obnovit kult Quetzalcoatl, opeřeného hada, protože křesťanství je pro mexické etnikum příliš „mentální“ a nedosta-
tečně tělesné a kde nutí Kate, ženu jednoho z nich, stát se bohyň.

Lawrence i Sölle jsou tak zajedno i v odmítnutí Kantovy etiky. Lawrence píše „beastly Kant!“ (Wellek 598) a celá *Fantazie a poslušnost* se u Sölle implicitně nese v duchu kritiky největšího filosofa protestantismu. Pro Kanta je etické jednání vždy spjato s povinností, odmítá jakoukoli spojitost s citem, tedy s celostním „myšlením srdce“: „Právě morality se dosáhne teprve tehdy, je-li zákon naplněn výlučně kvůli sobě samému, jsou-li všechna jednání konána jen z povinnosti a úcty k zákonu, nikoli z lásky a náklonnosti k tomu, co mají ta jednání způsobit“ (Coreth 224). Jak pro Lawrence, tak pro Sölle však je rozhodujícím momentem právě pocit štěstí, spontánní, ze srdce prýšící radost.

Sölle se však ve své genealogii špatně uchopeného štěstí vrací daleko před Kanta. Problém vidí v antické tradici uchopení štěstí, která k němu přistupuje jako k čemusi jednak naprosto nahodilému, jednak „ukořistěnému“ na úkor druhých – tedy jako ke zboží, o které můžeme dalším otočením kruhu fortune okamžitě přijít. „Polykratovský strach ze závidi bohů se mění ve strach z pomsty ošizených, které jsme připravili o jejich možnosti“ (68). Vedle toho staví Sölle možnost „nenahodilého štěstí“, možnost o štěstí usilovat. Štěstí tak pro Sölle není pouze nahodilým a proměnným „vlastnictvím“, jak je pojímáno v antice, ale štěstí lze vytvářet, respektive štěstí je „věcí naší svobody, našeho osvobození“ (70). Pro Sölle – stejně jako pro Lawrence – je pojetí štěstí blízko „spontánní chuti k činu a radosti z činnosti“ (70). Aby mohl být člověk šťastný, tvrdí Sölle, je k tomu zapotřebí spontánní fantazie. Pojem fantazie však Sölle rozšiřuje, odmítá tradiční pojetí fantazie pouze jako schopnost obrazotvornosti, schopnost odpoutat se sněním od reality, ale jako spontánní schopnost hledat řešení, hledat nové vlastní svébytné cesty, ozkoušet jejich pravost sám na sobě, a pokud se – jakože stále budou – i nadále ukazovat jako nepravé a nepřesné, neustále fantazijně hledat dál: „Fantazie si nedopřeje oddechu, dokud ji nenapadne nějaké vhodné řešení, je neúnavná v hledání nových cest a lepších způsobů. Je to tvořivé, neko-nečno pro druhé“ (90).

Fantazie je tak pro Dorothee Sölle hledáním možností, jak může každý člověk „vstát z mrtvých“, a používá-li Sölle tohoto obratu, myslí přesně to, co provedl v rámci literatury Lawrence s Whitmanem v našem textu, či v *Muži, který zemřel* s Kristem. Vstáním z mrtvých je zrod velkého Já ve Whitmanově „Zpěvu o mně“ či v úvodních kadencích *Obratníku raka* Henry Millera. Vstát z mrtvých tedy znamená začít žít vlastní život, objevit svůj vlastní život, žít naplněným životem. Není tedy náhoda, spojuje-li Sölle s autostylizacemi těchto autorů právě i svou slavnou tezi o Ježíši Kristovi jako o nejšťastnějším člověku: „Já považuji Ježíše Krista za nejšťastnějšího člověka, který kdy žil. Domnívám se, že zdroj síly jeho fantazie musíme hledat právě v jeho štěstí“ (82). Stejně jako Whitman pro Lawrence je i pro Sölle Kristus právě rabbi – učitel. Sölle odmítá – stejně jako Lawrence a Nietzsche – upnout se na budoucí život po odtrpěném životě zde, vnímá Krista jako učitele, který pomáhá i dalším lidem, aby se stali sami sebou, aby dosáhli pravé svobody, aby s ním vstali z mrtvých. Následně mohou svým štěstím infikovat, stát se sami učiteli: „právě šťastný člověk, který má odvahu říct ‚já‘, bude působit osvobodivě na všechny lidi, kteří s ním přijdou do styku, zcela jinak než člověk, jehož vztah k ostatním je určován jakýmsi ‚nad-já‘“ (91).

Ani pro Sölle, ani pro Lawrence však správnou cestou není egoismus. Sölle zdůrazňuje nutnost zřeknout se něčeho pro druhého: ale vždy jen něčeho, nikdy ne všeho, nikdy ne celého vlastního života – to pro Sölle vede k masochismu a sadismu a nemoci. Člověk

se nemůže kvůli druhým vzdát své podstaty, své vlastní osobnosti, vlastního já. Sölle tvrdí, že je možná pouze oběť „částečná“, člověk se zřiká vždy naplnění konkrétního přání.

Muž, který si vezme ochrnutou dívku, se spolu s ní zřiká možnosti tancovat a společně sportovat. Matka se zřiká vycházek a výletů, dokud jsou děti malé. Kdyby však chtěla udělat z této oběti něco jako zvyklost, chtěla jí dát rys trvalosti, jakmile by začala svou oběť glorifikovat, dávala by vlastně průchod svému nezdravému přání, aby děti zůstaly stále malé a stále ji potřebovaly. Jinými slovy: Fixovala by děti jako bytosti, které jí užírají života, a sebe samu jako jejich oběť. (61)

Člověk se rozhoduje, teprve když začne něco dělat, ne předem; teprve v akci poznává Boží vůli. Sám se musí rozhodnout, co má dělat, není jen vykonavatelem uložených rozkazů. [...] Boží vůle nepřichází s heteronomními požadavky, není předem stanovena [...] Každá situace znamená pro člověka nový, předem nevypočitatelný podnět, nové východisko. Poslušnost člověka nevyžaduje Bůh jako všeobecná a nadčasová veličina; mou odpověď žádá vždy určitá konkrétní situace a jen jejím prostřednictvím mě volá Bůh. (44)

I pro Lawrence je autentický soucit – vznikající zas a znovu v konkrétních situacích – a z něj vycházející sympatie a reálná pomoc důležitou hodnotou: „Duše [...] má sejít na otevřenou cestu, tam, kde se cesta otvírá, do neznáma, držet se společnosti těch, jejichž duše ji k sobě táhnou, a nekonat nic jiného než pouť a činnosti, jež onu pouť provázejí, vydat se na dlouhou celoživotní pouť do neznáma, na níž se svým hlubokým soucitem zdokonalí“ (Lawrence 169).

III.

Mezi těmito Lawrenceovými větami o otevřené cestě v závěru eseje o Whitmanovi a větami o poslušnosti temnému vnitřnímu „tomu“, které musí Američané objevit, v úvodu *Studii* i tohoto textu je zjevný rozdíl. Lawrenceovou posedlostí, jeho „It“ sice snad nebyla Whitmanova fixní idea „sympathy for“, tj. povinnost lásky ke všem a všude a za všech okolností, ale spíše cosi, co Lawrence metaforicky popisuje jako věrnost vlastním primitivním božstvům, či onen temný les, „ze kterého na mýtinu jím poznaného já vycházejí božstva a zase se vracejí zpět“ (25). V momentě, kdy je Lawrence ve vleku tohoto pólu své duše, vzniká například zmíněný až repulzivní román, plný kázání poslušnosti vnitřním božstvům, *Opeřený had*, který vyšel ve stejném roce jako *Studie*. Jindy však tak Lawrence pomalu opouští posedlost „It“ a přichází k Ty, k důrazu na vnímání a přítomnou chvíli. Tady lze hledat paralelu u základního slova „Já-Ty“ Martina Bubera, „Here and Now“ Carla Rogerse a k situační etice Dorothee Sölle. Je dobře, že tento pól setkání a přítomnosti a spontaneity našťastí převážil nad pólem poslušnosti vnitřním démonům a „vědomím krve“ v *Milenci Lady Chatterleyové*, posledním Lawrenceově románu.

Obvykle se nedoporučuje končit citátem, tento text však tak učiní a navíc přivede na scénu hned čtyři nové postavy. Zde jsou „Vzpomínky na Johna Keatse“ věnované „Mitchovi“ od Denise Levertovové, ve výborném překladu Hany Žantovské. Bylo by totiž škoda, kdyby se s Waltem Whitmanem, Davidem Herbertem Lawrencem a Dorothee Sölle na otevřené cestě nesetkali.

Pozorně se dívat a vnímat, jak mi řekl
John Keats,
skutečně
mi to řekl

(a taky tobě).

Bok po boku jsme leželi
nataženi na pemzové skále, před sebou
Ailsa Craig.

Vířící mořský příboj
vyrval nám
slovo
a další

a znovu: *to, co je tvůrčí,*
samo se musí stvořit.
Šli jsme podél
zvučící zelené průrvy
zvané Údolí zdraví

a zvolna dál po serpentíně
k údolí Stvoření duší.

Občas se zastavil,
utrhl list, ohmatal
kámen.

Pozornost bylo jeho slovo,
vnímavost a pozornost
– to stačí.

Génus poezie
už z toho vytvoří v člověku
své vlastní spasení.

Skočil jsem řekl
po hlavě do moře. . .

Poznámky

¹ Tyto i další úryvky Lawrencovy poezie jsou v překladu O. S.

² Silná patičnost textu se projevuje i v typografii *Studií*.

³ Lawrencovo „It“ navádí k možným paralelám s Freudovým „Id“. Lawrence Freudovo dílo samozřejmě dobře znal a Lawrencova poetika bývá často interpretována z hlediska freudismu. Přes všechny paralely však Lawrence v důsledku Freudův přístup odmítal: „Temný les duše“ je pro něj třeba zachovat, nesnažit se jej žádným způsobem „zprístupňovat“. Lawrence rovněž odmítal i Freudovu vědeckost a jeho vědeckou terminologii.

⁴ Angl. „has meant“ lze překládat i rezultativně a prezentně, tedy „znamená“.

⁵ Sylva Ficová překládá první jako „cítit s“, druhý jako „cítit kvůli“ někomu.

⁶ V *Apokalypse*, kterou psal těsně před smrtí, napadá Lawrence jiný aspekt ideologického výkladu křesťanské tradice, tedy mocenskou teologii Janova Zjevení. Jak si všiml mj. Gilles Deleuze, jde zde o paralelu legitimní Nietzscheovy kritiky takovéto teologie v *Antikristovi*.

⁷ Česky vyšlo dvakrát, viz bibliografie.

⁸ Bylo i zfilmováno. Režie René Allio, Francie, 1965.

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John Steinbeck a Robinson Jeffers: literární ikony Kalifornie v Československu

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Abstrakt

Článek se zabývá recepcí díla Johna Steinbecka a Robinsona Jefferse v Československu v letech 1941–1971. Na základě dobových kritických ohlasů sleduje trendy a proměny ve způsobu interpretace obou kalifornských autorů. Primárním cílem studie tedy není hodnocení uměleckých kvalit Steinbecka a Jefferse. Předmětem analýzy jsou především ideologické aspekty soudobé kritiky, která byla do značné míry ovlivněna dogmaty oficiální kulturní politiky.

Abstract

The essay examines the reception of the work of John Steinbeck and Robinson Jeffers in Czechoslovakia between 1941 and 1971. On the basis of criticism from this period the author traces the trends and changes in the interpretation of both Californian writers. The primary goal of the essay is not the evaluation of the artistic merits of Steinbeck and Jeffers. Instead, the analysis focuses on the ideological aspects of the criticism, which was largely influenced by the dogmas of official cultural policy.

Klíčová slova: John Steinbeck, Robinson Jeffers, Československo, americká literatura, recepce, ideologie, komunismus

Keywords: John Steinbeck, Robinson Jeffers, Czechoslovakia, American literature, reception, ideology, Communism

Esej vznikla v rámci postdoktorského projektu GA ČR Jeffersova a(nebo) Steinbeckova země: literární bitva o Kalifornii (P406/10/P297).

Během výzkumných pobytů v Kalifornii jsem nesčetněkrát čelil dotazům literárních vědců na adresu popularity Johna Steinbecka a Robinsona Jefferse v Československu. Jak je možné, že se tito autoři, kteří jsou považováni za kvintesenci Kalifornie na poli literatury, těšili většímu ohlasu v zemi tak vzdálené? Čím si vysvětlit, že právě v malé komunistické zemi uprostřed Evropy Steinbeck a Jeffers tak zdomácněli?

