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Milton Reigelman

The Love Song of Jeffrey Aspern Prufrock

When T.S. Eliot, an unknown 28-year-old, published "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry Magazine* in 1915, he launched a character who would become a synecdoche for the fragmented, disconnected, post-WWI modern age. Prufrock's confused and dreamlike interior landscape reflected the shifting, labyrinthine, modernist world that writers would explore for the next forty years. This halting, timorous, middle-aged, self-conscious male soon became a commonplace of twentieth-century literature.

It is the argument of this paper that Prufrock, unlike Jay Gatsby, did not spring from a Platonic conception of himself—or full-blow from the brow of his creator—but from a forebear created by the American writer whom Eliot most admired, Henry James. Because literary critics tend to deal with either poetry or fiction, there has been very little written about the relationship between these two towering innovators who bear such striking similarities. To be sure, F. O. Matthiessen did note in his groundbreaking 1935 work, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry,* "a fundamental sameness in point of view" between the two (53). And in 1979, A. David Moody wrote that "James was probably the obvious living writer for Eliot to read and study—the literary master of America and Europe. To read [James's] later fiction alongside Eliot's earlier poetry brings out the clear fact that Eliot read him not dutifully but passionately and to immense effect" (37). We know that the young Eliot also thought of James in a distinctly competitive way: in 1918 he wrote his mother: "I really think that I have far more *influence* on English letters than any other American has ever had, unless it be Henry James" (Gordon 145). Eliot titled one of his earlier poems "Portrait of a Lady"; another early Eliot poem, "Burbank with a Baedeker; Bleikstein with a Cigar," uses Jamesian language in its epigraph; and the first title of *The Waste Land* was *In the Cage,* the title of James' 1896 short story. Without a doubt, Eliot was much aware of James's towering presence.

The two writers, almost two generations apart, share some extraordinary biographical similarities. Both were raised by remarkable American families. Both attended Harvard, spent a crucial year in Paris, became heavily influenced by French literature, settled as expatriate writers in London, wrote important literary criticism, turned to drama in their later careers, became British citizens, and founded a new kind of literature marked by interior monologue and shifting points of view. After WWII, Eliot moved into the Chelsea flat on Cheney Walk, directly beneath the flat James had lived in before his death.

Both received honorary degrees from Harvard and Oxford. Both died childless in London after a long career. And as a final, ironic gesture of togetherness, were both cremated at Golders Green Crematorium.

On the other hand, though their lives overlapped by 28 years and both lived in London in the beginning years of WWI, they never met. James, essentially self-educated after his famously peripatetic young education, spoke only passable French. Eliot, a talented academic and linguist, knew many languages and spoke French, German, and Italian. James, a fiction writer and critic, wrote no poetry; Eliot, a poet and critic, wrote no fiction. All the more surprising, then, that a heretofore unacknowledged influence should be so strong.

What literary work does the following describe? The first-person narrator is a timorous, self-conscious, halting, middle-aged bachelor who, in spite of measuring out the risks, fears his words might seem "imprudent" (106). Events lead him to a "question" (108), perhaps even to "the riddle of the universe" (46)—but he recoils from asking it for fear he would be misinterpreted and rebuffed. Because he hesitates and "couldn't decide" (50), he realizes with poignant self-awareness that he is no heroic, romantic figure of old. To the extent his story has a plot, it is about his halting, ludicrously ineffective attempts at courtship. He "descends the stairs" (141), has a vision of "taking tea" (51), and imagines a voice in a "dying fall" (46). Women walk "to and fro" (130) in a large, upstairs room. The setting is a city; the narrator is not always sure of his bearings; and the work ends with the speaker living on in a sort of dreamlike half-state.

Every undergraduate would recognize in this summary "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the groundbreaking poem that began Eliot's career. In fact, each of these details is from the novella 27 years earlier that James's called his favorite, *The Aspern Papers*. James's novella looks forward to Eliot's famous poem a generation later in three surprising ways: in its insubstantial setting, its new narrative persona, and its indefinite sexuality.

Insubstantial Setting

Dickens' rendering of the London that Pip goes up to and Howells' depiction of the New York that Basil March moves to are definite and solid enough to allow us to construct a map and walk in their protagonists' footsteps, even today. Venice, the setting of *The Aspern Papers*, provides James a different kind of backdrop. (We know that James chose Venice consciously; he tells us in his Preface that the incidents his tale is based on occurred in Florence, where he actually wrote the story.) Venice, a city of canals that has

literally been sinking for many years, lacks the solid features that define most cities: streets, sidewalks, hills, wooded areas, parks. The Venetian neighborhoods are a series of small islands, approachable primarily by a confusing network of canals whose design seems haphazard. James's unnamed narrator of the tale, an American devotee of Jeffrey Aspern, literally floats, not walks, from place to place. Huck and Jim, a contemporaneous pair, float down the Mississippi River, but we know their journey is a linear one. Out at Walden Pond, Thoreau moves constantly between land and water, but his movement between the two is intentional and directed. In Venice, no matter one's intention, one gets lost. There are simply too many confusing, insidious turnings.

Most of the action in the story takes place in an old palace "very far from the centre" (61) where the Misses Bordereau live overlooking a "clean melancholy rather lonely canal" (49). James's description of it emphasizes not what it is, but what it is *not*. It has "an air not so much of decay as of quiet discouragement, as if it had rather missed its career" (49). Mrs. Prest does not "'know why—there are no brick gables'" and observes that though it is possible to pass it on foot, "'scarcely any one ever thinks of doing so. It's as negative—considering *where* it is—as a Protestant Sunday [when nothing is open]'" (49). Its main feature is a sparsely furnished "great cold tarnished Venetian *sala*" (46). On the upper floor are a "long succession of empty rooms" (67).

When the narrator leaves in the summer evenings, his man rows him to the most well known place in the city, the Piazza San Marcos. Even without the flooding that occasionally covers the square, the paved piazza takes on a fluid character in James's tale: "the traveler will remember how the immense cluster of tables and little chairs stretches like a promontory into the smooth lake of the Piazza" (79). The huge, solid basilica becomes vague and impressionistic: "with its low domes and bristling embroideries, the mystery of its mosaic and sculpture, [it] looked ghostly in the tempered gloom" (79). Near the end of the tale the narrator suddenly finds himself standing in front of The Church of Saints John and Paul, which is about as far from the Piazza as one can be in Venice. He has no idea how he got there. In *The Aspern Papers*, places are not only empty and insubstantial, they exist in a sort of free-floating universe, physically unconnected to one another.

New Narrative Persona

To populate this insubstantial setting, James created a new kind of narrator, one very different from the Duke of Ferrara, Henry Esmond, Jane Eyre, or other nineteenth-century story-tellers. His narrator, whose sole *raison d'etre* is to communicate the story to us, has trouble communicating. When Juliana surprises him as he fumblingly tries to

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break into the secretary to retrieve the letters, he tells us he "cannot now say what I stammered to excuse myself" (125). He flees the palace and wanders aimlessly for twelve days through the small towns surrounding Venice. In the tale's second climax, when Miss Tina makes her shocking proposal of marriage, his inability to speak is even more pronounced: "'Ah Miss Tina—ah Miss Tina,' I stammered for all reply. I didn't know what to do, as I say, but at a venture I made a wild vague movement in consequence of which I found myself at the door…. The next thing I remember is that I was downstairs and out of the house" (137). At precisely the most important times, he finds himself stammering, unable to move of his own volition. He tells his gondolier to take him "'Anywhere, anywhere'" and sits "prostrate, groaning softly to [himself], [his] hat pulled over [his] brow," trying to convince himself "for an hour, for two hours" that he had not actually made love to Miss Tina to get the papers. "I don't know where, on the lagoon, my gondolier took me; we floated aimlessly" (137).

His attempt to escape the scene of his embarrassment takes him to the Lido, the skinny barrier peninsula that serves as Venice's beach. On that shifting landscape, his helplessness is only exacerbated. He flings himself down on the sand for an unknown period, then tells us: "I am far from remembering clearly the succession of events and feelings during this long day of confusion, which I spent entirely in wandering about, without going home, until late at night" (139). On his second attempt to communicate what happened, his repetitive, halting words mimic his confusing physical movements:

> I forget what I did, where I went after leaving the Lido and at what hour or with what recovery of composure I made my way back to my boat. I only know that in the afternoon…I was standing before the church of Saints John and Paul and looking up at the small square-jawed face of Bartolomeo Colleoni…. Was it before this or after that I wandered about for an hour in the small canals, to the continued stupefaction of my gondolier. (139)

In this tale, James's narrator is literally and figuratively unmoored, moving between *terra firma* and water—or between a floating gondola, propelled and directed by someone else, and the shifting sands of the Lido. It is difficult to imagine such a watery, insubstantial setting and such a dazed narrator *before* James—and easy to imagine them after Prufrock, whose outer and inner landscapes are similarly vague, fluid, and directionless. Prufrock—as his creator Eliot liked to do—wanders through the little-known parts of a city that is fully as dreamlike and shifting as James's Venice. His opening invitation is for us to wander with him through "certain half-deserted streets" that "follow like a tedious argument / of insidious intent" (3). The physical place with the

most solidity in that poem, the room where the women come and go, reminds us of the sparsely furnished Bordereau *sala,* where James's women and narrator come and go. At the end of the poem, Prufrock declares that he will "wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach" (7). Like James's earlier narrator, Prufrock moves increasingly into a dazed state. He has "heard the mermaids singing," then lingers "in the chambers of the sea" with sea-girls "Till human voices wake us, and we drown" (7). Eliot's final vision is a poetic extension of the last view we have of James's narrator, who "can scarcely bear [his] loss" as he sits forlornly beneath the portrait of his beloved Jeffrey Aspern.

The very language of James's narrator echoes the circumlocutions and looping back of his physical and mental movements. One example here may suffice. As he sits in the garden "spinning theories" about the relationship between Juliana and Aspern, he says: "It was incontestable that, whether for right or for wrong, most readers of certain of Aspern's poems (poems not as ambiguous as the sonnets—scarcely more divine, I think—of Shakespeare) had taken for granted that Juliana had not always adhered to the steep footway of renunciation" (76-77). His clear, straightforward beginning ("it was incontestable") becomes so elaborately qualified ("whether for right or for wrong, *most* readers of *certain of* Aspern's poems" [emphasis mine]) as to call into doubt the "incontestable" point. The interpolated phrase within the dashes that are within the parentheses ("scarcely more divine—I think—") is confusing on two counts: does "scarcely more divine" indicate less or more divinity? And is it Aspern's poems or Shakespeare's sonnets that are "scarcely more divine"? Finally, there is the elaborately distanced, doubly negative to indicate sexual union: "had not always adhered to the steep footway of renunciation." If Prufrock finds it hard to speak to us directly ("It is impossible to say just what I mean!"), James's narrator is surely his model in prose. Both speakers are hesitant to act or speak, and then question every small action they hazard. When James's speaker offers Juliana the use of his gondola, he tells us he had "scarcely said this, however, before [he] became aware that the speech was in questionable taste and might also do [him] the injury of making [him] appear too eager, too possessed of a hidden motive" (62).

Prufrock continues to fascinate, partly because Eliot makes us see and understand the poignancy of his failed character. James's narrator similarly captures our attention and earns our sympathy. Like most first-person narrators, we see him rationalizing his failures. What makes him unique is that he is simultaneously aware that he *is* rationalizing them. He has, then, a sort of double vision throughout the story, showing us the workings of his own mind and critiquing those workings as he goes. In the middle of July, he sits in the garden waiting for something to happen—someone to appear on the balcony—and conflates Romeo and Juliet with Aspern and Juliana and then, preposterously enough, with himself and the dull, faded Miss Tina: "but Miss Tina was not a poet's mis-

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tress any more than I was a poet. This, however, didn't prevent my gratification from being great" (80). His inability to outwit his insipid, unimaginative "Juliet" is brought into sharper focus by his constant allusions to the heroic, romantic figures of the past: Orpheus, Romeo, Cassanova, Colleoni, Marcus Aurelius.

In a more concentrated fashion—in the more concentrated genre—Prufrock reveals the same double vision. He is "not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord, one that will do to / To swell a progress, start a scene or two, / Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool." Then, like James's narrator, his recognition and admission of his own failure makes us see him as a truly poignant figure: "a bit obtuse; / At times, indeed, almost ridiculous— / Almost, at times, the Fool" (7).

What Martha C. Nussbaum writes of James himself is true for both his 1888 narrator and Eliot's 1915 one: his "ellipses and circumnavigations of language and thought work to convey not truth but 'the lucidity of his characters' bewilderment, the precision of their indefiniteness" (149).

Indefinite Sexuality

Wendy Graham, in her 1999 book *Henry James's Thwarted Love*, writes that James "shared the culturewide panic over changing gender and professional roles" and "practiced sexual abstinence both to forestall nervous collapse and to conserve energy for his work" (1). Colm Toibin, in his superb fictional depiction of James in *The Master*, presents a figure who has strong libidinal temptations, but finds himself unable to act on them. Colleen Lamos, in "The Love Song of T. S. Eliot: Elegiac Homoeroticism in the Early Poetry," argues that Eliot "presents the dilemma of an avowedly heterosexual, homophobic writer whose work is obliquely yet significantly marked by homoerotic investments." Although Eliot rarely commented on what critics thought of his work, he "censored the only essay to appear in his lifetime that ventured a homosexual reading of *The Waste Land*" (Lamos 23). Strictly biographical matters are beyond the scope of this paper, yet it is interesting to note that the sexual orientation of both writers has been the subject for queer theorists and others for many years. What Martha Nussbaum calls the "indefiniteness" of James's characters extends to the sexuality of both his and Eliot's narrator.

Certainly neither narrator fits into the clear-cut, pre-modern categories of sexual orientation. Several critics have remarked how Prufrock metaphorically dismembers his women, focusing only on their parts: their eyes that "fix you in a formulate phrase," their "arms that are braceleted and white and bare [But in the lamplight, downed with light

brown hair!]" (5). Famously sensitive about the women talking about his bald spot and thinning hair, Prufrock knows that even his fantasy Mermaids will not sing to him.

James's earlier narrator presents a similarly ambiguous but somewhat different case. Leland Person, in *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity,* uses *The Aspern Papers* as an example of how James "transgenders" his desire, using ancient Juliana and dull Miss Tina to "physically mediate" his relationship with Jeffrey Aspern, the real object of his hopeless quest (125). James's narrator tells us he "had invoked [Jeffrey Aspern] and he had come; he hovered before [him] half the time." He even hears the dead poet speaking to him, cautioning patience: "'Meanwhile, aren't we in Venice together, and what better place is there for the meeting of dead friends? See how…the sky and the sea and the rosy air and the marble of the palaces all shimmer and melt together'" (73). The narrator's language, peppered with double entendres (or Freudian slips), occasionally suggests an almost comic voyeurism: "I hadn't meanwhile meant by my private ejaculation that I must myself cultivate the soil" (55), "I felt her look at me with great penetration" (61), "She had expected me to draw amusement from the drama of my intercourse with the Misses Bordereau, and was disappointed that the intercourse, and consequently the drama, had not come off" (70), and "then I could pounce on her possessions and ransack her drawers" (55). The final image the narrator leaves us with combines much of what we have learned about James's new narrative persona: he sits at his writing desk, alone, in some unknown and unconnected place, staring at Aspern's small portrait, scarcely able to bear his loss.