Dát na tyto otázky jednoznačnou odpověď nelze. Fenomenální úspěch Steinbecka a Jefferse vyvěrá z celé řady faktorů, mezi nimiž nepochybně dominuje samotná literární kvalita díla a um těch, kteří skrze překlad tuto kvalitu zprostředkovávali. Málo prozkoumaným zdrojem jejich popularity však souvisí právě s dobou a místem, v nichž se k nim čtenáři v Československu dostávali. Tato stať mapuje turbulentní období tří dekad (1941–1971), které je ohraničeno prvním vydáním Steinbeckova stěžejního opusu *Hrozny hněvu* na jedné straně, a publikací Bednářova pozoruhodného životopisu Jefferse *Přátelství přes oceán* na straně druhé.¹ Toto období se vyznačovalo omezenou mírou svobody, což se pochopitelně projevovalo také na umělecké scéně. Kritéria hodnocení literárního textu byla podřízena politickým potřebám vládnoucí elity. Ideologické aspekty díla proto byly bedlivě sledovány a vyhodnocovány. Právě na tuto mimoliterární dimenzi bude zaměřena pozornost. V následující stati tedy nepůjde o sledování umělecké hodnoty textů, ale především o kontext, v němž byly publikovány. Analýza tak necílí na způsob uměleckého zpracování, spíše na „ideologické zpracování“, které mělo často podobu předmluvy či doslovu ke knize, popřípadě autoritativního výkladu na stránkách nejčtenějších periodik. Steinbeckovy a Jeffersovy texty byly v diskutovaném období do značné míry pojímány jako politikum, stejně jako tomu bylo i u dalších amerických autorů. Tato složka dobové recepce je tedy hlavním předmětem rozboru.²

Prolog, aneb americká literatura v Československu

Před rozбором dobových kritik Jefferse a Steinbecka je nutné nastínit alespoň základní obrysy vydavatelské politiky v letech 1941–1971. Je nesporné, že vydavatelská činnost prošla v tomto období překotným vývojem. Požadavky kladené na literární produkci oficiálními místy se během těchto tří dekad několikrát změnily. Ve svém článku v *Literárních novinách*, nazvaném „Amerika minulých let“, Ivo Fleischmann tyto proměny obrazně přirovnává k ročnímu cyklu v přírodě: „Střídavá roční období naší ediční politiky staví literárního pracovníka s vytrvalou svižností denně před nové problémy“ (4). Fleischmann si náhlé změny klimatu nejen dobře uvědomoval, ale dokázal se na ně i promptně adaptovat.

Překladať literatura americké proveniencie byla patrně četnými turbulencemi postihena nejvíce. Po německé okupaci Československa sice následoval nejdříve zákaz sovětské, francouzské či britské umělecké produkce, americké filmy a knihy však přišly na řadu nedlouho poté, konkrétně v roce 1941. Osvobození země sovětskými a americkými vojsky v roce 1945 vedlo sice k návratu ke svobodným poměrům v oblasti nakladatelské činnosti, avšak již v tomto období byl patrný příklon k těm americkým autorům, kteří poukazovali na nešvary kapitalismu. Mezi nejúspěšnější americké romanopisce v poválečném Československu patřil Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis či právě John Steinbeck. Na kulturní a samozřejmě i na politické frontě byl již v letech 1945–1948 patrný silící prosovětský trend, z nějž se po Vítězném únoru stala oficiální prosovětská politika. Jak konstatuje Jiřina Šmejkalová, „krátce po únoru 1948 ohlásila Komunistická strana nové směry v kulturní

politice. Ty byly uváděny do praxe zvláštními komisemi, které vydaly několik seznamů *libri prohibiti* pro veřejné knihovny“ (94, překlad autora). V této době se jako hlavní proud literatury v Československu začíná formovat socialistický realismus. Postavit se tomuto proudu bylo v následujících letech téměř nemožné. Hlavním předmětem zájmu se podle nových norem měla stát oslava pracujícího člověka a nově nastoleného řádu. Americká literatura si našla cestu k českému čtenáři jen za předpokladu, že splňovala tyto parametry, respektive přidala autentické svědectví o vykořisťování dělníků kapitalistickým řádem. K ustavení základů nové kulturní politiky přispěl svými statěmi o jazykovědě i samotný Stalin. Jak ve své pozoruhodné studii „The Politics of Artistic Identity: the Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s“ (Politika umělecké identity: český svět umění v padesátých a šedesátých letech) uvádí Maruška Svašek, „ve stalinistickém diskursu byly umění a kultura interpretovány jako veřejný statek, který měl být použit k propagaci komunistických hodnot“ (386, překlad autora). Není žádným překvapením, že ve stejném duchu se na prvním sjezdu Komunistické strany po únorovém převratu vyjadřoval i Klement Gottwald. Ten definoval roli umělce jako politického propagandisty. Skrze prisma tehdejší politické korektnosti byla poměřována i díla amerických spisovatelů. Vycházet tak u nás mohla jen díla, která byla v souladu s novým politickým diskursem. Jejich autoři byli vnímáni jako zvěstovatelé nového řádu v buržoazii režírovaném společenském dramatu za železnou oponou.

V našem prostředí novým požadavkům nejvíce vycházel vstříc Howard Fast, o němž dokonce v roce 1953 vyšla ve Státním nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění (SNKLHU) odborná kniha s titulem *Průkopník socialistického realismu v USA*. V prvních letech existence SNKLHU byl podle Evy Kondrysové, tehdejší redaktorky nakladatelství, stanoven pro americkou literaturu limit jedné knihy ročně. Tento limit, především díky svému členství v americké komunistické straně, spolehlivě naplnil právě Fast (Semínová, Valášek 97). Jak ve svém článku „The Reception of American Literature in Czechoslovakia under Communism: 1945–1989“ (Recepce americké literatury v komunistickém Československu: 1945–1989) uvádí Hana Ulmanová, Fast ztratil přízeň SNKLHU v roce 1956, kdy se jeho politické postoje změnily v důsledku potlačení maďarského povstání sovětskou armádou (33).³ I tento případ potvrzuje, že jakékoliv odchýlení se od pevně vytyčeného politického (dis)kurzu se neodpouštělo. Státní propaganda samozřejmě zasáhla i literární scénu. Svou roli v antiamerické kampani sehrály i první ročníky *Literárních novin*, jejichž vznik se datuje rokem 1952. Ve stejném roce byla vydána také nechvalně známá Boučková „studie“ *Trubaduři nenávisti: Studie o současné západní úpadkové literatuře*, která se prezentovala jako ideologický literární průvodce. Jak příznačně konstatuje Josef Jařab, „přijetí do Boučkovy literární společnosti mohl zajistit jen členský průkaz Komunistické strany USA“ (401).

Zatímco v sousedním Polsku v roce 1956 vrcholí období „ideologického tání“, které v praxi znamenalo odstraňování stalinistických dogmat v kulturní oblasti, v Československu ledy teprve začaly pozvolna praskat.⁴ K narušování zamrzlých struktur dochází také za přispění nově vzniklého časopisu *Světová literatura*.⁵ Již v prvním ročníku v něm vyšel odvážný text Josefa Škvoreckého „*Některé pohledy na americkou literaturu*,“ v němž autor na příkladu Ernesta Hemingwaye odsuzuje metody svých profesních kolegů, mezi něž řadí „násilnou interpretaci, zamlčování důležitých rysů díla, neodůvodněná tvrzení, podkládání zlých úmyslů, papouškování cizích názorů i přímé a vědomé falšování

faktů, jako je obsah, děj a pod.“ (180). K celkovému uvolnění u nás začíná docházet až na samotném konci dekády. S ním přichází také nový pohled na americkou literaturu, který je mnohem méně zatížen ideologickými dogmaty a schematickým myšlením. Šedesátá léta se vyznačují příznivým klimatem jak pro časopisecké, tak pro knižní vydávání textů amerických spisovatelů v šedesátých letech. V souvislosti s kulturně orientovanými časopisy je také třeba zmínit jejich rostoucí počet i význam, který souvisí právě s ústupem dogmatismu. To však neznamená, že časopisecké tituly přestaly plnit společensko-politickou funkci, právě naopak. Jak ve své stati „Myšlení o literatuře v prostředí českých literárních časopisů šedesátých let“ upozorňuje a dokládá Tomáš Kubíček, vnímání literárních periodik jako „politicko-kulturní tribuny“ se v šedesátých letech notně prohloubilo (126).

John Steinbeck

Uvedení Johna Steinbecka na českou literární scénu provázela řada nesnází. Autorův debut v podobě seriálového vydání románu *Slunce a víno chudých* (známý spíše jako *Pláň Tortilla*) chystaly již v lednu roku 1940 *Lidové noviny*. Ještě 31. ledna 1940 na svých stránkách slibovaly, že na toto „krásné a zábavné čtení, které vás na chvíli odvede do jiných světů a životů“ se mohou čtenáři sobotního ránu těšit již od 3. února (12). K tomu ale nedošlo ani v avizovaném termínu, ani později. Lze jen spekulovat o tom, co se v inkriminovaných třech dnech stalo. Čtenáři se dočkali až v následujícím roce, kdy byl vydán román *Hrozný hněvu* v překladu Vladimíra Procházky. Při vědomí skutečnosti, že americká literatura může být každým dnem nacisty v Československu zakázána, zvládl Procházka tento objemný román přeložit za čtyři měsíce.⁶ V tradiční anketě *Lidových novin* byl román vyhlášen bezkonkurenčně nejvýznamnějším literárním počinem roku 1941 (Stuchl 4). V doslovecích k poválečným vydáním románu překladatel popisuje, co mu bylo v oněch měsících hnací silou. Svěřuje se, že „v autorovi pocítoval tichého spolubojovníka proti okupantům a velkou duchovní posilu v oněch dobách“ (Procházka 397). Nebývalý úspěch románu u čtenářů vysvětluje mj. tím, že symbolizoval „bojovný odpor vůči útlaku . . . nejhoršímu útlaku svých dějin“ (397). V recenzi nazvané „Amerika, jaká vskutku je“ poukazuje A. J. Urban na další přínos *Hroznů hněvu*. Vnímá jej mimo jiné jako korekci mýtu o americkém Divokém západě, který byl v meziválečném období šířen prostřednictvím filmů, rodokapsů a trampského hnutí (Urban 3).⁷

Asi málokterá země se v roce 1947 mohla pyšnit již čtyřmi vydáními překladu *Hroznů hněvu*. Dvakrát kniha vyšla v roce 1941, jednou pak v roce 1946 a 1947. Mimoto v roce 1947 vyšel i slovenský překlad (*Ovocie hnevu*). V témže roce se uskutečnila také první návštěva Steinbecka v Československu. V srpnovém vydání deníku *Pravda* se lze dočíst, že pozvání spisovateli zaslal Václav Kopecký, který v té době zastával funkci ministra informací („Zájem Johna Steinbecka o Československo“ 4). Během svého pobytu v Praze Steinbeck zhlédl i divadelní inscenaci své novely *O myších a lidech* v Realistickém divadle. Představení sledoval společně s ministrem sociální péče Zdeňkem Nejedlým a ministrem financí, Jaromírem Dolanským („John Steinbeck v Praze“ 5). Všichni uvedení ministři byli v té době členy KSČ a věrnými spojenci Klementa Gottwalda. Je tedy zjevné, že Steinbeckova návštěva byla využita Komunistickou stranou k propagaci její politiky, s níž se u nás v té době Steinbeck povětšinou spojoval. Dokládá to kupříkladu článek A. J. Šťastného v *Rudém právu*, který je nadepsán „Steinbeckova pouť z Nového světa do

Nové země.“ V juxtapozici proti Novému světu (tj. Americe) zde vystupuje v roli kladného „hrdiny“ Nová země (Sovětský svaz). Šťastný zdůrazňuje, že Steinbeck se k úspěchu „pracoval houževnatě . . . poctivým úsilím a pilnou prací“ a ve svém díle „líčí zubožené a zcela proti duchu ústavy nešťastné vydědence z amerického ráje“ (2). Vedle *Rudého práva* o Steinbeckově první návštěvě Československa nejčastěji referovaly *Svobodné noviny*, bez zjevných zásahů cenzury, přesto s již rozpoznatelnou prosovětskou rétorikou (Steinbeck do Československa zamířil po několikátýdenním pobytu v Sovětském svazu).