It is not possible or important to prove causality between literary texts. But the extraordinary similarities in setting, narrative presence, and sexuality between James's 1888 tale and Eliot's 1915 poem suggest that the later poet simply distilled and brought up to date the tale of the American writer he most admired.

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Katarzyna Nowak

The Girl of the Golden West: European and American Fictions of California after the U.S. Conquest

1. Introduction

California functions in the public imagination as the ultimate American space: it is said to be just like the rest of the States, only more so. For Europeans, it is associated with the fulfilled utopias of Disneyland and Hollywood, however problematic these may be. In Michael Davie's words, it remains "the ultimate frontier of the Western world" (qtd. in Haslam 56). Jean Baudrillard talks of its "criminal and scandalous beauty" and evokes its "mythical power" (122, 125). It is a repository of the national and transnational myths of the untamed frontier, of unlimited growth and economic success. The story in which this myth finds its full expression is the story of the Girl of the Golden West known from fiction, drama, film and opera both in the United States and in Europe.

In the present essay I analyze four texts that present the story: David Belasco's original play *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905) together with his novel of the same title (1911), Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Fanciulla del West* (1910), Susan Sontag's novel *In America* (1999) and Jeanette Winterson's short story "Goldrush Girl" (2010).[1]

My reading is premised on the assumption that the story, despite being a story of origins, questions the idea of origins. My analysis is informed by Walter Benjamin's elucidation of the term "origin," which he contrasts with "genesis." Origin, he claims, does not "describe the process by which the existent came into being"—which can be understood as genesis—but rather, it is meant to "describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance" (45). Benjamin thus explains the dialectic of origin: it "shows the singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials" (46). The story of the Girl emerges in constant vacillation between singularity and repetition. In all its configurations, there appear certain elements that testify to the story's uniqueness, but also those that establish a pattern that reappears in all versions.

[1] The play was followed by four movies based on it (1915, 1923, 1930 and 1938); the discussion of a cinematic medium would require a more extensive discussion than the scope of the present text allows.

The aim of my analysis is to look at these constant and repetitive elements. In each version those elements demonstrate the changing demands of the audiences. Such changes are conditioned by the trajectory of the myth: as it travels between continents and between genres, it mutates to answer the demands of the varying audiences. This accounts for the story's polysemy and heterogeneity.

As Michel de Certeau asserts, "Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice" (115). My reading is informed by this assertion: every story, every version of the same story, not only interprets and inscribes space, it also creates it. De Certeau suggests as much when he states that "space is a practiced place" (117). California, the borderland, is a place practiced and claimed by various agents and groups; and, in turn, the story of its origins is a spatially diverse practice.

2. David Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West*

The story of the Girl of the Golden West entered circulation in the American and Transatlantic canon of the twentieth century with David Belasco's play. The critics uniformly greeted it with the highest praise for capturing the spirit of California in the Gold Rush days in its rugged entirety.[2] The characters, their preoccupations, their longings and desires, though presented in a romanticized, idealized way, were said to reflect the existence of California's gold miners in much the same way as the mirror of realistic drama, in a well-worn phrase, is said to reflect reality.[3]

The story line of Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West*[4] is simple, yet dramatic enough to have a recognizable stage potential. An innocent girl, one of the two individualized female characters[5] in the play, works as a bartender in a mining camp saloon, at

[2] In the words of Burton D. Fisher, "Belasco's realism captured the supercharged gold rush craze of 1849-1850, its rugged individualism, and the pioneering spirit of the era" (*Opera Classics Library: Puccini's The Girl of the Golden West*; Boca Raton, FL: Opera Journeys Publishing, 2005, 16). For more on Belasco's realism in "The Girl" see e.g. Margaret A. Estabrook and Lise-Lone Marker.

[3] Lise-Lone Marker quotes Belasco on dramatic art: "If dramatic art is anything at all, and if it is worthy of being perpetuated… the reason is that it is, above everything else—far above the mere purpose of supplying pleasurable entertainment—an interpretative art, which portrays the soul of life" (qtd. in Marker 10).

[4] I am referring to the novelized version of the play, also by Belasco, since it provides the reader with fuller commentary on the expressive measures that in the case of the play are acted out on stage.

[5] The other character is Nina Micheltoreña, a fallen woman with no moral standards who betrays Ramerrez and denounces him to the authorities after he decides to leave her. The Girl is described as one with the "face of an angel," but it is Micheltoreña who is the real beauty. It is the purity of the heart—and that, undoubtedly, is connected with whiteness—that wins. Interestingly enough, Micheltoreña does not appear in Puccini's version of the story: it seems that the myth of California has enough strength on its own not to require a villain to accentuate the virtues of the white protagonist. There is also the character of Minnie's Native American servant, Wowkle; the presentation, however, is nothing more than a stereotype, and a harmful one at that. It would be interesting to analyze the play with reference to other works of fiction (such as

the same time acting as the miners' confidante, their teacher of catechism and a trustee of their gold. Some of them try to win her heart (the most persistent being Sheriff Rance), but Minnie, the eponymous Girl, gives her first kiss and her love to a man considered a fugitive criminal. The couple is forced to flee California, but we understand that they have each other for better or for worse, so the last scene of the play is a bittersweet goodbye to this earthly paradise. The story itself is a mournful farewell to the long lost frontier.

On the surface, then, the story is deceptively trite: it is formulaic and sentimental, with implausibly saccharine characters, yet the reappearance of the theme, its melancholic recurrence, suggests that the work of mourning is not completed. In different configurations of the story, one aspect remains constant: the border is contestable, it requires perpetual renegotiation. The California of Belasco's story is a borderland space constantly coming into being and it is the borderland's mixed heritage that guarantees its success. "*En unas pocas centurias,* the future will belong to the mestiza", asserts Gloria Anzaldúa with respect to the future political potential of the borderland (80), and the same contention can be detected in David Belasco's text. However, as the story crosses generic and geographic borders, this contention changes. Although at first, in Belasco's version, it is the mestiza, like Anzaldúa predicts, who will claim the future, the later versions are more wary of the assumption, in a way admitting the failure of the inclusive stance proposed by Belasco.

The founding myth of California rests on the optimistic vision of the hybrid future: the future of the state, and synecdochically, of the country, depends on its ability to incorporate elements of alien semantic regimes. The story of the Girl mirrors a paradox central to the founding myth of California: on the one hand, it presents the space as unequivocally American, a space awaiting its "inevitable American occupation" (Belasco), on the other, it testifies to the underlying anxiety generated through the silencing of a significant part of the state's population, namely, Native Americans and Californios.[6]

When writing about California and its early post-Mexican period, it is essential to realize the complex trajectories traveled by the stories that explain and create the space in question. Although the stories written from the perspective of the white settlers, such as the story of the Girl, attempt to present California as uniformly American, there is an

Ramona or *The Squatter and the Don*) in which the role of Native Americans, however problematic, provides an important point of reference when it comes to the construction of whiteness; yet the scope of the present text does not allow for such digressions.

[6] Charles Hughes thus explains the term: "It is occasionally necessary to consider a Californio as any non-Indian with a Spanish surname, and born in California, Spain, or Latin America. Strictly speaking, however, Californios were those Mexicans who inhabited California prior to American conquest, and the term also refers to their descendants" (2).

undercurrent—the silenced, oftentimes unacknowledged presence of the Native population as well as the political disavowal of the Californios—belies this conviction.

In the play, Belasco presents characters that he knew in his youth—gold miners who flocked to California after the discovery of the precious metal in 1848. He romanticizes the era and offers only one explanation for the miners' presence: the enterprising, pioneering spirit of Americans who go west to make their mark in life by releasing the untapped resources of the land and becoming rich. The political reality, however, is less romantic than this individualistic explanation allows. What directly made possible the presence of American miners in California was the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, signed after the Mexican war in 1848. On the force of this settlement, Mexico lost over a third of its pre-war territory, and the vast land of Alta California became open to American settlement. In itself a testimony to American colonial ambitions, the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo had grave implications for those inhabiting the land under the Mexican rule: it meant social, political and cultural marginalization.[7] However, in the story of the Girl, the forces that shaped the history of Alta California at the beginning of American rule remain unacknowledged to fit the triumphant ideology of American expansionism.

Despite its attempts to silence the uncomfortable history, the story still unwittingly testifies to the region's varied origins, and in part provides for the dramatic tension of the story, which rests on the racially charged occupation of the Girl's beloved, Ramerrez. It makes him morally suspect and compromises his chances of winning her heart.[8] On his deathbed, his father makes him swear to the pursuit of the same criminal path as he himself followed. Ramerrez is a descendant of a once prominent Mexican (or rather Californio) family that lost almost everything in an influx of white American settlers, and his father, who used to be an honorable rancher, is reduced to banditry in a hopeless attempt at revenge. Ramerrez himself is half-American, and his loyalty to his "race" seems less steadfast than that of his father. The romance is effectively a test of Ramerrez's ethnic identification, and its outcome indicates the future of California. It suggests, to evoke Anzaldúa once more, that the future belongs to the mestizos.

Within the economy of the romance, Ramerrez must choose his beloved and renounce his Mexican ancestry, and with it, as Belasco's text suggests, his criminal tendencies; only for her sake does Ramerrez decide to relinquish his struggle for the rights of the wronged Californios. But in fact, the damsel proves not so innocent after all: she saves

[7] For historical background of the issue see e.g. Cortes, *Mexicans*; Haas, *Conquests*; and Pitt, *Decline*.

[8] Fisher thus describes the corresponding moment in Puccini's opera: "In Act II… Johnson unmask himself, poignantly and passionately revealing his horrible destiny to Minnie: 'Sono Ramerrez, nacqui vagabond: era ladro il mio nome da quando venni al mondo' ('I'm Ramerrez. I was born a vagabond. My name was thief from the moment I was born'); his inheritance after his father's death was 'a gang of highway bandits!'" (Fisher 18).

her beloved's life when she wins it from Jack Rance, the sheriff, cheating at a card game. Cheating is justified because it is motivated by a romantic interest; yet, Belasco's text makes it clear that such a deceitful act deserves punishment. At the beginning of the story sheriff Rance punishes a dishonest player. The miners demand a severe measure, the punishment, however, is symbolic rather than corporeal.

The turn from the corporeal to the symbolic shows the shift in the meaning of California, from the real land to the land of fantasy. What it also means in the narrative is that the sheriff cannot retreat to the real, so when the girl cheats at cards, the incident should not be assessed in moral but in symbolic terms. Such reasoning obviously favors the symbolic and it justifies the colonization of Alta California and the dispossession of the native population in the process; and that, precisely, might be the rationale behind Belasco's text and the reason for the popularity of the discussed motif.

The retreat to the symbolic is accompanied by a dismissal of the significance of death; sheriff Rance, the figure of authority in Belasco's text, says at one point: "After all, gents, what's death? A kick and you're off" (54). This statement clarifies the frontier ethics: if one's survival depends on the annihilation, or at least the political disavowal, of the Californios as well as of the Native American population, then the meaning of death itself must be diminished to put the political machinations in perspective. On the other hand, this gesture retains its ambivalence because it renders the afterlife unknowable and hence unimportant. Yet, if all we have is this life, then what are the implications of our actions on the earthly plane? Belasco's text provides us with a very American answer: "We must always look ahead, Girl—not backwards. The promised land is always ahead" (344). These words are uttered by Ramerrez and they provide a validation of the frontier myth and an expression of the manifest destiny.

The frontier, in Gloria Anzaldúa's words, is inhabited by "the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (3). Ramerrez and the Girl represent those whom Anzaldúa calls *los atravesados*: they both reject the confines of the worlds they come from and cross the boundaries between them, just as much as the story of the Girl runs across genres.

3. Giacomo Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West*

A much publicized premiere of Puccini's opera based on Belasco's play took place in 1910. Puccini was apparently having difficulty finding an appropriate theme for his "American" opera, and it was ultimately to be Belasco's play or, to be more precise, the

minstrel figure in it, that inspired Puccini and provided him with the subject for his opera.[9] The Metropolitan Opera in New York commissioned the work and both the commissioner and the public expected it to express "Americanness." The opera, in a way, elevated California to the status of an emblematic American place. Though ridiculed by many for its Italian version of America and for being what might be called a spaghetti western of the opera, it still is *the* American opera.[10]

Puccini's work remains faithful to Belasco's text on the narrative plane[11]: it presents more or less the same story line, this time with music, and it is the element of music, or the power of song, that allows us to draw a parallel between *The Girl of the Golden West* and the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The gods of the netherworld allow Orpheus to reclaim Eurydice and to ascend to the earthly domain, back to life, and Ramerrez awakens the Girl to real life from her dreamlike existence in a mining camp. This parallel becomes most visible in the last scene, in which the Girl and Ramerrez say goodbye to California. Minnie knows that what she must reject is irreplaceable: "Oh, that was indeed the promised land!" (344). The stage directions in the libretto describe the scene in the following words: "she clings to Johnson, crying with joy, her face buried on his shoulder" (*La Fanciulla*). Nevertheless, she reacts very expressively to the necessity of leaving her home behind: "Good-bye, beloved country; good-bye, my California, My mountains, my Sierra Mountains—Good-bye!" (*La Fanciulla*). Belasco's text is more explicit: "'Oh, my mountains, I'm leavin' you! Oh, my California—my lovely West—my Sierras, I'm leavin' you!' She ended with a sob; but the next moment throwing her-

[9] "Belasco was first and foremost a writer of realistic melodrama: *The Girl of the Golden West* was 'American verismo,' a stark melodrama involving a love triangle, with fierce and brutal characters overpowered by their monomania for gold and wealth. For Puccini, Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West* cried out for music" (Fisher 14).
Marker points to the elements in Belasco's play that proved attractive for Puccini: "The thorough musicality and rhythmic integration of his California genre picture was remarked upon by several of the play's reviewers" (146) and she explains what these elements were: "The use of music to create atmosphere in this act was not, however, restricted to the dancehall orchestra. Belasco also inserted a wandering minstrel into the action, a banjo player modelled on an actual local figure whom Belasco had known in his youth" (149). Marker further writes: "When negotiations began between Puccini and Belasco regarding the creation of an opera from *The Girl of the Golden West,* it was the typically Western songs of this local minstrel which initially awakened the composer's enthusiasm" (150).

[10] Fisher thus sums up the opera's premiere: "It was a triumphant success, the composer receiving fourteen curtain calls after the first act, nineteen after the second, and twenty after the finale. Puccini declared it his best opera" (16).

[11] As Mario Hamlet-Metz has it, "Puccini kept the original crust (setting and most of the characters) but handled it with a smoother hand, giving it a very distinctive Italian (Tuscan) flavor, which ultimately explains much of the enduring success of the piece throughout the world" (76).
Fisher points to the differences between the play and the opera: "The libretto stresses Christian ideals of forgiveness and the redeeming power of compassion and love. Minnie represents the overpowering spiritual and moral force of the drama, a preacher and teacher who reads the Fifty-first Psalm of David to the miners of her scripture class, a sublime moment in the opera. In Belasco's play, she reads from a book called 'Old Joe Miller's Jokes'" (15).

self into Johnson's arms she snuggled there, murmuring lovingly: 'Oh, my home!'" (346).