V návaznosti na výše citovaný článek A. J. Šťastného vyznívá text stejného autora ze 7. dubna 1948, nazvaný „Záhada Johna Steinbecka,“ jako aprílový žert. Šťastný sotva po půl roce na stránkách téhož deníku vylíčil spisovatele v poněkud odlišném světle. Steinbeckovi vyčítá ambivalentní obraz Sovětského svazu v cestopisu *A Russian Journal* (Ruský deník 1948), z něhož „si může každý vybrat co chce. I největší nepřítel SSSR si tam najde zrnka pro sebe“ (3). Se značnou mírou účelovosti připomíná, že Steinbeck „napsal několik knih, které budí dojem, jako by je psal uvědomělý marxista, ale on přitom marxismus vůbec neznal“ (3). Deziluze Šťastného mohla pramenit i z jeho mylného výkladu *Bíty* a *Hroznů hněvu*, za nimiž viděl „autora pokrokového, bojovně socialistického, ne-li přímo marxistického“ (3). Šťastný jako by nechtěl vidět, že byť se v těchto románech Steinbeck zabíral vykořisťováním dělníků a poukazoval na nešvary kapitalismu, nečinil tak z pozice socialismu či marxismu. Vlastně mu šlo primárně o důvěrné zachycení situace, s níž byl velmi dobře obeznámen. Jeho líčení šlo mimo jakákoli ideologická schémata a nemělo ani ambici nabídnout východisko. Tyto rysy Steinbeckova díla byly po únorovém převratu vnímány v lepším případě jako slabost a odchylka od nově nastoupeného kurzu. I v těch nejobektivnějších dobových recenzích Steinbecka se ideologicky orientovaná kritika stává leitmotivem. Například Jiří V. Svoboda v poměrně vyvážené recenzi knihy *Měsíc zapadá* (1948) vyjadřuje názor, že „se Steinbeck v poslední době snad ze strachu, snad z pohodlnosti konformuje často s nepokrokovými proudy dnešní Ameriky. Odsuzujeme ho za to“ („Skvělá nebo slabá kniha“ 6).

V této souvislosti je relevantní také postřeh Josefa Jařaba, který ilustruje zvýšenou citlivost vůči ideologické složce uměleckých děl poukazem na citát z deníku Jana Zábrany, který se datuje květnem roku 1948. Zábrana zde komentuje filmovou adaptaci novely *O myších a lidech*, kterou nadšeně zhlédl hned dva dny po sobě, následujícím způsobem: „Zajímavá je též touha všech osob ve filmu, touha po soukromém majetku, touha dělat na svém, být svým pánem, třeba ve skromných poměrech. Touha společná všem chudákům. Tím snad neúmyslně, ale opravdu a silně film vyznívá protikomunisticky“ (Zábrana 12). Jařab vnímá tato slova jako jeden z příznaků toho, „že se v poměrech komunistického Československa v průběhu následujících desetiletí literatura a kultura Spojených států změnila na alternativní politikum“ (Jařab 402).

Zcela jiného přijetí než u Zábrany se Steinbeckovi dostalo od již zmíněného Jaroslava Boučka v ideologickém průvodci západní literaturou *Trubaduři nenávisti: Studie o současné západní úpadkové literatuře* (1952). Domnělou degeneraci americké literatury Bouček dokládá také na kalifornských románech Johna Steinbecka:

S jakou duší [Steinbeck] počítal, když v „Toulavém autobusu“ předvedl odpornou sérii lidských kreatur, jako zruďné rodiče Pritchardovy, jejich úchylnou dceru Mildred, zvráceného chorého starce, zvířecího šoféra Juana a jeho ženu alkoholičku . . .

Nebo v „Řadě konserv“, když středem učinil vandráky, prostitutky a zvrhlého „doktora“ ... Steinbeck může sloužit jako příklad, kam může dojít talentovaný spisovatel, nechá-li se korumpovat vládnoucím vkusem. (20–21)

Na citované pasáži je pozoruhodný nejen Boučkův nesmířlivý tón, ale také jeho pochybený překlad titulu románu *Cannery Row* jako „Řada konserv.“ Byť si jej pro potřeby své brožury Bouček přeložil jen pracovně, je zjevné, že buď nevládl angličtinou, nebo román vůbec nečetl. Pravděpodobnější je druhá varianta, protože vysvětlením slovního spojení *Cannery Row* celá kniha začíná. Boučkova zjevného lapsu si v článku „*Některé pohledy na americkou literaturu*“ již v roce 1956 všimá i Josef Škvorecký, který s humorem a ironií kvituje, že Bouček nenahlédl do Jungova anglického slovníku: „Pak by nás byl třeba obdařil *Rvačkou v konservárně*, nebo dokonce *Konservovanou kaší*“ (189).⁸

V prvních letech své existence nešetřily Steinbecka ani *Literární noviny*. Ve sloupku nazvaném „Z džunglí americké ‚kultury‘“, což je nepochybně aluze na Sinclairův román *Džungle*, je Steinbeck anonymním redaktorem vykreslen jako „aktivní propagandista atomového imperialismu“ (8). V témže periodiku se o rok později objevuje český překlad stati ze sovětského listu *Litěraturnaja gazeta* s titulem „Filosofie“ Mr. Steinbecka,“ v němž J. Romanova kritizuje *Na východ od ráje* za „odporné scény násilí a zvrhlosti, kterými román oplývá“ (9). Romanova se rozhořčuje také nad tím, že

v průběhu celého románu napodobuje Steinbeck množství banálních motivů otřepaných v reakční buržoasní literatuře Spojených států... Reakčnost, protilidovost nynějšího světového názoru Steinbeckova se projevuje v každé z těch „filosofických“ vloček... V ideji kolektivu spatřuje Steinbeck největší nebezpečí naší doby a přeje si vyvolat u čtenářů nenávist k těm státům, které jsou založeny na zásadách kolektivismu. (9)

Romanova dokonce autora označuje za rasistu. Toto tvrzení dokládá především replikami postav románu. Naprosto tendenčně tak ztotožňuje názory románových hrdinů s názory autora.

Výpady proti Steinbeckovi v periodickém tisku byly provázeny bojkotem autora na ediční frontě. V letech 1948–1958 nevyšel v Československu jediný knižní překlad Steinbeckova díla. Po této dekádě se Steinbeck vrátil na scénu díky pátému vydání *Hroznů hněvu* (1958) a druhému vydání *Bitvy* (1959). U románu *Bitva* stojí za zmínku zdánlivě nepodstatný překlad titulu. Zatímco původní anglický název zní *In Dubious Battle* (V pochybné bitvě), v češtině se „pochybný“ prvek z pochopitelných důvodů zamlčuje. Zato obálku českého vydání *Bitvy* stylově zdobí zaťatá pěst v rudém provedení. Za textem románu pak následuje doslov s titulem „Steinbeckova nejbojovnější kniha,“ který nabízí správný ideologický výklad, jak bylo tehdy u tohoto „žánru“ zvykem. Šťastný zmírňuje ostrou rétoriku předchozích let, Steinbeck se mu „jeví jako veliký básník společenského rozkladu na konci kapitalistické éry, jako veliký kritik, soudce a hledač lidskosti...“, mýlí se jen tam, kde mu chybí to nejpřesnější poznání, které může dát jenom dialektický materialismus. Ten zná Steinbeck jenom zkresleně a spíš od jeho odpůrců“ (272). V tomto konkrétním případě je umírněný tón kritiky dán také faktem, že Šťastný dotyčný román přeložil a měl

zájem na tom, aby po dlouhých čtrnácti letech vyšel ve druhém vydání. Ve svém doslovu tak vedle kvalit knihy poukazuje také na její nejednoznačné ideologické vyznění.⁹

K *Bitvě* se ve svém doslovu k novele *O myších a lidech* vrací Vladimír Vendyš. I zde se mísí zasvěcené literárně kritické soudy s čistě ideologicky vedenou polemikou. Na adresu románu *Bitva* říká, že „puká pobuřující sociální skutečností, jak ji viděl očité svědek. Ale ten svědek se bojí z ní vyvozovat závěry, nebo to nedovede, a jakousi náhražku závěrů dá vyrábět biologicky filosofujícímu lékaři... A tak ústřední postavy, profesionální revolucionáři, jsou prostě výtvoři nepoučeného romanopisce“ (108). V této pasáži se zcela zřetelně vyjevuje typický rys tehdejší literární kritiky, spočívající v hodnocení krásné literatury skrze ideologické hledisko. Uvedený rys byl často doprovázen naprostou absencí kritického odstupu, jenž by umožnil ocenit i díla, která ideově nekorespondovala se světovým názorem kritika. Toto fatální nepochopení pregnantně vystihl Antonín Přidal ve své esejistické apologetice autora nazvané „Případ Steinbeck.“ V polemice s těmi, kteří autora haní za ideologickou bezradnost, Přidal klade otázku, „zda by se Steinbeck nezavděčil víc, kdyby místo románů psal rovnou učebnice politické ekonomie“ (51). Na adresu kritiků, kteří ve Steinbeckovi viděli nebo chtěli vidět kritika či obhájce určitého společenského zřízení, sám autor řekl: „Použil jsem malou stávkou v sadařském údolí jako symbol věčného a trpkého boje člověka sama se sebou... Nezajímá mě tlachání o spravedlnosti a útlaču, pouhých symptomech, které naznačují stav“ (In Steinbeck and Wallsten 98, překlad autora). Právě kritické ohlasy na *Bitvu* nejlépe ilustrují prvoplánové čtení Steinbeckova díla a přehlížení symbolických rovin, které hrají především v rané tvorbě autora důležitou roli.¹⁰

Ideologické táni let šedesátých s sebou přineslo i komplexnější hodnocení Steinbeckova díla. Kritici se již nesoustředili pouze na ideové a ideologické aspekty, zabývali se také uměleckou hodnotou díla. Po dlouhých letech tak byl čtenářům nabídnut mnohem plastičtější obraz autora. Mezi jinými k němu přispěl i Josef Svoboda v recenzi románu *Pláň Tortilla*, kde příběh Dannyho a jeho přátel pojímá jako podobenství, které je možno vykládat mnoha způsoby. Zájem o autora u laické i odborné veřejnosti stoupl poté, co se v roce 1962 stal Steinbeck laureátem Nobelovy ceny za literaturu. Jeho druhá návštěva Československa na podzim následujícího roku byla i proto ostře sledovanou událostí. Ve svém článku „O Steinbeckovi a jiných“ se k návštěvě autora vrací i Josef Škvorecký. Vymezuje se vůči mnoha jiným kritikům a „milovníkům literatury“, které Steinbeck zklamal nejen svým přílišným holdováním vodce a zamračeným výrazem, ale také svými posledními literárními výtvoři. Škvorecký ve Steinbeckově společnosti strávil v Praze mnoho hodin a nezastírá, že na něm pozoroval „ten starý, příznačný a úchvatný rozdíl mezi fyzickou podobou člověka a jeho podobou duchovní, která je v knihách“ (Škvorecký, „O Steinbeckovi a jiných“ 9). V článku ale především polemizuje s kritikou fundovanými v oblasti teorie, kteří však nedisponují tvůrčími schopnostmi. Vlastně jsou podle něj pravým opakem Steinbecka. Toho Škvorecký hájí jako autora knih, které jsou prodchnuty duchem člověka, jenž je mu blízký. Vyznává se z lásky ke všem jeho „literárním dětem“, které odmítá odměřovat na vahách. Svou plamennou obhajobu autora uzavírá Škvorecký následovně: „Tak Steinbeck vás prý zklamal. Ale něco vám řeknu: umělec, který hodil do světa tolik perel, může už zklamat jenom ty příslovečné tvory, kteří se živí vším možným, jenom ne perlami“ (Škvorecký 9).

Zastání se Steinbeckovi v polovině šedesátých let dostalo i od dalších osobností literárního života. Jiří Opelík se v článku „Hallo Mr. Steinbeck!“ „rozplývá“ nad knihou

Toulky s Charleym za poznáním Ameriky. Vykresluje Steinbecka jako člověka, kterému je „absolutně cizí jakákoli ortodoxie a fanatismus z ní se rodící; ustavičně zdůrazňuje ohraničenost vlastního pohledu na americkou skutečnost“ (Opelík 12). Podobně jako Škvorecký i Opelík zakončuje svůj text narážkou na své profesní kolegy, patrně především dogmatiky kolem Ladislava Štolla, když píše: „Teď už jenom čekám, že mi tuhle krásnou knížku o životě někdo ukradne“ (Opelík 12). Mýtus o „chátrajícím velikánovi“ vyvrací v již zmíněném článku „Případ Steinbeck“ i Antonín Přidal. Významnou složkou onoho mýtu je Steinbeckova údajná politická bezradnost. Přidal vyjadřuje přesvědčení, že *Toulky s Charleym* jasně dokazují, že Steinbeck není „politická naivka, která rozpory své země nevidí nebo nepoznává nebo dokonce za každou cenu ‚pseudofilosoficky‘ omlouvá“ (Přidal 50). Nestranným komentářem o „nepředvídatelných fluktuacích“, kterými procházelo hodnocení amerických autorů, včetně Johna Steinbecka, přispěl ve stati „Americká literatura v ČSSR po válce“ i Zdeněk Vančura.