The Girl recognizes her "home" in her lover's embrace, which follows the prescribed line of plot development of sentimental fiction. On the other hand, if it is Ramerrez who is synonymous with California—at one point the reader learns that there should be "no difficulty in placing the status of this straight-limbed, broad-shouldered, young fellow as a native Californian" (8)—with the Girl's home, then this gesture also suggests recognition of the legitimacy of Ramerrez's claim to the land he and his father fought for. The fact that this seeming acknowledgment takes place when both lovers must leave the state makes it all the more problematic. Ramerrez, who assumes the name "Johnson" to escape his pursuers, reacts to Minnie's outburst in an emotional way: "Johnson was greatly moved. It was some time before he found his voice" (344). Like Orpheus, he must find his voice again to lead his Eurydice back to the earthly plane.

Minnie, the Californian Eurydice, thus describes her other-worldly experience:

> '[A]ll the people there in Cloudy, how far off they seem now—like shadows movin' in a dream—like shadows I've dreamt of. Only a few days ago I clasped their hands—I seen their faces—their dear faces—I—' She broke off; then while the tears streamed down her cheeks: 'An' now they're fadin'—in this little while I've lost 'em—lost 'em.' (345)

The moment Minnie envisages herself leaving the valley of the shadows reveals the crucial ambiguity of California: if California is the afterlife that Minnie-Eurydice renounces, then the question remains: is it paradise, or is it hell? This ambiguity is not resolved and we may suspect that the former is not far from the latter.

Leaving California, however, means that the movement is no longer toward the West, but back to the East: hence, it might be seen as a sign of disillusionment with the idea of unstoppable expansion. This direction questions the idea that the westbound progress eliminates the wilderness in its path. What supports this line of reasoning is the fact that it is a Californio character who takes the Girl away from this Eden. Its problematic status signals the impossibility of both living in paradise and descending from it.

The paradox inherent in the presentation of the Golden West reminds us of the Orphic myth as the founding myth of opera as a genre: "The [Orphic] myth is not only about the success of song but just as much about the inability to sustain this success" (Grover-Friedlander 30). Orpheus brings Eurydice back to life but must lose her again. Unlike in the original myth, it is the Girl who turns around to take the last look at what she is about to leave, but that is precisely what is forbidden. Her transgression (her being one of *los*

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atravesados) means that she must remain in the land of the dead, this time with no prospect of salvation. We know as much from the myth, but both Belasco's play and Puccini's opera end as the protagonist and her lover leave California to look for happiness elsewhere, which optimistically presents escape as a viable option. It is in Susan Sontag's and Jeanette Winterson's later versions of the story that the Girl returns, suggesting that Eurydice cannot escape her fate. This mobility indicates apprehension about the success of American continental colonization.

4. Susan Sontag's *In America*

Almost a hundred years went by before the theme was undertaken in fiction again, in Susan Sontag's 1999 novel In America. Although Sontag never states it explicitly, making it the reader's responsibility to supply the necessary connection, the novel features a character that is clearly based on the Girl.[12] This time the Girl, a disillusioned woman, returns to California and to the man she rejected earlier.

In *In America*, Minnie is no longer an innocent girl with "the face of an angel" (Belasco 163, Sontag 287), but a mature, somewhat bitter woman. Her life-after-opera in the novel suggests that the happy ending of the play is impossible. Sontag's salvaging of the character is also a commentary on the nature of the two genres: the drama and the novel. The stage drama, be it the theatre or the opera, is appropriate for the presentation of great discoveries and mass migrations of peoples. It portrays epic themes, grand vistas and characters larger than life. It does not, however, communicate the daily grind of those who no longer make history, but are reduced to making a living.

That the Girl becomes transformed from the heroine of a stage drama and opera into a novelistic figure seems only proper when we consider Bradbury's comments on the connection between the novel as a genre and America: "If the novel is a form of discovery, then one emblem of that is America or the New World itself" (12). Bradbury suggests both that America represents the essence of the novelty and that it delineates the limits of the known. He mentions O'Gorman who states, in Baudrillard-like fashion, "to this day, America is… the greatest example of the Supreme Fiction" (16). Thus, he points to the mythical quality with which America is endowed in the European imagination and in its own imagination. And it is the novel as a genre that most thoroughly expresses this quality.

[12] In *The Volcano Lover,* for instance, Sontag introduces a character inspired by Puccini's *Tosca*: it seems that the author peppered her novels with operatic references as yet another intellectual game in which she engages her readers.

Bradbury's comments on the nature of the cross-connection between the two concepts, that of the novel and of America, would lead us to an assumption that Europe writes America as a novel, but given American individualism we could assume that, in its own assessment, America writes itself. Sontag's reclaiming of the character of the Girl can be understood as her reintroduction to American fiction which reinforces the character's *mestizaje*, her ability to move freely in the borderlands.

In Sontag's novel, the protagonist, the actress Maryna, rests in a saloon and is approached by Minnie, "[f]at, tightly corseted, beribboned, a little drunk, around forty-five or fifty" (284). It is long after the events covered in the play or the libretto, and Minnie narrates her story in a conversation with Maryna. Not only is her monologue a continuation of the events rendered in the play, but it is also a revision of the incidents in Belasco's and Puccini's versions.

The reader learns that Minnie did not stay with Ramerrez, "the bandit," but returned to sheriff Rance. "I left [Dick] and went crawlin' back to California" (288), thus Minnie explains her return. The phrase used suggests that she retreats humiliated: California, then, is not so much an earthly paradise, but more likely the hell on earth. Minnie, like Eurydice, looks back and must stay in Hell.

In America consistently presents a disenchanted version of the story. In Sontag's version, Dick Johnson is a white American who assumes the name of Ramerrez, contrary to the stage versions, where Ramerrez disguises himself as a white man to avoid being caught. Although Belasco's text makes no attempts to explain or validate Ramerrez's cause, it does suggest a certain tragedy behind his choices and the inevitability of failure in following the path of honor, however that may be understood (either honorably obeying his father's deathbed wish and pursuing the robber's path or renouncing his criminal ways). *In America* presents Dick as a mere robber, not a Californio fighting for his rights. The story is deprived of romance, the Girl of innocence, her lover of a just cause, and it seems that California, too, is robbed of its paradisiacal allure.

5. Jeanette Winterson's "Goldrush Girl"

The Girl makes her final appearance in Jeanette Winterson's short story "Goldrush Girl," which is a variation on the same theme. Here, the narrator tells the story of his/her love affair with whom s/he calls "Goldrush Girl"[13]; Puccini's opera provides a parallel

[13] It is often the case with Winterson's fiction that the I-speaker's gender remains ambiguous: if in the case of "Goldrush Girl" the first person narrator is a woman, then it is an interesting departure from the original tale.

for the romance. The Girl is but a name and a title; no longer animated, she lives on as a textual point of reference.

Winterson's version departs most radically from the sentimental, idealistic perception of California. Here the equation between the Girl and gold is made explicit, but the materialist perspective is complicated by the insistence on a tripartite division of the self: "the mind moves ahead of the flow of life, and the heart hangs back, afraid, and… all you can trust is your body" (192). The story conveys a parallel between the main narrative and Puccini's opera, and this doubling is manifested through the intertwining of the plots: "In the dark I held your hand. Johnson takes Minnie's hand" (194). Puccini's *La Fanciulla* provides not only a point of reference for the narrative, but it also reveals the meaning of "gold" in the story. Now the treasure is love.

Winterson's story, similarly to Sontag's, retreats from the sentimentalism of Belasco and Puccini in the way that it presents a more carnal understanding of love. In "Goldrush Girl" we can trust but the body, and it is the body that provides the link between the material gold of the gold rush days and the metaphorical gold reached through sensuality.

The narrator builds the central parallel between the body and gold as she describes her lover's body: "like a pan of gold that has lain all this time on the riverbed, and now it's in my fingers" (193). This is contrasted with the paleness of her own skin: "like a mine where the sun didn't reach.… Sun on me now… and the gold of it, and these riches" (193). She concludes this comparison with the phrase "Goldrush girl" (193). Whether it describes the narrator or her lover remains vague, and this ambiguity consists in the fact that the eponymous girl can be either the one who carries gold or the one who strikes it, just as gold refers both to wealth and to the body.

In both meanings, gold is not to be acquired by force; an exchange must take place. The narrator gives love, yet "Love is such a difficult gift to accept" (199). Her lover represents the gold that she offers: "anyone who strikes gold can keep it" (199). Minnie's story again helps the narrator understand the meaning of her own story: "Minnie doesn't want to be stolen from; she wants to give. [The gold] is hers to give, not his to steal" (196). Equating gold with Minnie tells us that Minnie, the gold-rush girl who does not dig for gold but has it, is like the gold-carrying mines of California. She is the wealth that seduces and destroys men, a symbol of the land itself.

When we think of the gift in the understanding proposed by Marcel Mauss, which emphasizes the etymological connection between the English word signifying a present and its German equivalent denoting poison (28-32), then the ambiguity of the central symbol of Winterson's story is even more pronounced. "Goldrush Girl" invests too much in the metaphorical dimension of the story to be concerned with expansionism, but its central ambiguity directs us back to Belasco's original story and its discomfort in the

presentation of the Californio characters. If the gold of California proves a poisonous gift, it is because it is California's to give, not the miners' to steal.

As Derrida reminds us, "Lacan says of love: It gives what it does not have" (2). In her story, Winterson conflates the two categories of gold and love, and says of both that they are a gift. The gift, however, as Derrida teaches us, is never unproblematic. This impossible gift that California offers is given although it is not to be received. The political disavowal of the Californios and Native Americans cancels the condition of the gift.

The ending of "Goldrush Girl" stresses circularity: the narrator's description of the last act ends with the lovers leaving and "their tracks disappear[ing] in the snow" (199), and after the reference to the narrator's story, she notes: "But the sun will come again" (199). Such cyclicity points not only to the plot of the story, but to its reappearance in fiction, from Belasco, through Puccini and Sontag to Winterson.

6. Final remarks

The trajectory of the myth traced here starts with a celebration of the borderland (which, nevertheless, displays anxiousness about the legitimacy of American claim on the land). The second stage, in the operatic version, stresses the mythical aspect of the story: this time the borderland is de-realized, and the retreat from the celebratory position might be a way of reducing the status anxiety. In its next cross-generic move, the story becomes a novelistic account, which, as Bradbury explains, corresponds to the novelty of American settlement. The optimism of the original rendering of the story, however, is gone. The last version presents us with a banal equation between love and gold.

The last text credits Puccini's work and is thus a European commentary on an American theme revalidated by another European author. Sontag, on the other hand, seems to be referring to Belasco's theatrical version and not the opera; an American writer refers to the American playwright, whereas the British writer refers to another European's work, the opera. The circulation, though spanning two continents, proves limited. It may suggest that California is a land of fantasy, after all, "lying under an enchantment unlike any other land" (Belasco 3), and that is why it escapes imagination. The image we have of it is conditioned by the vantage point from which we describe it.

The story of the Girl is still an expression of the fertility and creativity of borderland cultures. Crossing between genres and continents allows us to see the story of the Girl as the story of *mestizaje*. It is a story that belies the notion of origins, as there is no state of "purity" before the mixing, crossing over, transgressing. It designates California as the

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borderland, perpetually reinventing itself. It is de Certeau's "practiced place," acted upon by *los atravesados* who deny one interpretation and singular understanding of the story of origins. The story of the Girl of the Golden West places *mestizaje* at the centre of the mythical beginnings, but it also denies the understanding of origins as a singular source of history, and, in a way that is limited by the historical moment, it celebrates multiplicity.

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Alicja Piechucka

The Past Is a Woman: Hart Crane's, Arthur Rimbaud's and Marcel Proust's Journeys Down Memory Lane

"I don't know when I shall get time or the proper mood to work more on the Grandame poem" (Crane 215). So wrote Hart Crane of the text he was laboring over in November 1919. In the letter to his friend Gorham Munson, from which the above quote comes, Crane elaborated: "Contact with the dear lady, as I told you I feared, has made all progress in it at present impossible" (215). In his subsequent letter to Munson, the mystery is clarified: "Grandma and her love letters, are too steep climbing for hurried moments, so I don't know when I shall work on that again" (216). The poem in question is "My Grandmother's Love Letters," included in Crane's 1926 debut collection *White Buildings*. The line which serves as an epigraph to the volume, "Ce ne peut être que la fin du monde, en avançant" ("The end of the world must be just ahead"; trans. Wyatt Manson), is taken from Arthur Rimbaud's prose poem "Enfance." Crane's fascination with Rimbaud's personality and *œuvre* is incontestable, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Piechucka, "Dream" 100). In the present article, I would like to focus on "My Grandmother's Love Letters," setting it against "The Sideboard" ("Le Buffet"), a poem Rimbaud wrote a few years before *Illuminations* (*Illuminations*), the cycle from which "Childhood" ("Enfance") comes. In an attempt to further illuminate the meanings of both poetic texts, I have decided to examine them in terms of their affinities with certain aspects of memory presented by Marcel Proust in *Remembrance of Things Past* (*À la Recherche du Temps perdu*). Though Crane's reading of the French novelist's *opus magnum* in 1926 (Fisher 306), which coincided with the publication of *White Buildings*, is posterior to the composition of "My Grandmother's Love Letters," Proust's text creates a useful background against which the notions of femininity and the temporal experience explored by Crane and Rimbaud are amplified.

While we cannot be sure that the author of *The Bridge* was familiar with the particular work by Rimbaud dealt with in this article, the fact that Crane felt a spiritual and artistic kinship with the French poet and that this kinship resurfaces in his own work remains

certain. The aim of my exegesis is to show that the two poems I have chosen have several affinities: not only do Crane and Rimbaud treat similar themes, but, despite the differences between the two poems, which I shall also point out, they seem to follow analogous lines of thought. More importantly, even though in the Rimbaud-Crane relationship the former must be seen as the master, for reasons to do with both chronology and the French poet's stature, it is the Crane poem that strikes me as more complex, as if "My Grandmother's Love Letters" were a continuation of and elaboration on the ideas sketched out by his symbolist predecessor. Though it might be argued that "The Sideboard" is one of Rimbaud's earliest poems, written when its author was barely sixteen, it must be remembered that all of his literary output was produced by the time he turned twenty, the age at which he gave up writing poetry, and that he is arguably the most celebrated example of poetic precocity in the history of literature. It is also worth noting that "My Grandmother's Love Letters" was written by a twenty-year-old Crane, who was only three years into a poetic career that was to span a decade and half. In both cases, we thus have to do with juvenile works, in which young poets reflect on the role of memory and try to establish a relationship with the past, and which complement each other despite—or perhaps because of—the differences as well as the parallels between them.

In his biography of Rimbaud, Graham Robb dismisses "The Sideboard" as "a sonnet on an old sideboard which sounds like a flimsy relative of the scent- and memory-impregnated wardrobes in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*" (61). He does, however, note that Rimbaud's friend Georges Izambard, the addressee of one of the two letters alternatively referred to as Rimbaud's famous "Letter of the Seer" ("Lettre du Voyant"), "perceptively" (61) said that the sonnet "had the cheek to be charming" (qtd. in Robb 61). Vague as the adjective may sound, it is appropriate in reference to a poem whose impact on the reader relies heavily on the aura of warmth and sweetness which permeates Rimbaud's lines. A piece of dining room furniture may not be an obvious choice for a poetic topic, but the down-to-earth, homely character of the object unabashedly named in the very title is counterbalanced by the evocative power of the poem itself.