V době, kdy Steinbeck úspěšně znovunabýval pošramocenou reputaci, přišel pro české čtenáře i kritiky šok v podobě autorovy obhajoby amerického vojenského tažení ve Vietnamu. Na počátku roku 1967 začal deník *New York Herald Tribune* uveřejňovat Steinbeckovy dopisy z Vietnamu, adresované fiktivní dívce. Odezva v českých periodikách na sebe nenechala dlouho čekat. Ještě v lednu vyšly dvě obsáhlé reakce, konkrétně „Vietnamský John Steinbeck... bez Charlieho“ z pera Evžena Štefana, a zejména text Arnošta Lustiga „Našel John Steinbeck pravdu?“, který vyšel v *Rudém právu*. Lustigův článek snad nejlépe vystihuje deziluzi, kterou mnozí Steinbeckovi čtenáři tehdy pociťovali. Lustig se v této obsáhlé polemice se Steinbeckem pokouší o objektivní analýzu, připouští, že zvěrstva byla páchána na obou stranách. Poukazuje především na nekonzistentnost Steinbeckova vietnamského angažmá s jeho literární tvorbou. V sérii rétorických otázek, na něž neexistuje uspokojivá odpověď, se Lustig mimo jiné ptá: „Ale co to musí být ve vzduchu, že to změní ducha a názory člověka, který doposud znamenal to nejlepší v Americe?“ (4). Rozčarování nad Steinbeckovým počínáním tlumočili kupříkladu i členové židovské obce v článku „Hledání pravdy a východiska.“ Stejně jako Lustig i anonymní autor tohoto článku nechápe, jak jedna a tatáž osoba může mít na svědomí *Hrozny hněvu* a *Zápisky z vietnamských cest*. Steinbeck „ztratil náhle tvář,“ uvádí se lakonicky v článku.

V letech 1967 a 1968 se v periodickém tisku jméno John Steinbeck zpravidla pojí s válkou ve Vietnamu. V některých případech dokonce nejde ani o spisovatele Johna Steinbecka, nýbrž o jeho stejnojmenného syna, který ve Vietnamu bojoval. V jednom případě novinové glosy citují jeho výrok o tom, že „tři čtvrtiny amerických vojáků v jižním Vietnamu se omamuje marihuanou“ („Tři čtvrtiny“ 3), jinde přinášejí zprávu, že „syn známého amerického spisovatele byl zatčen ve Washingtonu pro obvinění z pašování omamných jedů“ („21letý John Steinbeck“ 2). Nejednalo se sice o cílenou diskreditační kampaň, avšak Steinbeck se v těchto letech zmiňoval spíše v negativním kontextu války ve Vietnamu. Teprve ve druhé polovině roku 1968 byl zčásti rehabilitován. Jak uvádí ve své recenzi prvního českého vydání románu *Na východ od ráje* Václav Šašek, Steinbeck se „od svých vietnamských reportáží později sám distancoval“ (2). Tato recenze snad nejlépe vystihuje typický způsob psaní o Steinbeckovi v tomto období. Samotné recenzi románu, která je veskrze pozitivní, předchází obligátní připomínka autorova ideologického a morálního selhání. Podle Šaška „Steinbeckův postoj zarážel a odpuzoval“ a jeho dílo se nám „chtěj, nechtěj odcizilo,“ díky korekci svého názoru na Vietnam však „aspoň částečně získal

ztracený prestiž jako člověk“ (2). Steinbeck byl skutečně omilostněn, o čemž také svědčí již zmíněné první vydání knihy *Na východ od ráje* a šesté vydání *Hroznů hněvu* v roce 1968. V následujícím roce vyšly poprvé česky *Nebeské pastviny*, o rok později pak román *Neznámemu bohu* (Arbeit, Vacca 1516–1517).

Robinson Jeffers

Básně Robinsona Jefferse se knižního překladu dočkaly mnohem později než Steinbeckova próza. Poprvé se v knižní podobě Jeffers dostal ke čtenářům v roce 1958, kdy vyšla jedna z jeho narativních básní *Mara*, kterou přeložil Kamil Bednář. Bednář zasvětil překladu Jeffersovy tvorby poslední dvě dekády svého života a jeho jméno je v českých zemích s americkým básníkem nerozlučně spjato. Podle *Bibliografie americké literatury v českých překladech* však Jeffers v Československu debutoval na stránkách časopisu *Kvart* na přelomu let 1947 a 1948 (Arbeit a Vacca 811). Na konci roku 1947 vyšla na titulní straně *Svobodných novin* také krátká báseň „Lože u okna“ v překladu Františka Kožíka, který později proslul především svými životopisnými romány.

V roce 1970 Kamil Bednář publikoval ve zpravodaji americké Asociace Robinsona Jefferse článek nazvaný „Jeffers in Czechoslovakia“ (Jeffers v Československu). Hned v úvodním odstavci se svěruje, že Jeffersovy verše začal překládat již v roce 1950. Jednalo se však pouze o „šuplíkové“ překlady, které se předávaly z ruky do ruky. Ačkoli Bednář v této souvislosti neužívá slovo samizdat, jeho líčení distribuce i recepce Jeffersových básní samizdatovou literaturu nutně asociuje. Bednář vzpomíná, že „v těch časech – v padesátých letech – měl kult Jefferse příchut' zakázaného požitku“ (8, překlad autora). Pro dokreslení je třeba zmínit Bednářova slova v rozhovoru pro *Literární noviny* z roku 1967: „V době, kdy nemohl zaznít můj vlastní hlas, osud či múzy mi seslaly Robinsona Jefferse. Jeffers není běžný překladatelský čin. Mluvím skrze něho já sám“ (Burda 4). Byť se v citované pasáži nezapře Bednářův sklon k patosu, je nesporné, že některé jeho básnické sbírky ze třicátých let (*Kámen v dlažbě*, 1937 a *Kamenný pláč*, 1939), kdy Bednář Jefferse ještě neznal, mají mnoho společného s tvorbou amerického básníka. Nejnapadnějším společným rysem je akcentovaná symbolika kamene či apokalyptičnost.

Zatímco pro Steinbecka rok 1958 znamenal návrat k českým čtenářům po dlouhých deseti letech, tentýž rok je spojen i s knižním debutem Robinsona Jefferse. Přestože je patrné, že konec padesátých let znamenal uvolnění dogmatických poměrů v nakladatelské činnosti, první ohlasy na Bednářův překlad *Mary* se vyznačují schematičností. Ivo Fleischmann v *Literárních novinách* komentuje *Maru* ve stati s titulem „Amerika minulých let.“ Zatímco v úvodu Fleischmann konstatuje, že Jeffersovo dílo nelze číst jako obraz dnešní Ameriky, v tomtéž textu vyzdvihuje faktografii Jeffersových básní, jeho „portrét prostého Američana našich let,“ a dodává:

A objevujeme s Jeffersem psychu lidí, o kterých již tak dlouho zde v Evropě víme, že je duší nedospělou. Že je to duše dětí prosycená primitivní náboženskou výchovou, obhroublá přizemností mravů, které nutí vydělávat, jen vydělávat. Duše dětí, které touží po něčem lepším, ale které nevědí, po čem. Odtud jejich zběsilost, jejich komplexy, které je činí tak nebezpečnými, dostanou-li se do kulturní Evropy, kulturní Asie... Dostanou-li se tváří v tvář něčemu tak kulturnímu a vědeckému, jako je třeba marxismus. (4)

Ve své závěrečné úvaze přidružuje Fleischmann k Jeffersovi další americké autory, Hemingwaye, Faulknera a Steinbecka nevyjímaje, a uzavírá slovy: „Je jich hodně. Všichni těžcí, smutní, plní beznaděje. Tvář světa, od kterého je nutno se vzdalovat, nemá-li zvítězit zmar, který je také zánikem umění“ (4).

Ve zcela jiném duchu se již nese představení Jefferse v revue *Světová literatura*, které taktéž proběhlo v roce 1958. Zde byla otištěna poéma *Hungerfield*, která měla, také díky ojedinělému postavení časopisu, velký ohlas. Jak uvádí ve *Slovníku české literatury po roce 1945* Miroslav Zelinský, *Hungerfield* patřil mezi tituly publikované ve *Světové literatuře*, které měly „povahu zásadní informace, popř. inspiračního impulsu“ (Zelinský). Není samozřejmě možné přesně určit dopad této poémy a Jeffersovy tvorby obecně na českou literární scénu, následující odstavce však platnost Zelinského tvrzení do značné míry potvrzují. Platný je bezesporu výrok Kamila Bednáře, který tvrdí, že „Jeffers se zjevil v české poezii právě ve chvíli, kdy se česká literatura probouzela z mrazivého snu zvaného schematismus v literatuře“ („Jeffers in Czechoslovakia“ 8, překlad autora).

V roce 1960 se k Jeffersovi vrací výše citovaný Ivo Fleischmann v článku „Velký básník průhledného rozporu.“ Hned na prvních řádcích se pozastavuje nad nečekaným úspěchem Jeffersovy poezie v Československu: „Kdo by se nadál, že knihy veršů Robinsona Jefferse budou mít právě teď a u nás ohlas, který mají“ (4). Druhou polovinu pojednání o Jeffersovi zasazuje do ideologického rámce, ohraničeného učením Karla Marxe. Podle Fleischmanna jen marxistické vidění pomůže čtenáři zorientovat se v „pralese“ Jeffersovy poezie, kterou je „nutno číst do značné míry s krajně kritickým, dialektikou vyzbrojeným duševním úsilím“ (4). Svůj text uzavírá Fleischmann v duchu budovatelského optimismu: „My budeme číst Jefferse po svém... Všecko, co je v pokladnici lidské kultury cenné, patří nakonec a s konečnou platností strůjcem zítřka“ (4).

Ve zcela jiném duchu se nese recenze výboru *Jestřábí křik* (1960). Recenze z pera uznávaného českého spisovatele Jiřího Šotoly, příznačně nazvaná „Objev Ameriky v poezii“, líčí Jefferse jako jednoho z největších básníků 20. století. Šotolovo hodnocení je již prosté obligátních ideologických klišé, zaměřuje se na samotnou Jeffersovu tvorbu, její obsah i formu. Pozitivní ohlasy na Jeffersovu poezii Šotola vnímá mj. jako rehabilitaci epiky v kontextu moderní poezie. Stran obsahu, Šotola oceňuje neústupnost, s jakou Jeffers čelí lži a sebeklamu. Neopomíjí zmínit ani básníkův odpor k válce a na Jeffersovu adresu dodává: „Tvrději než nedůvěřuje v americkou civilizaci: tu civilizaci, která k válkám vede“ (4). Přes protiamerické ladění této části recenze je třeba poznamenat, že na rozdíl od jiných kritiků, Šotola nesmlčuje skutečnost, že Jeffers odmítá civilizaci vůbec, byť jeho vizi hodnotí jako „zjednodušující.“ V každém případě tato recenze představuje první jednoznačně příznivý pohled a předznamenává ústup ideologického hlediska, který je v šedesátých letech znatelný.

Robinson Jeffers zesnul 20. ledna 1962. Shodou okolností se v téže době na pulty českých knihkupectví dostala kniha *Pastýřka putující k dubnu*, která se u čtenářů setkala snad s největší odezvou ze všech básnickových děl. V první únorové dekádě se v českých periodikách objevilo hned několik nekrologů. S prvním přispěchal Jeffersův „dvorní“ překladatel Kamil Bednář. Píše v něm mimo jiné, že „Robinson Jeffers a Československo, to bude jednou zvláštní kapitola v jeho životopise. Čeští čtenáři pochopili Jefferse možná lépe než sami jeho krajané, nestalo se to u nás poprvé od Mozarta“ („Robinson Jeffers zemřel“ 2).

Jen o dva dny později svou poctu Jeffersovi přidává také jindy kritický Ivo Fleischmann. V textu s titulem „Básník trvalého významu“ Fleischmann ctí žánr nekrologu, o Jeffersovi píše pochvalně a uctivě. Jeffersova poezie už pro něj není dekadentní, vlastně spíše kritická vůči americké společnosti. O nebývalém ohlasu jeho poezie u nás prohlašuje, že „je jistě příznačný pro rostoucí zájem nových pokolení nového společenského řádu o problémy etického charakteru“ (9). Hold Jeffersovi formou básně („Předjitiťní: Za Robinsonem Jefferssem“) složil také František Vinant.¹¹ Báseň se objevila dokonce na titulní straně týdeníku *Kultura*. Jeffersovo jméno se o několik měsíců později objevovalo na novinových stránkách také díky jeho básnickému zpracování Euripidovy klasické tragédie *Medea*, které bylo inscenováno v libeňském divadle. Zatímco recenze v *Literárních novinách* („Médein Jestřábí křik“) či *Divadelních novinách* („Euripidova a Jeffersova Medea“) hodnotí Jeffersovo zpracování vesměs kladně a bez ideologického balastu, Jan Kopecký, uznávaný teatrolog, v *Rudém právu* sice uznává nesporné kvality Jeffersova díla, zároveň ale dodává, že „vyznavač Marxovy devízy 'člověk-to je svět člověka' nemůže při vši účtě k tomuto dílu smlčet, že jeho filosofie je na opačném pólu přesvědčení našeho“ (Kopecký 4).¹²

Při mapování obrazu Robinsona Jeffersa v Československu první poloviny šedesátých let hrají značnou roli předmluvy a doslovy k překladům, které byly v režii samotného Bednáře. I zde je patrná politická linie, bez níž by dost možná Hlavní správa tiskového dozoru knihu k vydání neschválila. V tomto ohledu si Bednář počíná elegantněji než mnozí jeho souputníci. Vystačí si i bez odkazů na marxismus, komunismus, kapitalismus a jiné -ismy, kterými se tehdy v dosloveh zrovna nešetřilo. Požadavkům ideologů vyhovuje tím, že účelově a účelně přirovnává vybrané aspekty Jeffersovy tvorby k režimem propagovaným klasikům, například ke Gorkému, Máchovi, Němcové či Halasovi. Bednář také často akcentuje protiválečnou dimenzi Jeffersovy poezie. V souladu s Jefferssem odsuzuje válku jako celek, aniž by stranil jedné ze stran konfliktu, jak to činí kupříkladu v doslovu k *Hřebci grošákovi* (83). V doslovu k již zmíněné *Pastýřce putující k dubnu* je Bednář poněkud adresnější. Jeffersův negativní postoj k soudobé společnosti ztotožňuje s kritikou „americké civilizace.“ Za ulitbu ideologickým lektorům lze považovat i pasáž z *Pastýřky*, na níž Bednář ilustruje Jeffersovo soucítění se sociálně a ekonomicky utlačovanými vrstvami americké společnosti: „Každoročně vzrůstají na zdejším pobřeží daně a je stále těžší udržet vlastní půdu; chudí se proto musejí stěhovat jinam“ (Bednář, Doslov k básni *Pastýřka putující k dubnu* 95). Netřeba asi dodávat, že tato pasáž je v kontextu dané básnické povídky nevýznamná a snadno tak u čtenáře projde bez povšimnutí.