Rimbaud's poem, as we soon understand, is not about the sideboard itself, but about its contents, which the poet unveils to the reader with a characteristic symbolist penchant for catalogue-like poetic structures:

> It's filled with a jumble of old knickknacks,
> Fragrant yellowing linens, women's
> And children's clothes, faded lace,
> Grandmotherly scarves embroidered with griffins (*Rimbaud Complete* 33)

In the stanza that follows, the list goes on and includes "medallions" (33), "blonde and white / Locks of hair" (33) as well as "portraits" (33) and "dried flowers / Whose scents mix with the scent of fruit" (33). With a childlike excitement, Rimbaud depicts the inside of the sideboard as if it were Ali Baba's secret cave. The enthusiasm with which the French poet enumerates the various objects, which "You'll find… inside" (33) and which are at once worthless and priceless, suggests that examining the contents of the sideboard is a real feast for the eyes. The pleasure one might derive from fingering the old pieces of clothing, locks of hair and dry petals, from handling them and feeling their texture is almost palpable. Importantly, olfactory sensations play a crucial role in building up the overall atmosphere of the poem. Floral and fruity fragrances amalgamate with the smell of old linen inside the sideboard, which "stands open, and sweet scents / Swim in its shadow like a tide of old wine" (33). All five senses are in fact satisfied, for it might even be argued that due to its function, of which the mention of "old wine" reminds us, the sideboard, which typically holds tableware, table linen and victuals, can be associated with the pleasures of the palate. It is even able to produce aural effects, as indicated by the phrase "tu bruis" (*Œuvres* 35), somewhat lost in the English translation ("you… speak"; *Rimbaud Complete* 33) but connoting pleasurable, homely noises in the French original.

It may, however, be inferred that, far from being reduced to the level of sensory stimuli, the visual, the olfactory and the auditory—and, by extension, the tactile and the gustatory—are in fact carriers of bygone days and mediums for recollections, as elusive as the evanescent scents that are central to the poem. The old sideboard is not just a repository of sights, smells and sounds, but also of time and of things past, a vast store of mementos and memories. Inviting and exciting, it has a unique aura, due to the sensual pleasure it gives but also, more importantly, to the sideboard's enormous yet hidden narrative potential, inherent in the stories it "remembers":

> Old sideboard, you've seen more than a little
> And have tales to tell, and speak each time
> Your big black doors slowly swing open. (*Rimbaud Complete* 33)

Like Baudelaire before him and Proust after him, Rimbaud seems to suggest that the senses have the power to resuscitate the past. Though "The Sideboard" does not say so explicitly, its content, with the references to scents recurring in the first three of the sonnet's four stanzas, echoes such poems by Baudelaire as "Flask" ("Le Flacon"), which describes how "in a deserted house, some dusty and dingy wardrobe, rank with time's acrid odor, you may find an old flask that you recall, whence a returning soul springs,

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quite alive" (64). In other words, it may be claimed that the charm of "The Sideboard" that Izambard spoke of has a lot do with what the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal* had in mind when in another poem, "Perfume" ("Le Parfum"), he exclaimed: "Profound and magical charm, the retrieved past intoxicating our present!" (52). Expressed in poetic form by the two French symbolists, the link between sensory impressions and remembrance is expounded in Proust's prose. The relevant and self-explanatory passage from *Swann's Way* (*Du côté de chez Swann*), the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*, could serve as a comment on the symbolist poems referred to in this article:

> But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. (37)

The above-quoted fragment is part of an episode in which the narrator of Proust's *magnum opus* manages to recapture his childhood thanks to the taste of a madeleine, a small, shell-shaped French cake, which he dips in tea on a bleak winter day. It is the narrator's mother who offers him a cup of tea and, to encourage her son to drink a beverage he is not in the habit of taking, she sends a servant to fetch a madeleine. The taste of the cake brings back the memory of an analogous experience in the narrator's past: as a child, he spent his summers in Combray, where, every Sunday morning, he visited his elderly, ailing aunt Léonie, who would offer him a morsel of a madeleine steeped in tea or a lime infusion. As has already been demonstrated, sensorial impressions, with particular emphasis on scents, are for Proust—as well as for Baudelaire and Rimbaud—the carriers of the past. However, what is also worth noting is that women are the key agents of the memory-resuscitation process. As we shall see, it is so not only in *Remembrance of Things Past*, but also in the Rimbaud and Crane poems under discussion.

While exploring Rimbaud's problematic relationship with his mother, the poet's biographer points to "The Sideboard," with its mention of "the wonderful weathered air of old people" (Rimbaud, *Rimbaud Complete* 33), as proof of the fact that "though he hated his mother, he was full of filial sentiment" (Robb 62). If we attempt to apply the same biographical point of view to Proust's *œuvre* and "My Grandmother's Love Letters," we shall see that the details of both authors' life stories resurface in their works with even greater conspicuousness than they do in the Rimbaud poem in question. A reading of both biographical materials and *Remembrance of Things Past* reveal the role his mother

and maternal grandmother played in shaping Proust's character and work. Without elaborating on the tender loving care bestowed on the young and frail Marcel by his closest female relatives, it is perhaps worth quoting an anecdote about a parlor game the future novelist once participated in, later immortalized as the celebrated "Proust Questionnaire." Asked to name the most terrible disaster he could think of, the thirteen-year-old Proust replied: "To be separated from mum" (Grunspan 26). One can recognize a similar pattern in Crane's biography. From a very early age, the hypersensitive American poet was taken care of by his mother Grace Crane and his maternal grandmother Elizabeth Hart, who periodically lived under the same roof with her daughter and grandson. Born Harold Hart Crane, the poet used his grandmother's married name instead of his Christian name when he started writing and publishing poetry. Importantly, he did so at Mrs Crane's suggestion. Early in 1917, his mother wrote in a letter: "[I]n signing your name to your contributions & later to your books do you intend to ignore your mother's side of the house entirely.… How would 'Hart Crane' be" (Crane 743). In August the same year, the poet signed a letter to his father "Hart Crane" (743).

Looking for the traces of female presence in "The Sideboard," one inevitably needs to focus on the poem's second stanza. The phrases "women's / And children's clothes" and "Grandmotherly scarves" indicate that the "mother's side of the family," to use a phrase borrowed from Grace Crane's letter, is the poem's center of gravity. The juxtaposition of *women* and *children* may suggest the mother-child relationship, while the adjective *grandmotherly*, which corresponds to the noun *grand-mère*—French for *grandmother*—in the original, extends the mother-child relationship to the previous generation. Though it is not clear which grandmother, maternal or paternal, is being referred to or what sex the children are, the fact remains that men, though perhaps not totally excluded from Rimbaud's poem, recede into the background. Even when women are not explicitly mentioned, their presence is reified. At the risk of being accused of gender stereotyping, one cannot help thinking that some of the other objects the sideboard contains, such as the "faded lace" or the "dry flowers" in the third stanza, are, like the "clothes" and "scarves," more likely to be female than male belongings.

The very title "My Grandmother's Love Letters" suggests the centrality of the female element to Crane's poem. References to it are both explicit and implicit. The seemingly straightforward and self-evident phrase used in the title is expounded in the poem's second stanza as "the letters of my mother's mother, / Elizabeth" (5). The phrase "my mother's mother," alliterative, based on a repetition and verging on a tongue-twister, is conspicuously placed at the end of the line. Equally—if not more—conspicuous, the name of the speaker's (and the poet's) grandmother occupies a separate line, the only one-word line in the poem, thus becoming its visual and semantic nucleus. Alliteration,

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a recurrent device in Crane's poetry, is aimed at "the achievement of the special effect" (Cuddon 25), which, in this particular case, seems to be the emphasis placed on the female presence in the poem. The fact that Crane resolves to employ a periphrastic phrase and says "my mother's mother" instead of "my grandmother" does not result from a desire for "pomp and verbosity" (Cuddon 701). The circumlocution is "used deliberately," but not "for comic effect" or the sake of "propriety and poetic decorum" (Cuddon 701). The result, in Crane's poem, is the repetition of the word *mother*, and the consequent prominence given to the figure of the mother—and the mother figure—in two successive generations. Though the focus is on Elizabeth, the poet's mother is also mentioned, if only *en passant*, and constitutes a link between him and his (grand)mother. Appearing in the poem as the (grand)son, the poet emphasizes the woman-child connection, which, as we have seen, is also found in Rimbaud's lyric. If, in older verse, the basic word which the periphrasis develops typically appears in the title of the poem but not in its body, while modern poets tend to juxtapose the word with its more circumlocutory equivalent within the poem itself (Sławiński 351), Crane combines both strategies in "My Grandmother's Love Letters." Used in the title and then taking the form of periphrasis in stanza two, the reference to Crane's grandmother reappears in the poem's closing stanza, the first line of which runs: "Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand" (5).

I have already pointed out the importance of "female memory" in another work by Crane, his childbirth poem "Stark Major" (Piechucka, "Religion" 32). There, the male protagonist is made to realize that the richness of his pregnant wife's experience will make his own forever pale by comparison: "Henceforth her memory is more / Than yours" (8), the speaker sadly informs the father-to-be, made inferior by his wife's life-giving power. Within the Crane and Rimbaud poems discussed here, femininity, motherhood and memory become intertwined in a way that makes them the reverse of what Louis Aragon famously wrote in the poem "Elsa's Madman" ("Le Fou d'Elsa"): "Woman is the future of man." For the male speaker of Crane's poem and the (presumably) male speaker of Rimbaud's sonnet, woman is very much man's past. The first two stanzas of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" illustrate this point:

> There are no stars tonight
> But those of memory.
> Yet how much room for memory there is
> In the loose girdle of soft rain.
>
> There is even room enough
> For the letters of my mother's mother,

Elizabeth,
That have been pressed so long
Into a corner of the roof
That they are brown and soft,
And liable to melt as snow. (5)

There is a close correspondence between the "room for memory" and that occupied by Elizabeth's letters. This brings us to the notion of space in the two poems, connected, on the one hand, with that of femininity and, on the other, with memory and the passage of time. In both poems, women are referred to explicitly, but their presence is also implied by the way space is presented. In Rimbaud's poem, the closely circumscribed space, which is in fact that of the sideboard, connotes the home and homemaking, which nineteenth-century popular belief and social practice viewed as feminine fields of activity, opposed to the public sphere of extradomestic preoccupations traditionally reserved for men. Similarly, the lines from Crane's poem identify the space therein depicted as a feminine territory. The grandmother's letters were found in "a corner of the roof," which makes the reader think, in synecdochic mode, of the house in its entirety. The house is—and was even more so in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—traditionally thought of as the female domain, and the strong presence of women in Crane's poem both reinforces and is reinforced by the woman-home connection. As for the third text I have chosen to examine here, *Swann's Way*, it is unarguable that the family house in Combray is marked by the conspicuous presence of women: the narrator's mother and grandmother, his great-aunt, his aunt Léonie and her cook Françoise.

Additionally, the "room for memory" is to be sought—if not necessarily, in the end, found—"In the loose girdle of soft rain." In his brief comment on the poem, Gordon A. Tapper points out the role of rain as an activator of memory:

> The 'stars of memory' are at once remembered stars and 'memory's stars,' a figure for memory itself. Absent from the rainy night, the stars exist only in the speaker's memory of them as remembered stars. But the rainy evening, obscuring the real stars, also brings to life 'memory's stars,' the speaker's desire to 'remember' his grandmother's erotic experience. 'Memory's stars' embody a phenomenon of consciousness with no actual physical existence. (22)

If the rain sets off the process of remembering, it must be seen as an agent of memory, which, as I have already noted, is "feminized" in the texts in question. As a consequence, we are tempted to search for female qualities in Crane's "soft rain." While it may be

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argued that the association of softness and gentleness with a woman is stereotypical, the fact remains that it is an association to which Crane was no stranger. Dealing with casual sex between men in "Possessions," a poem whose composition postdates that of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" by four years and which is also included in the *White Buildings* collection, Crane speaks of "the mercy, feminine, that stays / As though prepared" (13), which Fisher interprets as a reference to accidental male lovers and "the surprisingly '*feminine*' gentleness they could show when implored" (191, italics mine). If we analogically interpret the "softness" of the rain as "feminine," it becomes another element reinforcing the female dimension of the poem. The motif of rain itself is also invested with symbolism which "feminizes" Crane's text beyond its more explicit references to the woman. Associated with the act of conception, rain functions in all cultures as a symbol of fertility and is regarded as analogous to other fertility symbols, such as woman, the earth and water (Chenel and Simarro 43). Furthermore, though Crane uses the word *girdle* metaphorically, meaning something like "the embrace of soft rain," it is worth thinking about its literal meaning as well. A girdle is a kind of belt, which may be associated with women and has time-honored denotations and connotations, of which Crane may have been aware. Though worn in the past by both men and women, the girdle has acquired several associations which are gender-specific. "A woman whose girdle is unloosed" is "a woman who has lost her virginity," of which the girdle itself is "an allegory… implying moral defence and virtue" (Stewart 189). Suggestive of femininity and sexuality, the word also connotes motherhood, since "[c]hildren under the girdle" are "[c]hildren not yet born" (Stewart 190). This association inscribes itself into the notion of generational continuity present, as has already been demonstrated, in both poems discussed in this article, which in turn inscribes itself into the poems' overall preoccupation with time and memory.

Of all the qualities of memory, fragility is the one that is emphasized throughout Crane's poem. Elizabeth's letters are "brown and soft," and as delicate as snow. The "softness" of the letters, which may again be read as a "female" attribute, corresponds to that of the rain. While such fragility sends us back to the motif of femininity, since women are—or at least were—traditionally believed to be more vulnerable than men, it is crucial to note that the factor that has so "fragilized" the letters, rendering them "brown and soft," is the passage of time. The fact that the letters were kept in "a corner of the roof" for "so long" reinforces the text's temporal dimension. The letters "have been pressed" in the literal sense of the word that describes spatial compression, but also, by implication, indicates all sorts of pressure and repression to which memory is subjected, including the threat of marginalization and even erasure. Color symbolism also plays an important role: the letters have turned from white to brown, which suggests aging,

decay, degradation and the attendant fear of annihilation and disintegration. The third stanza of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" combines the theme of space with the fragility of memory:

> Over the greatness of such space
> Steps must be gentle.
> It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
> It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air. (5)

Two images in particular evoke the vulnerability of memory: the "white hair" and the "birch limbs." Crane seemingly builds the first of these images on the set expression *to hang by a thread*, substituting the human element—hair—for thread, and making it "invisible," which may be read as an indication of the elusiveness of memory. As for the second image, the white bark of the birch echoes the whiteness of the hair, which inevitably brings to mind old age and its embodiment in the poem, the author's grandmother. The tree itself is anthropomorphized, because its branches are referred to as *limbs*, a word that may also denote human arms or legs. It is also worth noticing that the speaker's approach is cautious and his "[s]teps must be gentle." Traditionally, a man is supposed to be gentle to women. Like a woman, memory is fragile and must be handled with care. The frailty of memory may also be that of an elderly person's body, trembling the way "birch limbs" do in the wind.

In Rimbaud's sonnet, the sideboard takes on qualities associated with old age. The piece of furniture is made of "dark, aged oak" (*Rimbaud Complete* 33) and is referred to as "old" (33). The "sweet scents" which "[s]wim in its shadow" are "like a tide of old wine" (33). The "old knickknacks" (33) is Wyatt Mason's translation of Rimbaud's tautological phrase "vieilles vieilleries" (*Œuvres* 35), which literally means something like *antique antiquities*. Since a poetic use of pleonasms often serves the purpose of amplification (Sławiński 360), we may assume that Rimbaud wishes to emphasize the notions of aging and old age in the poem. Consequently, we learn that the oak the sideboard is made of "[h]as taken on the wonderful weathered air of old people" (*Rimbaud Complete* 33). While in Crane's poem elderly people represent at once frailty and the passage of time, Rimbaud's sideboard seems to be more connected with the latter. Fragility, understood as susceptibility to being marked by the passage of time, is, however, to be found elsewhere: The "lace" is "faded" (33), the "linens" are "yellowing" (33). Additionally, the motif of hair is also used in Rimbaud's poem, where the "[l]ocks of hair" are "blonde and white" (33). The sideboard holds objects which by definition are carriers of memory, such as portraits, "dried flowers" (33)—whose dryness is itself a mark left by time—or

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"médaillons" (*Œuvres* 35) which may be translated, as Mason did, as *medallions*, but which in French may also mean *lockets*, a translation which seems logically connected with the hair Rimbaud mentions in the same stanza. Less metaphorical in his use of hair imagery than Crane, the French poet draws on the fashions and social customs of his day, based on a long tradition of combining hair and remembrance. As Sherrow writes in *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History*: "Hair also may be saved as a keepsake of someone who has died. Since hair is already dead once it grows from the head, it remains much the same after it has been cut. Saving the hair of deceased loved ones dates back to ancient times and was common in various cultures" (260). It was in the eighteenth century that "more people began to place locks of hair inside pieces of jewelry called lockets, some of which were made with glass windows" (260). According to Goldemberg, "lockets containing mementos of dead or living loved ones" were *de rigueur* in the 1870s, the decade from which "The Sideboard" dates, and "portraits of women of the period nearly always show them wearing such a locket high on their chests" (115). The fact that the case of the locket is supposed to protect its content reminds us that hair, which stands for memory in Rimbaud's poem, is delicate and that—though the French poet, with a typical symbolist penchant for suggestiveness, does not say so explicitly—this quality may be ascribed to memory itself.

At this point in my analysis, it seems worthwhile to return to Proust. The concept of memory as delicate and fragile underlies the madeleine episode discussed earlier in this article. As he recounts his epiphanic experience, the narrator of Proust's novel details the various stages of the process he underwent. He begins with the initial extraordinary sensation, the "exquisite pleasure" (35) which overwhelmed him. Intrigued by this "all-powerful joy" (35) and aware that it is due to more than just "the taste of tea and cake" (35), the narrator embarks on an intense self-examination, aiming to determine the source and meaning of that joy:

> I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. (35-36)

The "quest" for memory, to use a word borrowed from Proust (35), can be frustrating because the quester struggles as if in the dark, chasing something elusive, something he

is seemingly close to taking hold of one minute and about to lose hold of the next. The narrator himself admits to being daunted by the formidable task of "remembering things past," by the disheartening process of recollection: "the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone" (Proust 36) in order to avoid "effort or distress of mind" (37). Memory is by its very nature something that eludes us, disquiets and torments us. It is an amalgam of subtle sensations that fade out as we attempt to seize them. Capturing such fleeting impressions, let alone analyzing them, seems to be beyond human reach.

The process of self-scrutiny sparked off by the taste of the tea-soaked madeleine, which represents what is referred to in Proust scholarship as "involuntary memory," involves difficulty and mental effort, which, as we shall see when we return to Crane, are inseparable from any endeavor to reconstruct memories. Importantly in the context of the present analysis, Proust presents the narrator's struggle to establish the nature of the unique sensation he experienced in spatial terms: "What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail to nothing" (36). Determined to avoid anything that might drive his mind to distraction, the Proustian narrator "clear[s] an empty space in front of it" (36). Closely linked with space is motion, and both concepts serve the narrator as he attempts to verbalize his experience: "I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed" (36). In the process of what will turn out to be the recapturing of a childhood memory, the narrator has the sensation that some upward movement is taking place inside him and that long distances are being covered. He soon identifies the mysterious "something" as "the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, has tried to follow it into my conscious mind" (36). Before it fully manifests itself, the narrator will experience further anxiety resulting from his being unable to make out the exact shape of the memory, whose "struggles are too far off, too much confused" (36). The obstacle to thoroughly comprehending the meaning of the extraordinary phenomenon is again presented in spatial terms as the distance which separates him from the memory. When "suddenly the memory returns" (37), it too takes a spatial form: that of Combray, the village of the narrator's boyhood, and "its surroundings" (37), which "taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea" (37).

A similar correlation between memory and space informs "My Grandmother's Love Letters." In the year that saw the publication of *White Buildings*, Crane famously de-

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fended his poetic practice in a letter to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry* magazine. To exemplify his point, Crane drew an analogy between his work and modern science:

> Hasn't it often occurred that instruments originally invented for record and computation have inadvertently so extended the concepts of the entity they were invented to measure (concepts of space, etc.) in the mind and imagination that employed them, that they may metaphorically be said to have extended the original boundaries of the entity measured? This little bit of "relativity" ought not to be discredited in poetry now that scientists are proceeding to measure the universe on principles of pure *ratio*, quite as metaphorical, so far as previous standards of scientific methods extended, as some of the axioms in Job. (169)

The essence of Crane's argument was, as Fisher explains, that in the modern age both poetry and science "resorted to metaphor," which "underlay the new age of 'relativity,' which sought to calculate the extent of the universe as a symbol of time" (266). However, what seems more important in the context of the present analysis is the poet's interest in Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, which was announced three years prior to the composition of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" and to which the interdependence of time and space is central. If we attempt the reverse of what, as Crane claims in the letter to Monroe, is the case with modern science and apply notions derived from physics to poetry, we may, metaphorically speaking, argue that the poem discussed here revolves around its author's variation on the space-time continuum.

The notion of space, which, as I have already shown, may be identified with the female presence in the poem, is instantly combined with that of time when the speaker of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" notes "Yet how much room for memory there is / In the loose girdle of soft rain," a remark symmetrically completed by the beginning of the next stanza: "There is even room enough / For the letters of my mother's mother." The fact that there is sufficient space for Elizabeth's correspondence, through which memory is supposed to be channeled, appears to offer an opening for the poet-speaker's attempt to reconstruct the past. Spatial metaphors recur throughout the poem, in the third stanza of which the word *space* is actually used: "Over the greatness of such space / Steps must be gentle" (5). The question which immediately slides by is: which space does Crane have in mind? It is the "greatness" of the space that is emphasized in stanza three, and the word *space* itself is preceded by the predeterminer *such*, which may mean *like that* or *so great or unusual*. What seems likely is that the great and unusual space that Crane speaks of is the distance the poet-speaker has to cover to successfully recapture the past. The space dealt with in Crane's poem is vast, not least because it stands for the difficulty

encountered by one trying to recreate the past in the present, for the formidability of the enterprise. The notion of space is interwoven with that of fragility on the one hand, and the idea of movement on the other, all three inherent in the "gentleness" of the steps recommended by the speaker. As in Proust, motion comes to represent the process of reaching for the past, of retrieving memories. The speaker, whose presence in the poem has so far directly manifested itself only through the use of the possessive personal pronoun *my*, used in the title and in line six, expresses himself in the first person in line sixteen, which follows the third stanza and, standing alone, is not part of a larger stanza: "And I ask myself" (5). The content of the speaker's query is enclosed by quotation marks, forming the poem's penultimate stanza:

'Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes:
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again
As though to her?' (5)

The passage again revolves around the interplay of time, space and motion. The length of the fingers, which the speaker suspects may turn out to be insufficient, implies the necessity to metaphorically reach out a hand for reminiscences of his grandmother's youth. The motif of the echo, a phenomenon which requires considerable space to materialize, is also inscribed in the overall framework of a poem in which time is "spatialized" and space "temporalized," recalling Proust's "echo of great spaces traversed." Distances and directions are signaled by Crane as he charts the to-and-fro trajectory of "the music" of the past he attempts to play.

Spatial metaphors also appear in the poem's closing stanza, which again evokes motion: the speaker declares that he "would *lead*" Elizabeth "by the hand / Through much of what she would not understand" (Crane 5, italics mine). When, in Fisher's words, the poet-speaker "retreat[s] in the face of his self-appointed task" (100), he resorts to a verb of movement which includes the idea of fall or, on the figurative level, of uncertainty or failure: "And so I *stumble*" (5, italics mine). Interpreting the poem in the light of Crane's biography, Fisher sees the last stanza as a reference to the poet's homosexual love life. The speaker of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" is thus willing "to exchange amorous confidences with" Elizabeth, but ultimately refrains from doing so. Fisher is perhaps right in underscoring the sexual dimension of the poem, since its very title suggests the centrality of three themes: the female, the erotic and the textual. It is at the intersection

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of these three elements that the poet-speaker's struggle to reconstruct his grandmother's memories is played out. If we now return for a moment to the Rimbaud poem discussed here, we realize that similar themes appear in it, but the French poet, unlike Crane, merely signals certain possibilities without, however, delving into them. Like Elizabeth Hart's *billets-doux*, the lockets and hair mentioned in "The Sideboard" are mementos of love and tokens of commitment which inscribe themselves into nineteenth-century sentimentalism: "Lockets containing a miniature of the beloved were a popular nineteenth-century engagement gift" (Goldemberg 115). Sherrow similarly describes lockets containing locks of hair as "items of jewelry [which] were worn by loved ones," adding that "[s]ome women gave these mementos to their sweethearts" and that "[l]ockets and other pieces of romantic jewelry were made with strands of the couple's hair, and both people wore these items to show their attachment to each other" (260). Behind each such object there is a love story; it is thus little wonder that the closing stanza of Rimbaud's sonnet suggests the narrative potential inherent in the sideboard in which the keepsakes are stored:

> Old sideboard, you've seen more than a little
> And have tales to tell, and speak each time
> Your big black doors slowly swing open. (*Rimbaud Complete* 33)

Unlike the speaker of "My Grandmother's Love Letters," that of Rimbaud's poem does not directly confront the problems connected with either the painstaking process of reconstructing memories or the equally difficult task of translating them into a literary text. The latter difficulties are at the most suggested by the French poet when he has the anthropomorphized sideboard attempt to express itself. The "speaking" of Mason's translation corresponds, as I have already observed, to a verb denoting noise in the French original, just as the more confident "have tales to tell" of the English-language version is supposed to render the phrase "tu voudrais conter tes contes" (*Œuvres* 35), which literally means *you would like to tell your tales*. The speaking of the sideboard is in fact no more than the squeaking of its doors, which may be read as a suggestion that the titular piece of furniture, a repository of memories and, consequently, narratives, is a hapless story-teller, powerless to verbalize the stories which cannot wait to be shared with others.

The metaliterary dimension which I have just read into Rimbaud's sonnet is, I think, more conspicuous and more dramatic in Crane's poem. Here, the poet-speaker's task is marked—and marred—by explicit self-doubt. The question from the poem's penultimate stanza, quoted earlier in this article, is, as Fisher notes, "unanswerable" (100). Importantly,

however, the question relies on musical metaphors, with the speaker positioning himself as a pianist who confronts the silence-music dichotomy. The analogy between making music and writing poetry, which, as is well-known, has melic origins, is, of course, time-honored: one may "compose" poetry just as musicians "compose" music. It is thus the act of creation that is being referred to, and the poet-speaker questions not just his ability to recapture the past, but also his artistic abilities. In other words, "My Grandmother's Love Letters" emerges, upon closer analysis, as a self-referential poem whose speaker wonders whether he is able not just to reconstruct his grandmother's love life, but also whether he is able to do so in poetic form. In fact, artistic creation and memory recreation are inextricably linked by their very nature, not just because a poet or writer might wish to transpose the latter into the former. Recapturing memories is a creative process, as Proust shows in the madeleine episode. When the narrator strives to recall the "unremembered state" and "make it reappear," he realizes that there is more to his task than searching for the mysterious something hidden "in the depths of [his] being": "Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day" (36). To avoid being distracted, the Proustian narrator makes sure that "the silence is strong enough," to use a slightly transformed phrase from Crane's poem: "I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room" (Proust 36). Importantly, the narrator of *Swann's Way* recaptures his own memory, while Crane's poet-speaker sets himself the near impossible task of recreating someone else's reminiscences. The distinction, however, seems less important when we understand, thanks to Proust, that even the reconstruction of one's own past demands considerable creativity. In this light, the opposite poles of what Fisher sees as a central dilemma that hindered Crane's work on the poem, "to imagine or to remember?" (98), may in fact turn out to be two sides of the same coin.

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Francesca de Lucia

"An Abrupt Impression of Familiarity": Ethnic Projection in Arthur Miller's Work

Introduction: Perceptions of Ethnicity

The ethnic identity of white groups in the United States after the Second World War is an object of debate. Some scholars, such as Herbert Gans, Richard Alba, and Mary C. Waters, have suggested that, as a result of removal from ethnic enclaves, intermarriage and upward mobility, the ethnicity derived from groups that emigrated from Europe is reduced to symbols or tokens that are emptied of meaning, as these groups merge together and lose their fundamental characteristics. However, a different view of ethnic identity can be conceived of, like the one found in the studies of the anthropologist Michael J. Fischer. In his work, ethnicity is seen not so much as a rigidly defined identity, but rather as a fluid category, a protean notion that is deeply embedded in the individual's mind and emerges through memory: "[Ethnicity] is often something quite puzzling for the individual, something over which he or she lacks control…. It can be potent even when it is not consciously taught… something that emerges in full-often liberating-flower only through struggle" (195).

Fischer also points out that ethnicity possibly emerges from contacts and interactions between different ethnic groups perceived in a pluralistic perspective, rather than hinges on the antagonism between minority and mainstream discourses. In this way, one discovers the self through the observation of the other: "the ethnic, the ethnographer, and the cross-cultural scholar in general often begin with a personal empathetic 'dual tracking' seeking in the other clarification for processes in the self" (199). In his description, Fischer, in an interesting way, alludes to the cabalistic myth of divine sparks derived from broken vessels at the time of the origin of the world, the motif that will be explored later in greater detail.