Bednář se ve svých komentářích zhusta vyjadřuje k jiné podobě útlatu, kterou Jeffers v poezii zachycuje – k útlatu etnických menšin. Věnuje se především indiánským postavám v Jeffersových básních. Bednář sympatizuje s indiánem Onoriem, který vystupuje v *Pastýřce* a v *Ženách od mysu Sur*. Na něm podle Bednáře básník chtěl demonstrovat, že „právě tato rasa byla blíže k životu a lásce než běžný americký typ“ (Bednář, Doslov k básni *Pastýřka putující k dubnu* 95). Bednář v tomto udeřil na strunu, která rezonovala u českého publika. To na vztah Američanů k indiánům pohlíželo poněkud zjednodušeně, každopádně velmi kriticky. Problematiku rasového atavismu rozvádí Bednář i v předmluvě k výboru z Jeffersovy tvorby *Básně z Jestřábí věže*, který vyšel roce 1964 v neobvykle vysokém nákladu 24 tisíc výtisků.¹³ Zde upozorňuje na mimoliterární okolnosti autorova života: „Není bez významu ani drobný, ale příznačný fakt, že se Jeffers po leta přátelil

s největším černošským básníkem Ameriky Langstonem Hughesem a dokonce mu kdysi dal svůj rukopis s přáním, aby byl vydražen ve prospěch obhajoby uvězněných černochů“ (Bednář, „Samotář myslící na osud lidstva“ 21). Nutno podotknout, že Langston Hughes patřil k několika málo americkým autorům, kteří v Československu vycházeli i v nejtěžším období politického konformismu a dogmatičnosti, tj. v padesátých letech. Jeho verše překládal dokonce Jaroslav Bouček, autor již zmíněných *Trubadurů nenávisti*.

O strmě rostoucí popularitě Jefferse v první polovině šedesátých let svědčí nejen zájem o autora v periodickém tisku, ale také ohlasy v původní tvorbě. Velmi důležitou součástí kulturního kvasu počátku dekády byla v Praze poetická kavárna Viola. V ní se kromě veršů Ginsberga či Ferlinghettiho inscenovaly také básně Jeffersovy. Jistou měrou k tomu přispěla i skutečnost, že spoluzakladatelem Violy a jedním z recitátorů byl syn Kamila Bednáře Jiří.¹⁴ O univerzálnosti Jeffersova apelu u nás svědčí také pestrá škála českých autorů, kteří se k Jeffersovi ve své tvorbě obraceli. Patří mezi ně polistopadový český premiér a předseda Senátu ČR Petr Pithart, který v roce 1962 publikoval „Dopis R. Jeffersovi,“ napsaný ve verších (Pithart). V téže době oslovili ve své poezii Jefferse také Ivan Diviš a Egon Bondy. Diviš své „krátké psaní“ Robinsonu Jeffersovi posílá

až do kamenné vesnice, kde žiješ,
nevrlý, nerudný,
ruce složené na vazbě světového žaltáře,
jehož četba tě tak zklamala
a který my, na opačné straně rozrýhované buňky,
trháme prudce ve hřbetě a přetiskujeme
v čítanku plnou rudých jablek... (51)

Zatímco Divišovi rudá jablka zhořkla v ústech natolik, že v roce 1969 emigroval do západního Německa, Egon Bondy jen zatrpkle pozoroval a komentoval Jeffersovo počínání:

Robinson Jeffers mohl vlastníma rukama
z žulových kvádrů přinášných od moře
vystavět pro svou ženu dům
Já mohu leda na brigádě okopávat šnytlik
nebo vlastníma rukama z žulových kvádrů
stavět novou přehradu jež bude napájet
slabým světlem několik vesnických žárovek
a vysokým napětím novou zbrojní továrnu (111)

Jeffers Bondyho neinspiroval jen po ideové, ale také po formální stránce. Jak uvádí Milan Machovec, který edičně připravil rozsáhlý výbor Bondyho poezie *Ve všední den i v neděli...* (2009), Bondy v „prozaizaci poezie však jistě nebyl ojedinělý, jedním z jeho velkých učitelů byl např. Robinson Jeffers“ (In Dvořák). Jeffers měl zásadní vliv i na generaci nejmladších básníků. Potvrzuje to mimo jiné Ludvík Hess, spoluzakladatel a šéfredaktor literárního časopisu *Divoké víno*. Karel Hvižd'ala se v rozhovoru pro *Host* (5/2007) ptá Hesse, kdo pro něj a jeho spolupracovníky byl v šedesátých letech vzorem. Hessova odpověď zní následovně: „Milovali jsme Robinsona Jefferse, ten byl pro nás modla“ (Hvižd'ala 48).¹⁵

O tom, že se Jeffers v Československu brzy stal obecně známým pojmem svědčí také způsob, jakým byl pojednán ve dvou literárně laděných cestopisech z pera Miroslava Holuba (*Anděl na kolečkách*, 1963) a Ireny Dubské (*Americký rok*, 1966).¹⁶ Ani v jedné z těchto knih nemusel být Jeffers čtenáři představen, jejich autoři jej již pojímali jako osobnost obecně známou. Obrazy Ameriky z pera Holuba a Dubské nesporně ovlivnily smýšlení čtenářů o Americe. Vždyť patřily ve své době k několika málo relativně věrohodným portrétům země, která byla především v padesátých letech a pak v období normalizace ustavičně demonizována. Není bez zajímavosti, že Holub při popisu Jeffersova kraje zdůrazňuje, že divokost Carmel a okolí byla zdecimována sterilní průmyslovou civilizací, zatímco Dubská dějiště dobře známých básní poznává a utvrzuje se v tom, že je ideálním místem „pro dramatickou a prapůvodní konfrontaci člověka a světa“ (Dubská 173).¹⁷ Nelze se tedy divit, že když v roce 1965 navštívil Prahu kalifornský spisovatel Irving Stone, žasl nad ohlasem svého krajana Jefferse u nás i neuvěřitelným nákladem vydání jeho básní (Maršíček 2).

S uvolněním poměrů na politické scéně se v polovině šedesátých let osměluje ve svých komentářích k překladům i Kamil Bednář. V doslovu k básnickému dramatu *Ženy od mysu Sur* již Bednář necítí potřebu kamuflovat, jeho výklad je prostý zjednodušujících narážek na zkorumpovanost Ameriky, které byly ještě nedávno nezbytností. Nejen že Bednář odhaluje univerzálnost Jeffersovy kritiky civilizace a lidského pokolení obecně, ale dovoluje si i interpretaci, která se v našem politickém kontextu těžko dala číst jinak než jako popis let právě minulých. Píše o „bludu moderních tyranů a diktátorů, kteří nevidí jedince, ale pohybují milionovými armádami poddaných, nehledíce na bolest či radost jedince, nýbrž na součet všech radostí a bolestí – čímž je možno s diktátorským optimismem vytvořit pro jedince pravé peklo na zemi“ (Doslov k básnické povídce *Ženy od mysu Sur* 163).

O politickém „otevlování“ v souvislosti s Jeffersem píše v článku „Na západ od ráje“ také Milan Hulík, který se v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech zapojil do řady protirežimních aktivit. Hulík v článku věrně líčí, co v očích mladé generace Jeffers v šedesátých letech představoval. Zdůrazňuje kontrast Jeffersovy poetické mluvy s komunistickou hantýrkou. Připomíná klíčovou roli, kterou při popularizaci Jefferse sehrála kavárna Viola. Především ale upozorňuje na jiný faktor, který do značné míry vysvětluje oblibu Jefferse u nás, totiž na dobový politický kontext:

Tehdejší popularita tohoto básníka v Československu měla samozřejmě co dělat i se samotnou skutečností, že byl básníkem americkým. Adjektivum „americký“ v té době mělo mnoho synonym. Pro komunisty „imperialistický“, pro nekomunisty „svobodný“ a „demokratický“. I Jeffers byl přísně cenzurován. Možná, že kdyby byl v Americe známější, tak by jej komunističtí cenzoři asi nepovolili. Takto mohl být dokonce prezentován jako básník, kterého objevují socialističtí čtenáři, zatímco kapitalističtí nakladatelé jej pro jeho pokrokovost nechťejí tisknout... Jeffers byl ve své době populárním autorem, četly jej dvě generace Američanů, největší slávy si však užil u nás, jeho českoslovenští čtenáři byli nejvnímavější. (Hulík)

Hulík na malém prostoru otevřel hned několik důležitých aspektů recepce básnickovy tvorby u nás. Přestože linie mezi komunisty a nekomunisty nebyla tak ostrá, jak ji Hulík načrtl, jeho vysvětlení je v zásadě platné. Jak již bylo řečeno, v komunistickém

Československu existovalo velmi omezené množství informačních kanálů, z nichž se člověk mohl dozvědět spolehlivé informace o zemi, která byla propagandou prezentována jako říše zla. Hulík má jistě pravdu v tom, že americká poezie, včetně té Jeffersovy, byla mnohými vnímána jako politikum. Hodnotný je i jeho postřeh ohledně apropriace Jeffersa socialistickým čtenářem a tendenční označení jeho poezie jako ostře protiamerické. Těžko soudit, z jakých informací Hulík vychází, když mluví o přísné cenzuře básníka. Sám Bednář tuto domněnku nepotvrdil ani v poměrně otevřené zpovědi v rozhovoru s Vladimírem Burdou v *Literárních novinách*. Poměřovat slávu Jeffersa v Československu a v Americe je ošidné. I když o nesmírné popularitě básníka v Československu se zmiňují i přední američtí odborníci na dílo Jeffersa,¹⁸ v absolutních číslech se ve Spojených státech prodalo nepochybně více výtisků jeho veršů než u nás. Relativní číslo v poměru na obyvatele však hovoří výrazně v náš prospěch. Podle Bednářovy ženy Emilie se v Československu prodalo přibližně 120 tisíc výtisků Jeffersovy poezie v překladu jejího manžela („Research in Foreign Translation“ 8).

Ačkoliv Jeffers měl u nás největší ohlas zejména v šedesátých letech, jeho básně vycházely i v období normalizace. Čtenáři se však mohli s Jeffersem setkat i v pozoruhodné knize Kamila Bednáře *Přátelství přes oceán* (1971), která je vyznáním obdivu básníkovi a zároveň jeho životopisem. Žádný jiný text tak průzračně nevyjevuje fascinaci Jeffersovou poezií, která tehdy postihla řadu čtenářů. Z mnoha pasáží je zjevné, že Bednář se do Jeffersova díla nořil, aby utekl od ponuré reality doby a místa, které obýval v reálném životě. Již v úvodu knihy tento pocit explicitně vyjadřuje: „[E]xistence Robina a jeho poezie, to že ji překládám, že skrze ni žiji v kouzelném snovém světě, pohádkovém, a přitom nanejvýš reálném, to všechno je nepochopitelný zázrak...“ (8). Rád se nechal pohltit divokostí pobřežní krajiny Big Sur a nekonečností oceánu, které umenšovaly jeho „klausrofobii, úzkost z uzavřeného prostoru,“ kterou tehdy Bednář podle svých slov trpěl (12). Představa rozlehlého Tichého oceánu, která se jako leitmotiv vine celou knihou, pomáhala Bednářovi zbavit se sevřenosti a otevírala netušené prostory představivosti: „Pacifik. To slovo zní trochu ocelí, je to největší oceán země, je v něm nejvyšší pro nás představitelná svoboda, je v něm nezkrotnost, gigantická síla a nadzemská krása“ (21).