Jews and Italians in Arthur Miller's Work

Fischer's ideas can be applied to Arthur Miller's treatment of Italians and Italian Americans. Miller's Jewish identity is an object of debate in relation to his work, since the protagonists of his plays often function as American "Everyman"-type figures or

have a Jewish identity that is implicit. In texts dealing with Italian or Italian American themes, Miller seems to be projecting his own ethnic identity onto Italian Americans, thus "seeking in the other clarification for processes in the self" (Fischer 199). Miller's work, in this context, tells about the evolution of the Italian American identity in the post-war years, when it emerged from an essentialized sphere and entered a broader American cultural context. Indeed, after the war, Italian Americans became more visible, in particular in film and in the entertainment industry. In his book *Feeling Italian: The Art of Ethnicity in America*, Thomas Ferraro observes that, paradoxically enough, Italian Americans, at the same time, became more Americanized and started introducing their own culture into a more general cultural realm, which can be described as a process of "intertwin[ing] and interpenetrat[ing]" (4). It is significant, from this point of view, that Miller, who in his drama concentrates on universal themes, has indeed chosen Italian Americans as a minority to address in his writing.

I shall discuss here Arthur Miller's play *A View from the Bridge* (1955), set in an Italian milieu in Brooklyn, admittedly his best-known illustration of the above-mentioned process, his short story "Monte Sant'Angelo" from the collection *I Don't Need You Anymore* (1967), and sections of his autobiography *Timebends* (1987) that focus on the Italian and Italian American life. Miller's interest in the Italian subject matter seems to have stemmed not only from his interaction with the immigrant communities in New York, but also, more specifically, from his trip to Europe in 1948, in company of his friend Vincent Longhi, a lawyer and aspiring politician. The trip is described in *Timebends*, wherein the depiction of devastated Italy in the early post-war years has a noteworthy transatlantic aspect; namely, Miller tends to play down the "high" aspects of classic Italian culture associated with ancient Rome or the Renaissance which fascinated earlier American travellers, and, instead, he emphasizes the continuity between the world of the immigrant working class in greater New York and the Southern rural areas from which Italian Americans originated. Therefore, on the one hand, he evokes an encounter with the mobster Lucky Luciano, an epitome of the gangster, and on the other, he notices the presence of returning immigrants in an Apulian town:

> [W]e saw a promenade at the seafront consisting of an unusual number of single men… not dressed like other Italians; they wore dark New York overcoats and grey New York hats with brims…. We accosted four who were having their coffee. At first they spoke Italian, but Vinny [Longhi]' s witty grin brought acknowledging smiles and they happily lapsed into Brooklynese. (164)

As an outsider both to native Italian and Italian American culture, Miller associates the immigrant identity with the old country. In his view, Southern Italy has a limited

autonomous existence beyond its connection with the communities of the American immigrant quarters. With respect to the presentation of Italy and Italian America, *Timebends* evidently echoes "Monte Sant'Angelo."

While Jewish motifs tend to be absent from Miller's major plays, the struggle to define Jewish identity features more prominently in his early work and his prose, in particular in the novel *Focus* (1945), where a WASP anti-Semite protagonist ultimately embraces a Jewish identity that the community has started to attribute to him, which suggests a subjective and self-constructed notion of ethnicity.

"Monte Sant'Angelo": Recuperating Jewishness through Italy

The themes of *Focus* are reiterated, in a different key, in "Monte Sant'Angelo," which also concentrates on the difficulty of defining Jewish identity. In this story, a Jewish character, struggling to define selfhood, is contrasted with a more confident Italian American. The two men: the Jewish Bernstein and the Italian American Vinnie Appello, travel together, presumably in the early post-war period, to the places in Southern Italy the latter's family originally came from. Bernstein and Vinnie Appello function, to a certain extent, as each other's doubles, being described as physically similar:

> For a fleeting moment it occurred to Appello that they resembled each other. Both were over six feet tall, both broad-shouldered and dark men. Bernstein was thinner, quite gaunt and long-armed. Appello was stronger in his arms and stooped a little, as though he had not wanted to be tall. But their eyes were not the same. Appello seemed a little Chinese around the eyes, and they glistened black, direct, and for women, passionately. Bernstein gazed rather than looked. (56)

Possibly, Bernstein is the author's alter ego, which justifies the analogy between Americans of Jewish and Italian descent, even though Appello corresponds in some way to the stereotyped seductive Latin male. At the same time, their attitudes toward their immigrant origins are diametrically different. Appello emerges as a well-established ethnic American, who draws a sense of assurance from interaction with the world of his roots in rural Southern Italy, whereas Bernstein, by contrast, is portrayed as a rootless Jew, whose disconnection from his European ancestry is aggravated by the trauma of the Holocaust, as he ponders that, unlike Appello, he has no relatives he knows of in Europe. This motif ties in with Miller's recollection in *Timebends* of an encounter in Southern Italy with Holocaust survivors attempting to immigrate to Palestine, which elicits in him the feeling of alienation and shame rather than of kinship or empathy.

Yet, at a crucial moment, Bernstein is able to overcome his dismay and feeling of inferiority to Appello through an exchange with a mysterious individual named Mauro di Benedetti, whom he recognizes as a Southern Italian Jew. Here Miller represents a perception of ethnicity analogous to Fischer's, as something that emerges in ways that can be startling for the individual. The "liberating" process of the discovery of ethnicity, as described by Fischer, is evident in this passage:

> Of what [Bernstein] should be proud he had no clear idea; perhaps it was only that beneath the brainless crush of history a Jew had secretly survived, shorn of his consciousness but forever caught by that final impudence of a Saturday Sabbath in a Catholic country; so that his very unawareness was proof, a proof as mute as stones, that a past lived. A past for me, Bernstein thought, astounded by its importance for him, when in fact he had never had a religion or even, he realized now, a history. (68)

"Monte Sant'Angelo" can be read in the light of Fischer's use of the cabalistic myth of the "divine sparks": "what thus seem to be individualistic autobiographical searchings turn out to be revelations of traditions, re-collections of disseminated identities and of the divine sparks of the breaking of the vessels" (165). The imagery Fischer alludes to derives from the creation myth elaborated by the sixteenth-century mystic Isaac Luria. In this myth, the creation of the world comes from God retreating from the universe and emanating a force that is filtered through vessels. The vessels, however, cannot withhold it and they break, releasing "divine sparks" that remain in the world from which God has been exiled. The performance of commandments or blessings enables the revealing of the divine sparks through what is considered a "healing of the world" or *tikun olem*, which is exactly what Mauro di Benedetti does by observing the Shabbat. In a less literal way, he allows Bernstein's sense of self to re-emerge on an unexpected occasion, thus liberating and healing him. Like Newman in *Focus*, the character of Mauro di Benedetti is endowed with a Jewish identity he does not acknowledge, but in "Monte Sant'Angelo" this ethnic problem has a specifically Italian context, just as the Italian American Appello functions as a kind of foil for Bernstein.

A View from the Bridge: Dealing with Masculinity

The displacement of Miller's ethnic identity onto Italian American culture is even more pronounced in *A View from the Bridge*, as this play focuses exclusively on characters of Italian descent, drawing inspiration both from Miller's interaction with the members of the Brooklyn longshoremen union and his witnessing of immigrant transatlantic

exchanges in rural Southern Italy. According to Tracy Floreani, Miller's endeavor to explore Italian American masculinity in the figure of Eddie Carbone is relevant because the play was written at the time where Miller was emerging as a public figure thanks to the success of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* as well as to his marriage to Marilyn Monroe (49). Consequently, he started to be seen as a new emblem of Jewish masculinity, distant from the earlier, contrasting stereotypes of the Jew as a lecher or an effeminate scholar. As observed by Jonathan Freedman, this public image of Miller, in some degree distinct from the way he was perceived as a writer, is that of an intellectual aware of his roots, yet deeply immersed in the mainstream context (135-152).

A kind of translation mechanism is at stake in *A View from the Bridge* because the play concentrates on an ethnic male unable to resolve the tension between the longing for assimilation and the atavistic impulses and traditions. Floreani suggests that "[u]ltimately, the story comes down to an examination of self and masculinity, and that Miller delineates this struggle within the Italian American male seems telling" (49). In the play, Miller unites the two different strands of Italian "high" culture associated with the classical world and that of the immigrants. As noted by Christopher Bigsby: "There is a past in this play but it is not Eddie's. It's a mythical past, a past of elemental feelings and ancient taboos carried forward by the subconscious as much as by traditions, forged in a distant Italy" (179-180). This is reflected in the conception of the play as a version of a modern Greek tragedy. It is worth remembering that, in his description of the trip to Italy, Miller evokes his visit to the amphitheatre of Syracuse and his fascination with classical drama. Indeed, the character of the lawyer Alfieri functions as a kind of chorus and his name possibly echoes that of the nineteenth-century Italian poet and playwright Vittorio Alfieri, who also drew heavily from the tradition of the classical tragedy. In the opening of *A View from the Bridge,* Alfieri expresses the idea of an ineluctable fate, establishing a link between the milieu of Italian American longshoremen and the reminiscence of the Greek-Roman past of Southern Italy: "[T]he thought comes that in some Caesar's year, in Calabria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse, another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course" (12). The references to the Greek tragedy do not concern only the play's form, but also its plot, since Eddie Carbone resembles a classical tragic hero, a fundamentally good man who is destroyed by his flaw, which is, most obviously, his morbid attraction for his niece Catherine, but at a deeper level his incapacity to reconcile the Italian and American aspects of life.

The protagonist of *A View from the Bridge* is distant from the self-assured Appello in "Monte Sant'Angelo" and closer to the conventional images of working-class Italian

American men. The main theme of the play has a strong connection to the Italian American literary tradition: the adaptation of the immigrant familial structure to the alien environment of the New World. However, as Albert Wertheim points out, Eddie expresses two forms of repressed sexual deviancy, his incestuous attraction for Catherine and his possible subconscious homoerotic interest in Rodolpho, since "[t]he two successive kisses are partially meant to destroy Catherine and Rodolpho's union, but they also bespeak Eddie's incestuous and perhaps homosexual passions" (111). He disrupts more directly the immigrant family unit by denouncing the presence of the "submarines," causing a dramatic friction between the culture of his origins and that of the United States, which culminates in the tragic dénouement of the play. At the same time, Eddie's denunciation gives *A View from the Bridge* a more universal aspect by implying the idea of "telling names," important to Miller especially in the light of his concern with McCarthyism and his refusal to cooperate with the House of Un-American Activities. *A View from the Bridge* brings forth some recurring clichés associated with Italian ethnicity, such as arrogant masculinity, ubiquitous syndicate presence and the restriction of female agency and independence. Nevertheless, it can be interpreted as a broader reflection of the personal conflict experienced by ethnics, in particular in relation to Miller's ambivalent attitude toward his own Jewishness.

Conclusion

Jewish identity occupies a marginal space in Miller's dramatic oeuvre, which concentrates on a more general presentation of American society. However, when describing his creative processes in *Timebends*, Miller refers to the surfacing of his own ethnic and religious heritage as a source of inspiration for his writing. Thus, for instance, he claims that, while doing preliminary research for *The Crucible*, he gained a deeper understanding of the Salem Trials through an unexpected mental association with a childhood memory of a synagogue scene:

> I noticed hanging on a wall several framed etchings of the witchcraft trials, made apparently at the time by an artist who must have witnessed them…. Suddenly [an etching] became my memory of the dancing men in the synagogue on 114th Street as I had glimpsed them between my shielding fingers, the same chaos of bodily motion… both scenes frighteningly attached to the long reins of God. I knew instantly what the connection was. Yes I understood Salem in that flash, it was suddenly my own inheritance… it belonged to me now. (338)

In a similar vein, Miller's interest in Italian American themes can be linked to his Jewish ethnic identity.

From a more specific Italian American standpoint, Miller represents an illustration of the process that Ferraro describes in *Feeling Italian*. He observes that just as Italian Americans partly lost their original values, which stemmed from a particularly vivid brand of Catholicism, and assumed a more standard Americanized outlook, America was influenced by an Italian-derived Catholic sensibility, not in sense of religion but as a kind of outlook and mentality. The intermingling of these two elements has generated new, more ambivalent representations of Italian American identity:

> The two sides of the dialectic—the secularizing of Catholicism versus the Italian Catholicizing of secular America—come together not as a righteous xenophobia, the guido-style parochialism of which we've had more than enough, but as a demanding, even consequential mode of culture-based cohesion: *acting* Italian, finally as an art *for* America. (7; emphasis in the original)

In this context, Miller's example is significant because it reflects a specific form of cultural dialogue between two ethnic groups in America that have a history of occasional frictions and of cohabitation in metropolitan immigrant quarters. They also share similar reasons for immigration prompted not only by poverty but also by oppression and brutalization (the post-unification Italian government undertook viciously repressive campaigns on Southern peasantry) as well as similar positions in the ethnic hierarchy on arrival and partly analogous values rooted in the family and the community. The kind of process we see in Miller's representation of Italian Americans is thus highly significant for the literary construction of Jewish American and Italian American identities alike.

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Marta Rzepecka

Richard Nixon's Campaign Rhetoric of Anti-Communism

Studies of Presidential Rhetoric

A review of literature bearing upon U.S. presidential studies revealed that at the end of the 1970s some scholars rejected mainstream approaches to the study of the presidency (institutional, legal, political power as well as psychological), and chose to analyze the executive office from a rhetorical perspective. To have a proper understanding of this way of approaching the presidency, it is necessary to understand the difference between the phenomena of the rhetorical presidency and presidential rhetoric. As Martin Medhurst observes, the rhetorical presidency is a construct that derives from the discipline of political science and is grounded in the U.S. Constitution, while presidential rhetoric is a construct rooted in speech communication and based on human persuasion. At the most fundamental level, the two constructs differ in their respective domains: the former focuses on the presidency, while the latter focuses on rhetoric. Medhurst observes that researchers who work on the rhetorical presidency focus on the office as an institution and turn to the U.S. Constitution to define its character, scope and role, while scholars concerned with presidential rhetoric investigate the principles and practice of rhetoric used by presidents in order to achieve their goals (Medhurst xi-xiii).

Much of the scholarly interest in presidential rhetoric commenced with the publication of "Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study" by Theodore Otto Windt, Jr. In this seminal essay, the author explains that rhetoric-oriented researchers examine the president's public statements, including speeches, press conferences, messages to Congress, and official remarks, to show how the president's utterances affect his ability to exercise the powers of the office. They focus on presidential discourse, conducting either a kind of linguistic analysis, which focuses on the surface language, or rhetorical analysis, which considers contexts, speakers, audiences, constraints and exigencies (Windt 103). A survey of research relevant to the study of presidential rhetoric showed that the essay encouraged rhetoricians, political scientists, historians, and journalists to both conduct new research in the field and offer a fresh perspectives on it. It revealed that some of the studies, for example Jeffrey K. Tulis' *The Rhetorical Presidency,* focus

on the impact of presidential rhetoric on the character of the presidency and the style of presidential leadership, while others, for example Mel Laracey's *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public,* concentrate on the origins and the techniques of the presidential practice of going public. Some, for instance Roderick Hart's *The Sound of Leadership: Presidential Communication in the Modern Age,* analyze the variables of presidential public statements and presidential speechmaking regularities and patterns, while others, for instance Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's *Deeds Done in Words: Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance,* examine the content of presidential messages. Some, like Lester G. Seligman and Cary R. Covington's *The Coalitional Presidency,* explore the link between presidential rhetoric and the electoral, while others, like Theodore Otto Windt, Jr.'s *Presidents and Protesters: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s*, study the connection between the political stances which different presidents took and the rhetoric they adopted to express those stances.

The aim of this paper is to analyze President Richard Nixon's political campaign discourse to show that as a campaigner Nixon went through several distinct phases, which do not merely form a chronological sequence but show his evolution as a campaigner who consistently and consciously employed rhetorical tools to reach his goals. The paper contends that each phase can be identified with a few most representative choices of rhetorical forms. Tracing the rhetorical devices in his congressional and senatorial campaign discourses, one discovers that Nixon was unmatched in keeping his opponents on the defensive through the use of insinuations based on the principles of guilt by association, half-truths, and outright lies. He skillfully discredited his rivals through loose logic, confusing quotations, false interpretations, and obvious insults. While in the first campaign for the vice-presidency he still at times tended to get carried away by his old intense and rough rhetoric, commonly based on slurs, allegations, and lies, he used a more moderate discourse through most of the campaign, deliberatively and strategically replacing direct accusations and statements with indirect references and generalizations. He continued modifying his discourse in his second vice-presidential campaign relying on logical rather than emotional proofs and stressing the importance of issues rather than personalities. To substantiate his arguments, he used logical forms of support, such as information and example, and appeals to loyalty, reputation, will, and character. In confrontations with his rival in the first presidential campaign, Nixon was on the defensive for the most part, identifying with President Dwight Eisenhower and his policies. At the times when he attacked, he based his arguments on the opponent's political immaturity and personal vulnerabilities. In making his second bid for presidency, he continued to run an intellectual campaign fo-

cused on issues and policy proposals, conveyed through metaphors of bridge and bridge-building, coupled with references to peace. A comparative analysis of Nixon's utterances from his congressional, senatorial, vice-presidential and presidential contests will show how his thinking about the issue of Communism, his understanding of the ideology and how his goals and his means of reaching them changed, as he developed during his years on the stump.

The Congressional and Senatorial Campaigns

As Stephen E. Ambrose writes in *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962,* in the way that Nixon ran his campaigns to Congress and the Senate, representing southern California's Twelfth Congressional District, he showed himself to be a fierce rival, capable of going to almost any extreme and employing any trick available so long as it proved helpful in achieving political success (139). Sensing correctly that the political atmosphere of fear of Communists at home, characteristic of the period of the late 1940s, was conducive to a campaign focused upon issues related to ideology, he used the banner of anti-Communism with skill and without scruples.

In the 1946 and the 1950 contests, he discredited his opponents, Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas respectively, through innuendos based on the principle of guilt by association. He repeatedly tried to tie Voorhis' name to Communism by constantly referring to him as "the PAC (Political Action Committee) candidate" (qtd. in Costello 53). His goal was to plant doubts in voters' minds by reminding them that Voorhis may have allied himself with Communists and therefore could not be trusted with the position for which he campaigned. What is more, as William Costello notes, Nixon wanted to put Voorhis on the defensive for, as a skilful debater, he knew that it was politically more advantageous to attack the opponent's position than to defend one's own, especially if one were a challenger to the office (46).

Nixon also defeated his opponents by attacking them with loose logic, confusing quotations, half-truths, and outright lies. When Douglas accused him of voting against giving aid to Korea and limiting aid to Europe, he circulated a pink paper handout, known as "The Pink Sheet," in which he conveyed the charge that Douglas voted 354 times along the same lines as the only pro-Communist member of Congress, Vito Marcantonio, on issues of national importance, which meant that, in essence, she was a left-wing extremist secretly trying to socialize America. Employing arguments based on distorted information, he wanted to question her patriotism and leave the voter with the impression that she was, at the very least, "soft" on Communism. He seemed convinced,

as Judith S. Trent observes, that "facts" presented in a clear form, and backed by what seemed to be well prepared and carefully researched and referenced data, were strongly persuasive (29).

Nixon interpreted the facts in such a way that the public would see his opponents' strength as their disadvantage and his own weakness as his advantage. Reminding the public that "Voorhis [was] a former registered Socialist" (qtd. in Ambrose, *Education* 136-137), he did not want to help his opponent come clean of alleged accusations, but rather suggest that Voorhis' leaving the Communist party meant his staying loyal to the ideals and principles underlying the party's ideology. By contrast, recalling his experience in the bureaucracy in 1942, when he declared:

> I know what I am talking about. OPA (Office of Price Administration) is shot through with extreme left-wingers. They are boring from within, striving to force private enterprise into bankruptcy, and thus bring about the socialization of America's basic institutions and industries (qtd. in Ambrose, *Education* 136)

he tried to foresee the actions of his opponent and anticipate any moves that could hurt his political image. Instead of waiting for Voorhis to use the argument of his inexperience against him, Nixon turned the fact that he was a freshman in politics to his advantage by explaining that as an outsider he was free from any socialist or communist affiliation.

He also relied on personal attacks based on name-calling and catchy descriptions. He often repeated the line that Douglas was "pink right down to her underwear" (qtd. in Bochin 27) and called her the "Pink Lady." What is more, the Nixon headquarters popularized a memorable description, asking, "How [could] Helen Douglas, capable actress that she [was], [take] up so strange a role as a foe of communism? And why [did] she when she [had] so deservedly earned the title of 'the pink lady?" (qtd. in Ambrose, *Education* 216). He used the fact that Douglas was a woman and a former Hollywood actress to question her qualifications and competence for the office of senator. Moreover, he used irony to ridicule her candidacy to the point when the public would not even consider her to be a serious contestant in the race. Although he never ran an ostensibly anti-feminist campaign, he calculated that if he hoped to win the contest he had to expose all of his opponent's weakest points. The fact that Douglas was a woman politician in the male world of the mid-twentieth century American politics was an argument against her which appealed to both Republicans and Democrats, since both parties were dominated by men determined to keep politics as exclusively their domain.

The First Vice-Presidential Campaign

While in the 1952 vice-presidential race Nixon continued his anti-Communist crusade, he showed more restraint in his criticism of the opposition and reason in the accusations he leveled against his rivals. Acting as a member of soon-to-be President Eisenhower's team, he was expected to adjust his agenda and discourse to represent the views of, and follow the course set by, the presidential candidate and his advisers. He was supposed to show that he was able to work out a new manner of delivery concerning controversial issues, which manner would correspond to the traditional standards associated with the office for which he campaigned. Trying to adapt and modify some of his views and modes of communication, at times, he would prove once again to be a tough partisan who went after his enemies with a vengeance, and who used techniques reminiscent of those applied in his campaigns against Voorhis and Douglas.

As a Republican nominee for vice-president, he used a more restrained rhetoric to attack. He did not address his charges against any particular adversaries but made his arguments as general as possible. In an interview for *U.S. News & World Report* from August 29, 1952, when answering a question about Communism in the U.S., he explained:

> it is necessary to appraise the Communist threat and to determine what is the most effective action to deal with it. As I have suggested, there are those who always come up with a simple answer to the problem—like a law which would outlaw the Communist Party. Or some would say, 'Ship all the Communists back to Russia.' We all may have emotional feelings which might support such drastic action but, on the other hand, I think that, as we calmly and objectively analyze the Communist tactics and strategy, both in the United States and in other countries where they have developed the 'fifth column' to such a remarkable degree, we must conclude that the most effective weapon against so-called internal Communism—infiltration—is exposure. The Communists, the Communist-front organizations, the Communist Party, cant's stand the light of day. (48)

In accusing the Democrats of proposing ridiculous and extremist ways of dealing with the issue of the Communist threat at home, Nixon suggested that his plan for handling the problem was, in contrast, reasonable and balanced. He ridiculed the naïve solutions he ascribed to his political opponents to show that, unlike the Democrats, he was a man who refused to take any shortcuts and chose to earn his credit the hard way. He preferred to achieve his goals by struggling against all odds and proving himself in that way, instead of just reaching them effortlessly. What this statement shows is that Nixon did not

address his attack against any particular adversaries but used collective pronouns to make his attacks as general as possible to imply that "their" view of the subject matter was radical and that "they" were in the minority, while he represented the opinion of the majority of Americans and therefore he deserved the support of the voters. This is a clear instance of a cunning rhetorical device: on the one hand, the speaker suggested that emotions should be put aside when discussing the issue at hand to create the impression of being distanced and unbiased, while, at the same time, by calling the Communist Party the "fifth column" and associating it with an evil force, he evoked the fear of sabotage and the fear of godlessness.

Nixon used a more restrained rhetoric not only to attack but also to respond to attacks. Commenting upon the controversies surrounding the Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), he stated in the interview that the HUAC

> has faults, but I submit that many of its faults have been exaggerated and many of its faults have been due to the difficulty of the problem which it dealt with…. But with all of its faults, the Committee on Un-American Activities has rendered a worth-while service in that it has awakened the American people to the danger of the Communist movement in the United States, how it operates, how effective it can be. (48)

Instead of rebutting criticism of the Committee's work and blasting the Democrats for attacks against the Committee's activities, he agreed succinctly that the Un-American Activities Committee had made mistakes. On the one hand, this admission is the evidence that he tried to be critical and impartial in his evaluation of the Committee's actions; but, on the other, it can also be argued that he made the statement simply to silence the opposition and draw the public's attention away from the Committee's weaknesses to its strengths and achievements.

While he modified his discourse through most of the campaign, Nixon at times went out on his own and returned to his old aggressive and uncompromising campaign style, replete with smears and allegations. In a February 26, 1952 address, delivered during the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association, he held the Truman administration responsible for the loss of 100 million people a year to Communism. "It [was] immaterial," he stated, "whether [those] losses [had] been sustained because of the questionable loyalty of some of those who [had] made our policy or because of their stupidity or honest mistakes of judgment" (qtd. in Ambrose, *Education* 251). During the Chicago convention, he restated the charge that Truman's Far Eastern policy was the cause for the loss of China, and he added that the administration's foreign policy in Korea might be the reason for the outbreak of World War III. "There [were] only two alter-

natives," he declared, "continuing the Korean war without any real hope of winning it, or ending it with a political settlement." The problem was that "[t]he only political settlement possible would amount to appeasement, because the price of settlement which the Communists insist upon is a seat in the United Nations and control of Formosa—laying the foundation for eventual Communist domination of all Asia and in the end an inevitable world war" (qtd. in Costello 80-81). Nixon made a sweeping charge that the Truman administration was responsible for nations falling under the Communist rule, not because he really believed that the president was capable of resisting the tide of the Reds or that he was secretly collaborating with the Soviets, but because such a charge, when supported with data, had proven to be a strong campaign weapon to wield. Although he did not call Truman a traitor or a fool, if one follows the logic of the sentence, Nixon had in fact accused the president of disloyalty and incompetence and did so in order to discredit him—and his party—in the public's eye. To that end, he also criticized Truman for the policy he pursued in Korea. Drawing on the fear of war, Nixon used a device identified by Robert E. Denton and Dan F. Hahn the "Straw Man" attack (216), limiting Truman's conflict solutions to two options only and predicting that terrible consequences would accrue from accepting any of the alternatives. By tying Truman's name to the notion of war, Nixon persuaded the public that a vote for Truman was a vote for another war.

The Second Vice-Presidential Campaign

In the 1956 campaign for re-election, Nixon also concentrated on the theme of domestic anti-Communism, except that he changed from a ruthless and irrational campaigner into a restrained and reasonable one. He tried to rehabilitate himself from the reputation of "Tricky Dick" and "hatchet man" and sought to promote an image of an attractive candidate whose mature character and mind predisposed him to the office for which he campaigned. Underlying the change of rhetoric seems to be also the reconsideration of his role on the national scene as a man who might well be the president and the desire to dispose the public well towards his candidacy.

Nixon marked a difference in the character of campaigning in the forms of support employed to substantiate the arguments. As Bernard Charles Kissel observes, among the most common were those classified by Donald Bryant and Karl Wallace in *Fundamentals of Public Speaking* as information and example (Kissel, manuscript). In an address delivered at the annual Alfred Smith dinner at the Waldorf Astoria in New York on October 19, 1956, one of his major campaign appearances, Nixon used facts when he stated that "[t]hirty-nine years [before the following] month a new state [had been] created in

Russia." He relied on an example when he observed that "it [was] not that [Americans were] without fault or that [Americans had] perfectly lived up to [their] ideals. [Americans had had] slavery during the first 76 years of [their] nation's history" ("Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner Address"). Nixon used these forms of support as evidence to accurately and fully substantiate his arguments and thus show that his anti-Communist rhetoric developed from a discourse full of unfounded allegations delivered by tricky and aggressive language into a logical and reasonable political oratory communicated in a manner which gave credence to the truthfulness of what was being said. It can also be speculated that he relied on such rhetorical devices to demonstrate to his opponents, in particular, that he would not be provoked and would not lose his temper, returning to his former campaign practices. Given the stakes of the campaign, he might have wanted to show that he would withstand the opposition's criticism and charges and thus prove that his new image as that of a patient and dignified politician was true and sincere.

The kinds of appeals that Nixon employed in the campaign speeches seem to confirm the fact that he rejected the old practices of instigating feelings of hatred for Communists and drawing on the fears of sabotage, instability, aggression, war, loss, or godlessness and called on the voters to take responsibility for struggling with the Communist threat through appeals categorized by Bryant and Wallace as appeals to loyalty and reputation. Representative examples of the appeals, as Kissel notes, can be found in an address to the national convention of the American Legion in Los Angeles, delivered on September 6, 1956 (Kissel, manuscript), during which Nixon evoked the sense of devotion and patriotism when he said that it was "the eternal credit of the American Legion that, years before the true nature of the Communist conspiracy [had generally been] recognized in [America]," the members of the Legion had seen "the threat and proceeded to educate and alert the American people to the danger." In the same address, he appealed to America's reputation, asserting that Americans respected "the right of any nation to differ with [them] on international problems and to choose political neutrality in the present world situation" ("Address to the National Convention of the American Legion"). The use of appeals to higher values clearly indicates that Nixon realized that the emotional references he had favored in earlier campaigns were no longer appropriate. The fact that he understood that a campaign for re-election required a replacement of his old simplistic way of winning public support with higher policy talk proves his elasticity and flexibility in finding methods that fit a given political situation. It demonstrates that he wanted to offer himself to the American electorate as a positive and vigorous politician, with strong moral values and beliefs and a character fit for a future president, in case of Eisenhower's incapacity or death.

Among the appeals that seem to be designed to carry a similar message, as Kissel suggests, were those described by Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird in *Speech Criticism: The Development of Standards for Rhetorical Appraisal* as referring to will and character (Kissel, manuscript). In his acceptance address delivered in San Francisco on August 23, 1956, Nixon communicated to the voters his determination when he stated that "[t]he true ideals of freedom and democracy [could] win out over the deceptive and false ideals of communism if people [had] a chance to compare them" and he urged to "give them [that] chance." He insisted that Americans "should not lose [that] war by default" and declared that "[they] would not." He established his strength when he assured that "There [was] no need on [Americans'] part… for cringing at every Soviet gesture, or for feeling that [Americans] always [had to] be on the defense" ("Republican Policies. Acceptance Address"). The examples just cited expose Nixon's strong will and probity, which he exercised to communicate to an electorate the virtues of his character he wished to convey to them. These virtues indicated that the vice-president was predisposed to hold the office he campaigned for not only by his qualifications and experience but his character as well. Extensive use of a variety of appeals may also indicate that Nixon realized that the reputation he had earned in his earlier campaigns could harm his chances for re-election, and he was determined to overcome the old impressions, prove to the public that he had a changed appearance and dispose them well towards him. He knew, however, that he was not going to do so without a basic change of attitude towards him in people's hearts. His emotional and ethical appeals seem to have been designed to accomplish that very purpose.