Překládání Jeffersa Bednář považoval za „očistnou koupel“. Toto přirovnání má v kontextu Bednářova života a tvorby zřetelně duchovní rozměr. Bednář se identifikuje s Bratrem Antoniem (Williamem Eversonem), který považoval Jeffersa za svého „guru“, v jehož knihách hledal přítomnost „spirituální a psychologické substance“ (156). Obdobně své vnímání Jeffersa Bednář vyjádřil i v článku „Jeffers in Czechoslovakia.“ V něm akcentuje nezměrnou spirituální sílu básníka, která mu dodávala odvahu čelit pravdě. Bednář zde uvádí i příklad osmnáctiletého chlapce, který se mu svěřil, že s Jeffersem nemá strach, zatímco bez něj ano (8). Tyto výroky, stejně jako mnoho dalších, mají nesporný politický podtext. Bednář Jeffersa prezentuje jako stavitele odolné kamenné věže, ale také trvalejších a hodnotnějších světů než byl ten, ve kterém tehdy přebýval Bednář. Soustavně na něm oceňuje spirituální přesah, který byl v rozporu jak s dogmatickou vírou, tak s vědeckým ateismem.

Nepřekvapí tedy, že v atmosféře socialistického Československa nabýval Jeffers a jeho dílo téměř kultovních rozměrů.

Doslov

Jak již bylo uvedeno výše, doslov byl v diskutovaném období svěbytným žánrem, jenž spočíval v návodu, jak si dané dílo správně politicky vyložit. V tomto případě má jiný účel. Jednak nabízí stručné srovnání osudu Steinbecka a Jefferse v Československu, jednak v kontrastu k prologu, který nahlíží na vydávání americké literatury u nás obecně, nastiňuje příběhy několika konkrétních lidí, kteří nám tvorbu autorů zprostředkovávali, ať už jako překladatelé, nebo jako kritici.

Zcela zásadní rozdíl v recepci těchto dvou kalifornských autorů spočívá v tom, že zatímco Steinbeckovy knihy se k českému čtenáři dostaly většinou s nevelkou prodlevou,¹⁹ u stěžejních Jeffersových poém tato prodleva činila několik desetiletí. Zatímco Steinbeck se četl a poměřoval se svými reálnými literárními soupeřníky a soupeři, především Faulknerem a Hemingwayem, Jeffers se u nás v šedesátých letech stal kultovní postavou až s beatnickými autory (Ginsberg, Kerouac, Corso či jim blízký Ferlinghetti). Vždyť repertoár poetické kavárny Viola sestával z valné části právě z básní beatníků a Jefferse. Přitom Jeffers v té době byl ve své rodné zemi jen málo známým autorem, jeho věhlas z let dvacátých a třicátých byl zapomenut. To však svědčí o tom, že Jeffersova poezie byla nadčasová, její ohlas nebyl tolik závislý na společenských poměrech. Jeho verše se v různých podobách vyjadřují k zotročení lidského ducha, ať už tyranskou vládou, moderní vědou a technikou či prostými lidskými touhami. Steinbeckova obliba byla také spojena s osvobodzováním člověka, avšak na méně subtilní rovině. Steinbeck byl a stále je u nás vnímán především jako sociálně orientovaný spisovatel, který zachycoval a pranýřoval zejména ekonomický útlak. Je bez pochyby, že tento pohled je příliš omezený a nepostihuje hlubší vrstvy autorova díla. Pojednání na toto téma však vyžaduje zevrubnější rozbor, který jde nad rámec tohoto textu. Lze však s jistotou říci, že Steinbeck byl cenzury a kritiky paradoxně hodnocen přísněji než Jeffers, protože se očekávalo, že všechny jeho knihy budou stejně kritické vůči americké společnosti jako *Hrozny hněvu*.

O tom, že při vydávání i čtení americké literatury byla ideologie určujícím prvkem, vypovídá také životní příběh několika výše citovaných osob. Jaroslav Bouček, autor propagandistické knihy *Trubaduři nenávisť: Studie o současné západní úpadkové literatuře*, byl v letech 1949–1956 šéfredaktorem nakladatelství Mladá fronta. Podle Evy Kondrysové si vedl v této pozici velmi dobře a vydal řadu kvalitních knih. Ironií osudu byl obviněn z ideologické diverze a preferování západní literatury. Přes podporu celé redakce musel z tohoto postu odejít. V šedesátých letech psal Bouček pro *Rudé právo*, ale i tamější působení musel z politických důvodů na začátku normalizace ukončit (Kondrysová). Velmi pohnutý a plný zvrátů je také život Aloise Josefa Šťastného, který překládal i vykládal Steinbecka. Do historie se nesmazatelně zapsal atentátem na předsedu první československé vlády, Karla Kramáře. Kramář dva výstřely zblízka přežil jen díky náprsní tašce, od níž se patrony odrazily. Díky svému otci, který byl tehdy senátorem, dostal Šťastný milost a brzy nato vycestoval do Ameriky. Po svém návratu se profiloval jako zarputilý kritik kapitalistické Ameriky. Také díky své revoluční minulosti se těšil přízni KSČ, tedy až do roku 1968, kdy na protest proti invazi vojsk Varšavské smlouvy vystoupil ze strany (Kondrysová). Téměř exkluzivní překladatel Jefferse, Kamil Bednář, nikdy nepodlehł svodům komunismu, jakkoliv umně dokázal Jefferse prezentovat komunistickým cenzorům. Ve třicátých letech psal existenciálně laděnou poezii a za druhé světové války byl považován

„za vůdčí osobnost nastupující básnické generace“ (Janoušek a kol. 161). Po únorovém převratu v roce 1948 se z politických důvodů stáhl na nějakou dobu jako autor do ústraní. Začal se věnovat mimo jiné překládání a původní tvorbě pro děti. V pozdější vlastní tvorbě se již k existencialismu nevrátil, svou tvůrčí osobnost však uplatnil v kongeniálních překladech Jeffersovy poezie.

Poznámky

¹ Receptce díla Steinbecka a Jefferse v období normalizace tvoří neméně zajímavou kapitolu. Výklad obou autorů byl i v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech zatížen ideologií, která měla zpravidla subtilnější podobu. Toto období si nepochybně zaslouží samostatné pojednání.

² V názvu článku figuruje tehdejší název země (Československo), analýza je však zaměřena výhradně na české překlady a jejich kritickou odezvu v česky psaných periodikách. Pro větší plynulost textu jsem se také rozhodl v článku pojímat jméno Amerika (a odvozené tvary) jako ekvivalent Spojených států amerických.

³ Ulmanová ve svém článku také věnuje pozornost roli SNKLHU. Upozorňuje na programovou snahu o glorifikaci dělníka skrze vybrané americké tituly. V neposlední řadě poukazuje také na skutečnost, že SNKLHU mělo hlavní slovo při rozhodování o politické korektnosti knih (33).

⁴ Co se týče počátku ideologického tání v Československu, (literární) historikové se neshodují v jeho datování. Zatímco Maruška Svašek („The Politics of Artistic Identity: the Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s“) jej datuje koncem padesátých let, Jiří Knapík („K počátkům ‘tání’ v české kultuře 1951–1952“) jej spojuje s rokem 1953. Osobně se ztotožňuji s názorem Rudolfa Vévody („Mezi Seinou a Vislou. Kulturní politika v čase ‘tání’: polský model“), který v této souvislosti uvádí rok 1956.

⁵ Významná role časopisu *Světová literatura* při zprostředkování (anglo)americké literatury v Československu je zevrubně popsána ve stati Zuzany Semínové „Počátky časopisu Světová literatura a angloameričtí autoři.“

⁶ Podle slov významné redaktorky a překladatelky Evy Kondrysové posílal Procházka překlad do tiskárny po stránkách, aby tak urychlil celý proces (Kondrysová).

⁷ Tomuto tématu se podrobněji věnují Don Sparling a Tomáš Pospíšil („Thirteen Ways of Looking at America“) či Petr Kopecný („The Wild West through Czech Eyes: Cowboys and Indians in the Heart of Europe“)

⁸ Česky vyšel román knižně pod názvem *Na plechárně* (SNKLHU, 1965).

⁹ Šťastný tak činí přesně v míře, jež uspokojila ideologické pracovníky Hlavní správy tiskového dohledu, kteří fakticky schvalovali konečné znění každé jednotlivé stránky. Taková byla praxe u překladové literatury v padesátých letech. Schvalovací procedury, v nichž se redaktori s cenzory často dohadovali o znění jediné věty, věrně popsala v rozhovoru pro *Souvislosti* Eva Kondrysová (Semínová, Valášek 97–104).

¹⁰ Do mozaiky pozoruhodných ohlasů na tento román lze zařadit také pasáže z doslovů na jiné Steinbeckovy knihy, kupříkladu doslov Jaroslava Schejbala k *Toulavému autobusu* (Praha: Máj, 1966).

¹¹ František Vinant (vlastním jménem František Petiška), bratr Eduarda Petišky, patřil mezi významné postavy literární scény šedesátých let. V roce 1963 se stal prvním šéfredaktorem kulturního měsíčníku *Tvář*.

¹² Jan Kopecný v šedesátých letech působil jako profesor a vedoucí katedry dějin a teorie divadla na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy. V letech 1968–69 dokonce zastával post náměstka

ministra kultury. V roce 1971 však byl z Filozofické fakulty propuštěn a během normalizace se živil mj. jako čerpač vody (Blažíček).

¹³ Tato předmluva byla použita i jako doslov ve výboru Jeffersovy poezie *Maják v bouři* (1983), který připravila k vydání 11 let po Bednářově smrti jeho žena Emilie. Jedná se o nejreprezentativnější výbor Jeffersova díla, jaký v Československu kdy vyšel.

¹⁴ Jiří Bednář sice nezasvětil Jeffersovi tak velkou porci svého života jako jeho otec, zato jej však popularizoval v divadle a televizi. Napsal scénář k filmu *Cawdor a Fera* (1986). Jefferse adaptoval na televizní obrazovce i po sametové revoluci ve snímcích *Gudrun* (1996) a *Samota* (2002). Na jeffersovské motivy napsal dokonce libreto k opeře *Nenávistná láska*, která byla uvedena ve Státní opeře Praha v roce 2002.

¹⁵ Ludvík Hess se k Jeffersovi ve vzpomínkách vrací i ve své dosud poslední knize *Romance o klisničkách a balady o ženách* (2010). I zde jej označuje za idol svých gymnaziálních let (91).

¹⁶ V kontextu této statě nelze nezmínit srovnávací studii Holubova *Anděla na kolečkách* a Steinbeckovy knihy *Toulky s Charleym*, nazvanou „Visions of 1960s America from American and East (European) Intellectual Perspective“, z pera Stanislava Koláře.

¹⁷ Příslušná kapitola byla otištěna také na stránkách týdeníku *Kulturní tvorba* 3 (1965). Význam Ireny Dubské jako portrétistky amerického života vyzdvihuje Josef Jařab (404). Není divu, vždyť zmíněný *Americký rok* vyšel v nákladu 20 tisíc výtisků.

¹⁸ Například Alex A. Vardamis tvrdí, že Jeffers je v Československu populárnější než v mnoha amerických regionech („Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Controversy“ 59).

¹⁹ O čekání na české překlady jednotlivých Steinbeckových knih podrobněji pojednává Martin Malenovský v článku „Americký spisovatel John Steinbeck v českých překladech.“

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Book Reviews

Petr Chalupský.

The Postmodern City of Dreadful Night. The image of the city in the works of Martin Amis and Ian McEwan.

Berlin: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller, 2009.

Petr Chalupský in his *The Postmodern City of Dreadful Night* presents selected novels by the contemporary British writers Martin Amis and Ian McEwan. The city, principally London, is the main theme. It is not only the setting of the novels, but also a symbolic connecting line which influences the behaviour of the protagonists. Chalupský attempts to show the importance of the city in novels written during 1980s and 1990s. He describes several roles played by the city in the novels and discusses its social, political, and psychological aspects. Chalupský's book is divided into four main chapters, which serve as an organised survey of the works of various writers who have used the city as a fundamental motif.

The first chapter could be seen as an introduction to the theme from a historical point of view. It traces the portrayal of cities in novels from the late Victorian era up to the present day, and outlines how the city has changed since then. This chapter also briefly discusses tendencies in the modernist depiction of the urban milieu in the works of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. It is a very useful summary of the theme in general, while the other parts of the chapter are mostly devoted to London and postmodern society.

The book outlines connecting threads between Amis's and McEwan's novels, although each writer is analysed in separate chapters. The second chapter provides the reader with a detailed analysis of Martin Amis's novels. Martin Amis is an urban writer and London is the setting of most of his novels. Chalupský has chosen four of them: *Other People: A Mystery Story* (1981), *Money* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), and *The Information* (1995). Although London is not always the central theme of the novels, it reflects the socio-cultural conditions of the protagonists. Chalupský suggests that some of the novels can be also read as socio-political works, as they incorporate particular historical events. Nevertheless, this kind of reading is highly speculative. A vivid emphasis is placed on the state of modern civilisation, which is seen as being in a process of moral decay. It is not necessary to stress the political issues that were current at the time of writing, although it is undoubtedly important to see certain historical connections. All novels are described as satirical pictures of modern Western society in the 1980s and 1990s, typified by consumerism, which prioritised money. The city, which used to be a flourishing centre of art, culture and trade, is now depicted as corrupted and declining. Chalupský analyses not only the plots of the novels, which are usually very simple and not essential, but also their form. He supports his analysis by literary theories and shows how Amis and McEwan employ postmodern devices in their writing. Besides presenting the plot and the form of the individual novels, Chalupský also analyses the psychology of the characters. In Amis's novels, the characters usually have their alter-egos, which make them ridiculous caricatures of society. In

McEwan's novels, the protagonists are not depicted as stereotypical caricatures, but they still bear features that are typical of city dwellers. Chalupský suggests that these features include alienation and isolation, which can be caused by the anonymity of life in the city. In his view, the novels can serve as a warning against contemporary negative social tendencies, such as violence, hostility or consumerism.

The third chapter is devoted to Ian McEwan's novels *The Cement Garden* (1997), *The Comfort of Strangers* (1997), *The Child in Time* (1992), and *Amsterdam* (1999). Chalupský explores the consequences of living in the city through violence, cruelty and fear, which are the main motifs of the novels analysed in the chapter. In comparison to Martin Amis, McEwan is considered less experimental, though he still to a certain extent implements a number of postmodern devices. Among the devices which are distinctive for both writers is the mixing of various genres. In order to present an emotional, social and political understanding of the novels, the chapter includes a characterization of narrative techniques and various strategies that are skilfully combined by McEwan. Chalupský is well acquainted with the works of both writers as well as with relevant theoretical concepts, so he is able to summarize the essential elements appearing in the novels and to compare them on the theoretical level. Unlike McEwan, Amis is a master of postmodern features such as flashbacks, his own appearance in the book as one of its characters, and various disruptions of the narration. However, Chalupský has found many postmodern features even in McEwan's writing.

In the fourth and last chapter Chalupský demonstrates correlations between modernism and postmodernism and presents the literary prospects of the city. He summarizes the effects of postmodern culture and points out how the phenomenon of the city is popular in contemporary literature. In spite of the fact that he examines mainly the works of Martin Amis and Ian McEwan, his research manifests a broad knowledge of related literary topics.

The core of the analysis is included in the second and third chapters, which describe the function of the city in the selected novels. Nevertheless, the selection of the novels should not have been restricted by their date of publication, because there are other novels, such as McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) or Amis's *Yellow Dog* (2003), in which the city plays a significant role, making them worthy of attention. In summary, Chalupský's research represents a valuable contribution to the field of contemporary British literary studies. The monograph includes supporting theoretical and historical contexts which help in understanding the text.

Jarmila Kojdecká
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice

Stanislav Kolář, Zuzana Buráková, and Katarína Šandorová.
Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature.
 Košice: Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, 2010.

The field of trauma studies has attracted increased scholarly attention over the past two decades. The diverse literature associated with the analysis and representation of trauma, violence, and their aftermath has led to a number of important advances in how we understand the scope and consequences of traumatic exposure. In the engaging and methodologically sophisticated new monograph *Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature* the authors make a valuable contribution to this growing field of research. Drawing upon selected works of American and British post-war literature, the study presents an important model for conceptualizing the field as an area of academic inquiry, and thus represents a new tool for the interpretation of literary works.

The introductory section addresses terminological and conceptual issues, illuminating the complexity and ambiguousness of the concept of trauma. Building upon seminal works in the field (Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra), Stanislav Kolář gives the reader the terms, background, and tools to understand further readings or discourse on the various topics covered. He discusses the usefulness for literary studies of the category of post-traumatic stress disorder – an individual's reaction to both physical and psychological trauma, which "involves a wide range of traumatogenic stressors, including not only combat and natural catastrophes, but also torture, rape, child abuse, incest, serious accidents and other life-threatening events" (6). Kolář also discusses LaCapra's concept of remembering traumatic events (acting out and working through), differentiates between individual and collective trauma, explicates theories of transgenerational transfer of trauma, and discusses the benefits and limits of the artistic representation of traumatic events.

In the first chapter Kolář applies the outlined concepts to selected works of American Holocaust literature. His analysis of E. L. Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*, S. Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, W. Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, C. Ozick's *The Shawl* and A. Spiegelman's *Maus* locates typical symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and focuses both on the psychological effects of the wartime trauma and the traumatizing consequences of American exile on the survivors. Kolář argues that life in America fails to heal the survivors' suffering: "While their prewar life in Europe is associated with wealth and social success, in their American exile they are depicted as despondent alienated strangers leading miserable, isolated lives" (55). The essay is successful in pointing out that the individual historical traumas portrayed in the examined novels are in fact closely linked to collective identity formation.

The second section introduces another form of trauma representation. *Hiroshima*, a nonfiction reportage assembled by the Pulitzer prize-winning author John Hersey, portrays the stories of six people who survived the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. Kolář discusses the relevance of testimonies in studying traumas of contemporary history, arguing that initial failure to understand fully the traumatic events does not exclude the survivors' ability to testify to what has happened. He considers the reverberations of the "Nuclear Holocaust" in the lives of the victims and demonstrates that "people in Hiroshima were traumatized even prior to the explosion, having lived in anxiety over the potential conventional bombing of

the city” (61), and that the long-term traumatic effects brought on by the cataclysm were even more serious after the victims’ realization of the extent of the losses.

In Zuzana Buráková’s contribution “Finding Identity through Trauma” the transmission of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma serves as a prism through which to view the strengthening of modern Jewish identity. The author examines three works of contemporary Jewish American writers: J. S. Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated*, L. Vapnaryar’s collection of short stories *There are Jews in My House*, and G. Shteyngart’s novel *Absurdistan*, and shows how various points of traumatic experience (the settings of which range from interwar Ukrainian shtetls to post-Soviet Russia) shape and disrupt identities. Furthermore, the approach seeks to explain the recent “return of tradition” in Jewish American writing (69). Despite numerous references to “tradition” and its “resurrection” in Jewish American literature, the article does not quite manage to explain and define what is meant by the term, which can be understood in religious, cultural, national and other terms with resulting constraints on the topic of identities. This is, however, a matter of the clarity of the exposition at this particular point rather than an issue of substance.

Transhistorical structural trauma is employed by Katarína Šandorová in her essay on traumatic experience of lesbian characters, analyzing three works of contemporary British novelists—S. Waters’ *Tipping the Velvet*, J. Trollope’s *A Village Affair*, and J. Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Šandorová broadens definitions of traumatogenic stressors to encompass “other traumatizing phenomena, such as education and the knowledge which is acquired at school and in the family,” as she argues that: “It is not only direct experience which can act as a traumatizer, but also contact with individuals who can transmit their own traumatizing beliefs or fears onto other people” (97). The analysis aptly underlines how the female protagonists are exposed to traumatizing social norms and conventions which are passed onto them by the community in the midst of which they live.

The volume provides a collection of valuable case studies using trauma as an explanatory model in literary studies. The authors make a strong case that we should continue to explore our categories regarding the concept of trauma and its application in cross-disciplinary research. The range of topics overcomes the Eurocentric focus that has dogged trauma studies as a discipline and suggests how various forms of trauma representations move beyond the individual and translate themselves across and between cultures. The book also offers a fine addition to the scholarly debate about investigations of identity and helps the reader understand the rich potential that trauma studies has held for sociological research.

Marie Crhová
Silesian University in Opava

Michaela Náhliková.

Jewishness as Humanism in Bernard Malamud's Fiction.

Olomouc: Palacký University, 2010.

The cover of Michaela Náhliková's book has a simple drawing—a bird standing on a barrel. The picture poignantly alludes to two short stories, "The Jewbird" and "The Magic Barrel" by Bernard Malamud, to whom her monograph is devoted. A quarter of century after Malamud's death, it is even more evident that this outstanding writer transcends the realm of Jewish American fiction. His work defies the strict categorization of ethnic literatures, providing us with a universal message. It is precisely this universal appeal of Malamud's novels and short stories that Náhliková underscores in her highly informative and well-structured study of the writer's work.

As indicated by a considerable number of monographs and essays, Bernard Malamud can be approached from various viewpoints, depending on what literary critics choose to highlight. He can be read as a realistic observer of Jewish immigrants in a big American city, a symbolist, or a storyteller mixing reality with fantasy in a Chagallesque manner; some critics even see him as an existentialist writer. As Sheldon J. Hershinow in his book *Bernard Malamud* (1980) remarked, the author's prose is a "distinctive mix of realism, myth, fantasy, romance, comedy, and fairy tale" (136). Michaela Náhliková presents Malamud, in accord with some other studies, as a humanist. She points out the humanistic tone of the author's stories and their deep moral message, which emerges from the conflict between man's personal freedom and his limitations. Malamud's monoanthropic concept of the Jews as suffering Everyman figures is seen through the prism of their responsibility, resulting in activity, whether embodied in Yakov Bok from the author's much-praised novel *The Fixer* or in many protagonists of his short stories.

Náhliková rightly claims that Jewishness in Malamud's fiction symbolizes more general, universal values and "serves as a platform for common human experience" (108). This is not to say that she ignores the unique cultural features of Malamud's characters, but again she interprets their Jewishness in connection with morality and humanism. Even so, in her interpretation, Malamud's marginalized hapless outsiders retain their Jewish identity despite the author's universalizing tendencies. In fact, Malamud is perceived as one of the most Jewish writers in American literature, and Náhliková's book confirms this judgment. She cogently shows that the Jewishness of his characters does not consist in their religion, but rather in their morality and humanity. Morris Bober from Malamud's early novel *The Assistant*, the old Jewish tailor Manishevitz from the famous short story "Angel Levine", Mendel from the title story of the author's second collection of short stories *Idiots First*, and many other characters are Jews attached to their own system of values, in which they find the truth. Despite numerous biblical allusions, Malamud's characters are conceived as mundane beings with their earthly joys and pains, more often with their Jobian suffering and lamentations. The nature of these characters compelled Náhliková to draw a distinction between Judaism and Jewishness, though in her claim that the division between them "was fully completed" (17), she seems to set up a rather artificial schism or even an insurmountable chasm between Jewish religious faith and cultural status—since there is always a space, even in Malamud's stories, for a possible symbiosis of the two. However, she is

right when she describes the writer's approach to faith as universal, not only religious in its content.

On the other hand, a lack of faith, as well as the denial of the Jewish past and subsequently of ethnic identity, can have devastating effects, as we can see from the interpretations of such stories as "The Silver Crown", "The Lady of the Lake", "The Last Mohican", or the novella "Man in the Drawer". The past, linked with suffering, is meaningful, and becomes a very important if not crucial component of Jewish identity. Ignorance or denial of personal and collective history brings about the loss of this identity, which may be restored in an encounter with an observant Jew, as some stories indicate, or paradoxically in a prison during the worst suffering (*The Fixer*). As Náhlíková suggests, faith is often accompanied by doubts, and the struggle between both forces is what characterizes Malamud's fiction. She is, however, aware that faith itself is not sufficient in Malamud's stories; it must be imbued with love that leads to humanity, as is seen from her approach to such stories as "Take Pity" and "Idiots First".

Malamud's emphasis on humanity is not in contradiction with the theme of anti-humanism—which, in Náhlíková's interpretation, functions as a warning. She thoroughly analyzes the various manifestations of this theme in Malamud's prose—anti-Semitism (e.g. *The Fixer*, "The Jewbird"), racial prejudices ("Angel Levine", "Black Is My Favorite Color", *The Tenants*), and the total dehumanization of mankind, reflected in Malamud's last finished novel *God's Grace*. She charts Malamud's pessimism, growing in intensity from *The Tenants* and *Dubin's Lives* and culminating in *God's Grace*. In her analysis of this novel, she uncovers various questions posed by Malamud, pointing out the biblical background of his story. The need for humanity is visible even in the stories with non-human characters (which are nonetheless endowed with human traits) whose human-ness is confronted with the inhuman behavior of human beings ("The Jewbird" but also "Talking Horse", a story which is not analyzed in the book). Throughout her book, Náhlíková rightly pays attention to a very significant feature of Malamud's prose, namely his use of grotesque and fantastic (magic) elements. She convincingly argues that in these stories, Malamud does not place emphasis on the supernatural, but rather on the human qualities of his protagonists. In combination with the realistic core of his stories, the supernatural ceases to be perceived as unbelievable, and instead becomes a very natural and integral part of their structure. Let us add that this strategy draws on Yiddish folklore, rooted in Eastern and Central Europe of previous centuries.

In the chapter "Jewishness and Schlemielhood: Man Versus Stereotype", Náhlíková clearly explains the terms *schlemiel* and *schlimazel* and applies them to Malamud's work. If we stick rigidly to the traditional definition of *schlemiel*, we can agree with the assertion, promoted by such authorities on Yiddish and Jewish culture as Ruth Wisse (in her book *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero*), that the figure of the *schlemiel* is gradually disappearing from American fiction. Yet I strongly believe that even in a society that glorifies heroes and superheroes, the figure of the *schlemiel* has not vanished. It has been transplanted and modified, deprived of some quintessential features such as simplicity and passivity. To put it simply, Malamud's characters are far away from S. Aleichem's Tevye, I. L. Peretz's Bontsha the Silent and I. B. Singer's Gimpel the Fool. On the other hand, I fully understand Náhlíková's concern about the rather reductionist approach of some literary critics to Malamud's characters, which results in a stereotyping of Jews as passive victims of

circumstances. She rejects the too straightforward concept of a Jew as a metaphor, because she is convinced that “categorizing the characters greatly reduces their fates and complexity” (107). Here she seems to respond to such scholarly studies as R. Alter’s “Bernard Malamud: Jewishness as Metaphor” (published in *After the Tradition: Essays on Modern Jewish Writing*) and S. Pinsker’s *The Schlemiel as Metaphor: Studies in Yiddish and American Jewish Fiction*.

One of the strengths of this book is the way in which it places Malamud’s work into its broader contexts—philosophical (for example Náhliková’s inspiring application of M. Buber’s philosophy to the analysis of the novel *The Assistant*), religious, social, and last but not least, literary. Also on the positive side, Náhliková’s interpretation includes many examples of intelligent judgments which reveal her sensitivity to Malamud’s texts. On the other hand, at times her monograph tends to be rather descriptive, especially in the passages in which the author inclines to retell the plot. Náhliková’s acquaintance with the secondary sources dealing with B. Malamud and Jewish American literature is impressive; however this virtue turns against her as her text is excessively overloaded with many quotations due to which her own voice tends to be diluted. Náhliková’s analysis does not cover Malamud’s complete works, as she refrained from interpreting his *Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition* and the novels *The Natural* and *A New Life*. Although Malamud’s first novel *The Natural* is the least “Jewish” novel in the context of his work, it forms an important part of his writings and therefore should not be omitted. On the other hand, Náhliková devoted space to the unfinished book *The People*. In her analysis of *The Fixer*, she mentions Israel Zangwill’s interest in the Mendel Beiliss, which inspired Malamud to write this novel. It would be beneficial to compare the novel with Maurice Samuel’s non-fiction book *Blood Accusation* and to trace the function of Malamud’s departures from real facts. A few inaccuracies have crept into the text (e.g. Bernard Malamud did not die in 1984 but in 1986; the final violent scene of *The Tenants* is more fantastic than real).

All in all, Náhliková’s monograph represents a very valuable contribution to studies of Jewish American literature in the Czech Republic. It addresses a highly challenging subject and manages to present one of the most interesting American writers of the 20th century as a conscious humanist for whom “being Jewish was an ethical stance” (115) and who wrote his books without sentimentalizing Jewishness.

Stanislav Kolář
University of Ostrava

Šárka Bubíková.

Úvod do studia dětství v americké literatuře.

Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2009.

Šárka Bubíková, in her *Úvod do studia dětství v americké literatuře* (Introduction to the Study of Childhood in American Literature), reflects current trends in the humanities. Childhood as a theme has received the attention of Czech scholars (see e.g. the 2006 publication by Milena Lenderová and Karel Rýdl, *Radostné dětství?*) and this book extends the available range of general information on such texts. The publication will suit not only those who are involved in the study of English literature, but also those readers who simply enjoy reading and want to go beyond the simple “consumption” of a book. In the introduction, Bubíková clearly defines the target group of her publication and places it on the boundary between a textbook and a popular book for readers with an interest in American literature but without the necessary linguistic skills to read the texts in the original. The purpose of the book is reflected in its chronological concept, where the author stresses time periods that brought some significant changes in understanding childhood.

The choice of the topic, and particularly the American literary milieu, is one of the many strong points of the book. It allows for the perception of childhood from a completely different perspective. Growing up in the Czech environment has its specific features, which have been well dealt with in other scholarly texts; however, the author of this book examines the particularities of growing up in the United States, the development of understanding of the phenomenon of childhood, and the changes in this understanding through different historical periods as reflected in the literature of the time. Such a concept offers ideal ground for cultural comparison, enabling one to identify the differences between growing up in Central Europe and the United States in different periods. The colonial period, for example, brought a very specific environment for a child – both physically and spiritually. According to Bubíková, the stress on moral upbringing and religious education is clearly reflected in texts published at the time. The threshold of modernity, with the advent of economic prosperity, brought about the decline of Puritan thought, and thus led to changes in the understanding of childhood: the increased respect for natural development, the turn away from seeing a child as a “little adult”, and so on. The modern era then brought a further emphasis on childhood as a time of development and learning, which is not to be quickly overcome, but on the contrary, used and enjoyed. Interestingly, the author’s portrayal of postmodern childhood seems to complete the circular development of the understanding of childhood by again bringing the notion of the child closer to that of the adult (similarly to pre-industrial times). Besides presenting the philosophical, religious, social, psychological and educational milieu of childhoods in different periods, Bubíková also makes very useful comparisons and references, thus producing a coherent picture of her chosen topic. The citations are well selected to precisely illustrate her points. Apart from the chronological approach, the author also strives to paint a complete social picture, and so she includes chapters on the ways in which childhood is influenced by racial or gender issues. The final chapter is devoted to the genre of the Bildungsroman, perhaps in order not to omit adolescence – the bridge between childhood and adulthood.

In summary, the reviewed publication presents not merely an introduction, but an insight into the phenomenon of childhood in American literature. The author’s expertise

and experience is clear from the organisation of the text, its informativeness and the variety of well-chosen citations from primary sources. The book *Úvod do studia dětství v americké literatuře* is a valuable teaching resource, and at the same time a good popular source for non-student readers.

Olga Roebuck
University of Pardubice

News, Announcements

Pětašedesátiny prof. Stanislava Kavky

Čeští anglisté a hispanisté, ale i četní kolegové v zahraničí si v září letošního roku připomněli životní jubileum významného jazykovědce, historika jazyka a idiomatologa, profesora PhDr. Stanislava Kavky, CSc.

Stanislav Kavka se narodil 21. 9. 1946 v Poličce. Vysokoškolská studia angličtiny a španělštiny absolvoval na FF UP v Olomouci, mj. u Jaroslava Macháčka, Jaroslava Peprníka a Jiřího Černého. Dalšího akademického školení se mu dostalo v Brně u Jana Firbase a v Polsku u Jacka Fisiaka. Profesní dráha Stanislava Kavky je od počátku spojena s anglistickým pracovištěm na dnešní Ostravské univerzitě. Třebaže několik let hostoval na univerzitách ve Skandinávii, Německu či Spojených státech amerických, v dějinách české lingvistiky bude oprávněně zapsán jako spoluzakladatel a současně hlavní představitel ostravské jazykovědné anglistiky. V Ostravě působil od roku 1970. Zažil zde jak období strastí, když na dlouhých dvanáct let bylo studium anglické filologie zrušeno, tak i šťastné chvíle obnovení katedry anglistiky a amerikanistiky po roce 1989. V devadesátých letech se (již v hodnosti docenta) pustil do aktivní organizační a pedagogické práce a pomohl vybudovat anglistické pracoviště, které se může směle měřit s obdobně zaměřenými katedrami na tzv. kamenných univerzitách v Praze, Brně a Olomouci. Zároveň učitelsky vypomáhal na nově vznikající katedře hispanistiky. V roce 2004 byl jmenován řádným profesorem.

Vědecká dráha Stanislava Kavky měla od počátku široký záběr. Figurovaly v ní zájmy o zvukovou stavbu anglického jazyka, o jeho morfologii, sémantiku a externí i interní dějiny. V posledních letech stojí v centru Kavkovy pozornosti idiomatický rozměr angličtiny, přetrvává zájem o historii jazyka se zaměřením na širší kontext germánské jazykové rodiny. Z publikačních výstupů prof. Kavky jsou nejvýznamnější dvě anglicky psané monografie: komparatisticky pojatá studie *Semantic Determinations within the Noun Phrase in Modern English and Spanish* (1980) a shrnutí jeho osobního pojetí idiomatologie *A Book on Idiomatology* (2003). Dílčí články k oběma tématům publikoval v prestižních odborných časopisech u nás i v zahraničí. Výrazným oceněním bylo přizvání ke spolupráci na kolektivní monografii *The Oxford Handbook of Compounding* (2009), vydané předním britským nakladatelstvím, do níž Kavka přispěl kapitolou *Compounding and Idiomatology*. Skrytými a dosud nedoceněnými vědeckými monografiemi jsou také některé z Kavkových učebnic a skript. Platí to dle mého názoru o učebních textech *The English*

Verb. A Functional Approach (1995) a *Past and Present of the English Language* (2007). Zejména v případě druhého jmenovaného autor přichází s vlastním přístupem (k vývoji angličtiny), který je přinejmenším na úrovni prezentace látky novátorský.



Prof. PhDr. Stanislav Kavka, CSc.

Jak vidno, Kavkovu činnost odbornou nelze oddělit od činnosti učitelské. Prof. Kavka bral úlohu vysokoškolského pedagoga vždy velmi vážně a mám zato, že se považuje mnohem více za učitele jazyka než jazykovědce-teoretika. Za dobu svého působení ve vysokém školství přednášel v podstatě všechny tradiční anglistické disciplíny: fonetikou a fonologií počínaje, slovtvorbou a idiomatologií konče. Pro všechny předměty, které kdy vedl, připravil taktéž studijní materiály, mnohdy nevšedního ztvárnění. Jejich úplný výčet, zahrnující nemalý počet revidovaných vydání, by zabral několik samostatných stran, proto uvedu pouze náhodně vybraný vzorek z posledních dvaceti let: *Mluvená a psaná forma současné angličtiny* (1990), *Úvod do anglistiky* (1991), *Nástin dějin anglického jazyka* (1992), *Morphology* (2000; in *Rudiments of English Linguistics*) a *Compounds and Compounding* (2006; s P. Štekauerem). Některé z česky psaných textů získaly v průběhu let anglickou podobu (např. *English Linguistics for Novices*, 2003; *Modern English Phonemics*, 2009), čímž Kavka materiálově zabezpečil své zahraniční studenty z vysokoškolských pracovišť v polské Ratiboři a v Žilině. Pro studenty španělského jazyka navíc sestavil pomocný učební text pro seminář historické mluvnice *Cesta k moderní španělštině* (1998).

Nezanedbatelná je také Kavkova činnost ediční a organizační. Do první kategorie spadá podíl na editorství druhého dílu zevrubného přehledu jazykovědné anglistiky

Rudiments of English Linguistics II (2003) a ediční dohled nad souborem statí *New Chapters in Functional Syntax* (2011). Z kategorie druhé lze za nejvýznamnější okamžiky považovat organizaci mezinárodní konference *European British and American Studies at the Turn of Millenium* v roce 1999 a především úspěšnou akreditaci doktorského studia anglického jazyka na katedře anglistiky a amerikanistiky FF OU v Ostravě. Kromě toho prof. Kavka zasedá v oborové radě pro doktorská studia a habilitační řízení v Košicích a pro své kvality odborné a lidské je žádaným oponentem i vedoucím řady disertačních a habilitačních spisů. V minulosti navíc působil na postu ředitele Vyšší odborné školy Junior College Laros v Ostravě a po mnoho let vedl ostravskou pobočku Kruhu moderních filologů.

Dosavadní práce našeho jubilanta je úctyhodná. Společně s poděkováním za to, co vykonal nejen pro ostravskou anglistiku a hispanistiku, mu do dalších let přejeme pevné zdraví, osobní pohodu a tvůrčí i životní energii.

Miroslav Černý
Ostravská univerzita

Universals and Typology in Word-Formation II

Venue: *Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia*

Date: *August 26–28, 2012*

The Conference aims to give an impetus to the research into universals and typology in word-formation by a joint effort of both morphologists and typologists. Papers discussing cross-linguistic correlations between individual word-formation processes, between WF processes, on one hand, and genetic types and/or geographically related languages, on the other, are most welcome. Space will also be given to any other typologically oriented research into word-formation as well as papers discussing the scope of word-formation and the relation between word-formation and other linguistic disciplines.

Main organizers

Jan Don, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Livia Körtvélyessy, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia

Pavol Štekauer, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia
Slávka Tomaščíková, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia

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Mark Aronoff, University of New York at Stony Brook, USA
Matthew Baerman, University of Surrey, United Kingdom
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Important deadlines

Submission of abstracts: **March 31, 2012**

Notification of acceptance: **May 21, 2012**

Submission of a registration form: **June 15, 2012**

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