The First Presidential Campaign

Nixon's 1960 presidential campaign rhetoric was in keeping with the vice-president's image, which had emerged in the 1956 campaign, had focused on issues rather than personalities, and had used a defensive and reserved rhetoric instead of an aggressive and unreasonable one. Foregrounding issues and policy proposals, Nixon appears to have wanted to overcome the deep-rooted conviction that he had won political contests by concentrating on appearances only and show that he was capable of running a serious issue-oriented campaign. The projected new campaign style seems to be also an indication that the threat of Communism at home was a matter of the past, which meant that the Communist menace was now limited to the discussions of foreign affairs.

Nixon made his experience and his opponent's, Senator John F. Kennedy's, immaturity the themes of his campaign statements. When discussing American foreign policy

toward the Soviets for *New York Daily News* on November 4, 1960, he emphasized that in his "personal dealings with Communist leaders, [he had] seen demonstrated the truth that Communists [had] but one objective—a Communist world. Everything they [did was] designed to advance that objective. [That meant] that the free world [could] never relax its guard" and had to "continue a policy of steadfast resistance to Communist aggression." He then contrasted his measured maturity with his opponent's immaturity and irresponsibility, explaining that "Any unilateral concession [was] foolish when dealing with the Communists," which lesson Americans "should have learned… long ago," and remarking that "there [were] still some American political figures who [did] not understand [that] fact" ("You Asked Them" 36). Nixon used contrast and indirect reference to subtly point out the gap between the candidates' experience and understanding of American-Soviet affairs. Although both he and Kennedy were ardent Cold Warriors and both declared to counter Communist expansionist policies, Nixon tried to appear to be more qualified through his skills and experience to accomplish that goal. Underlying his move to expose his strengths and Kennedy's vulnerabilities was also the intention to establish himself as a mature and successful statesman. He seemed to know that in a discussion of foreign affairs voters tended to support more often a Republican candidate rather than his Democratic rival, and he tried to use this tendency to his advantage, offering proposals which made him look tougher and consequently more effective in handling the Soviet issues.

Nixon's decision to rest his campaign in large part on the issue of experience involved his assuming at times a defensive posture. As the incumbent vice-president, he was in a position where he had to respond to charges against Eisenhower's policies. For example, during the third Nixon vs. Kennedy presidential debate held on October 13, 1960, he defended the controversial U-2 flights over the Soviet Union, pointing out that "the President [had been] correct in ordering [those] flights" and that "the President [had been] correct, certainly, in his decision to continue the flights while the conference [had been] going on." The choice to protect the administration's record reflects Nixon's desire to claim his share in the successes of Eisenhower. While he had to explain some of the less popular of that president's decisions, he still benefited from his identification with him. The decision to make the rebuttal of allegations a part of the campaign also discloses his rhetorical and political adaptability. Although he had run most of his former campaigns on the offensive, Nixon may have wanted to prove that he was able to conduct a successful contest defending his position rather than challenging the position of the opponent. Given his debating past, he may have believed that he knew both postures well enough to be able to win on either of them. Whether the defensive approach stemmed from his incumbent vice-presidential position or was a demonstration of self-confidence, it

showed his good political sense in remaining loyal to the president and defending Eisenhower until the very end. Although adopting such a posture forced him to speak about the past policies rather than promote his own political agenda, Nixon risked doing so because he calculated that it helped more than hurt his chances for election.

The Second Presidential Campaign

In the 1968 presidential campaign, he continued to stay away from the practice of making Communism a key campaign theme. He rarely spoke about the Soviet Union and completely ignored the issue of domestic subversion. In his rare references to the American-Soviet relations, he talked about the need to improve mutual relations in a balanced and tempered manner, conveying an image of himself as a diplomat ready and willing to negotiate and to seek consensus. Nixon moved away from the practice of focusing on the issue in his public discourse, because he realized that his anti-Communism had lost its former appeal for and impact on the American public. He also entered the campaign with an attitude reverse of the one he had exhibited in the past, since he was trying to encourage voters to reevaluate him as a public figure and appreciate his potential as a national leader.

A content analysis of the campaign speeches indicates that Nixon discussed the Soviet issue in the context of negotiations. In an early campaign speech made for an elite audience of the biggest and most powerful American businessmen gathered at the Bohemian Grove in California in July 1967, Nixon stated that Americans "should have discussions with the Soviet leaders at all levels to reduce the possibility of miscalculation and to explore the areas where bilateral agreements would reduce tensions" (*Memoirs* 284). In his "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," made in Miami Beach on August 8, 1968, he declared again that "[a]fter an era of confrontation, the time [had] come for an era of negotiation" ("Richard Nixon XXXVII President of the United States"). A day later, at an informal press conference at Key Biscayne, records of which conferences were published in *U.S. News and World Report* on September 16, he reasserted his commitment to negotiation when he said that "[t]he time [had] come when [Americans needed] a dialogue with the Russians primarily because [that was] the kind of world in which the nuclear powers [could not] afford not to have a dialogue, a time of negotiations" (48). The use of the words "discussions," "negotiation" and "dialogue" in the context of American-Soviet relations indicates a major shift in Nixon's Cold War rhetoric. Although the phrasing is rather generic, presumably to avoid specific questions on the issue, it suggests that he had revised his approach to dealing with Communism and

Communist leaders. If one remembers that for twenty-two years—ever since he had entered American politics—Nixon had been a staunch anti-Communist, treating Communists as enemies and rejecting accommodation and compromise with them, his sincerity might seem questionable, but it is worth noting, as Stephen E. Ambrose does, that with regard to Communism Nixon had always meant what he said and believed in it (*Triumph* 95). Since his decisions and actions concerning the Soviet issue had previously agreed with his declared anti-Communist view, it can be assumed that his statements calling for an end to the Cold War and offering friendship to the enemy indeed reflected his revised outlook.

Indicative of Nixon's new outlook was also the use of metaphors of bridge and bridge building, coupled with references to peace. Speaking at Bohemian Grove, he insisted that negotiations required a spirit of mutuality, though he stressed out that in building bridges Americans "should build only [their] end of the bridge." He stressed that in the negotiations with the Soviets Americans should remember "that [their] goal [was] different from [the Soviets']. [Americans sought] peace as an end in itself. [The Soviets sought] victory, with peace being at [that] time a means toward that end" (*Memoirs* 284). The character of Nixon's discussion of the Soviet issue reflects a change in his public image, showing him as a conciliator with a talent for overcoming splits and the ability to alleviate tensions and heal divisions. The choice of rhetorical devices suggests that Nixon wanted to present himself to the public as a candidate who reconciled people and thus brought them together. Yet, the uncompromised assertion that bridging differences needed reciprocity and the warning that the Soviet understanding of peace was different from the American perspective clearly indicate that in his attempt to seek a consensus with the Soviets he was not a wishful thinker who believed that one could make peace with Communists simply by being soft on them. Indeed, Nixon's hopeful but tempered rhetoric proves that although he had bold and innovative proposals, he still held to a conservative attitude and saw the need for a cautious and careful manner in dealing with the enemy.

Conclusion

The examination of Nixon's campaign rhetoric across his career exposes a development of the politician's choice of rhetorical devices, of his approach to the issues of Communism and the Soviet Union, and of his campaign personae. It illustrates that over his political life, Nixon was constantly working on his discourse and means of its realization, changing his thinking about and understanding of the Soviet ideology and ad-

vancing his public character. His interpretation of the politico-cultural landscapes, adaptation of new modes of communication and modification of some of his political views demonstrate Nixon's evolution from campaign warrior and crusader to campaign peacemaker and diplomat. They show the development of Nixon as a rhetor who carefully planned and constructed his campaign discourse, a statesman who persistently worked on his approach to the Soviet ideology and policies, and a campaigner who fought hard for his positions on the stump.

Nixon approached campaigns the way he approached challenges in school, college, sports, law practice and the navy—with extreme competitiveness and a dogged determination to win (Ambrose, *Education* 139). He brought into contests his habits of thorough preparation and hard work as well as his polished skills in public speaking and debate. Over the years on the campaign trail, he learnt that winning an election was predicated on skilful communication and public relations techniques, which involved conditioning and controlling public attitudes, and that any rhetorical device was a good political weapon to use so long as it brought the expected results (Costello 42). He rejected the idea of devising a patent blueprint for a victorious campaign and made a continual effort to look for techniques that best suited the circumstances and his goals. While excelling at the old practices, he adopted new ones to meet new challenges posed by new politico-economic landscape. Having achieved one goal, he aimed higher and worked harder to succeed in accomplishing another.

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Ewa Luczak

After the End of Man: John A. Williams's *The Man Who Cried I Am*

Among the books written by African American writers and addressing the expatriate experience, John A. Williams's *The Man Who Cried I Am* (1965) takes a central place. It testifies to the radical shift in the way exile, modernity and identity are constructed in African American literature in the 1960s. It sums up the radical move of the generation of the 1960s from the concept of exile embodied by the immigration of Richard Wright towards the concept of nomadism enthusiastically endorsed by the younger "New Breed."[1] A new way of configuring exile was concomitant with and perhaps also triggered by a new way of conceptualizing Europe. Just as the United States of America was reappraised by revolutionary black leaders, Europe was probed, investigated and interrogated for its role on the world stage: even though it still attracted black writers with the promise of respite from the racism rampant in the streets of the United States, Europe underwent scrutiny for its legacy of slavery, racism and colonization. Turning their exile into a journey into the origin of Western racism, black writers challenged a number of concepts and ideological frameworks which, according to them, constituted the foundations of European modernity. A major concept that underwent a disfigurement and reconfiguration was that of humanism.

That Williams's novel places "man" at the center is without doubt. The title turns the reader's attention to a man who asserts his existence in what looks like a desperate act of screaming. A skillful play on the Cartesian dictum "I think therefore I am" signals that for the man of the novel the foundational act of consciousness and being is not that of the free thought of a sovereign subject but an act of protest: the cry of the human voice that is otherwise silenced and erased from existence. Engaging in a dialogue with other immature or hidden forms of manhood presented in such antecedent novels as *Native Son* or *Invisible Man*, Williams's narrative foregrounds the man, who, no longer content with his marginalized position of invisibility, demands that his voice be heard.

[1] I address the topic of a more general shift in the exile fiction by African American writers of the 1960s in *How their Living Outside American Affected Five African American Authors: Toward a Theory of Expatriate Literature.*

As the title promises, the novel pays tribute to the life of one man—Max Reddick. Modeled on the writer Chester Himes, Max is a 49-year-old writer dying of anal cancer. He finds himself in Europe to pay his last respects to his best friend, Harry, disturbingly evocative of Richard Wright. Even though the action time of the novel is only two days, thanks to the technique of telescoping time, which Williams adopted from Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, the reader is exposed to Max's entire life: his poverty and struggles to survive as a young writer in the 1940s in the city of New York; the trauma of losing his beloved wife as a result of an unsuccessful abortion; his travels to Africa and Europe in the 1950s as a newspaper correspondent; his experience in the Korean War; his job as a writer of presidential speeches at a time that evokes the presidency of J. F. Kennedy; his involvement with Regina, a Holocaust survivor; and his marriage to a Dutch woman, whom he decides to leave when he finds out that his disease is terminal. The narrative, told by a third-person narrator and incorporating a free indirect discourse, with Max frequently being the focalizer, constitutes what looks like a tribute to the endurance and strength of the black intellectual in the postwar years. Yet, despite its humanist bent, the novel refuses to embrace humanism in a straightforward, classical manner. It veers away from the pompous assertions about man's dignity and endurance epitomized by Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech delivered in 1950. Suspicious of universalistic aspirations of humanism, the novel anticipates the wave of anti-humanist criticism which was to overflow the academy in the late 1960s and 1970s to challenge the validity of these aspirations for the black intellectual in the 1960s.

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s the Enlightenment concept of humanism was still approached with respect by numerous African American leaders and writers. Even if its shortcomings were exposed, they were treated as temporary aberrations that could be corrected by the prevailing good will aided by the intervention of the victims. Martin Luther King, Jr. permeated his speeches with religious humanism, and his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" was a tribute to the Enlightenment belief in the brotherhood of men and man's rational will to act toward humanity's common good, progress and perfectibility. African American writers such as S. E. Anderson argued that the new black art would not only "aid the liberation [of black people] but also help black art and humanistic art" (24).[2] When he contended that the black writer of the new generation was "creating a new man, a new humanism, unlike the pallid and self-centered old 'humanism' of the exploitative West" (24), he was voicing the conviction of those black intellectuals who trusted art's potential to reconfigure the old asphyxiating Western human-

[2] Such were the views expressed by Anderson in a survey conducted by *Negro Digest* in January 1968 and inquiring into the trends of development in African American literature.

ism. Anderson's assertions, for example, echo the type of humanism which was endorsed by the Pan Africanist movement in the late 1950s. The Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, held in Rome in 1958, took a decidedly humanist bent. One of the prominent speakers at the Congress and a co-founder of the concept of *Negritude*, Léopold Sédar Senghor, while discussing "Constructive Elements of a Civilization of African Negro Inspiration," offered a language that was a blend of Marxism, the religious philosophy of Father Teilhard de Chardin, ethnological essentialism and humanism. He described his method of investigating African culture as "the socialist method" that had the virtue of being "humanistic," i.e. it "explain[ed] the *man by man*" (263). Drawing attention to what he believed were the major characteristics of the African, such as emotionality, spirituality, respect for elders, collectivity and a strong link between man and nature, Senghor expressed a hope that these features would have the potential to "inspire[] this world, *here and now* with the values of our past" (291). According to Senghor, the new humanist values would still cling to the conviction of the priority of man's life on the earth. When Senghor concluded his speech with the assertion that "*Man* must be the focal point of all our preoccupations" (294), he expressed his unwavering allegiance to the tradition of secular humanism, which he attempted to wrench away from the provenance of Western thinkers.

The powerful discourse of the new Pan African humanism clashed with its emerging critique. Franz Fanon was probably one of the most astute critics of the Enlightenment concept of man. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he bluntly expressed his misgivings about what he believed to be European ideological schizophrenia. His assertion that "[in] Europe... they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them" (251) signified his rejection of the Enlightenment belief in the human being. His bellicose rhetoric captured the imagination of the more radically oriented fraction of the "New Breed" and became the staple of black critical thought regularly expressed in such periodicals as *The Negro Digest* or the more revolutionarily inclined *Freedomways*. In his essays, Larry Neal proclaimed the death of Western civilization and his tenor of uncompromising criticism of the tradition of Western philosophical thought mirrored the intellectual zeal of Amiri Baraka or Calvin C. Hernton. Williams joined them when he expressed his reservations about Martin Luther King, which later found their way into his nonfictional book *The King God Didn't Save* (1970). Williams's critique of Martin Luther King's strategy of racial compromise and reconciliation testified to Williams's awareness of the limitations of the belief in classical humanism.

When seen through the prism of Williams's political skepticism, *The Man* reads like an artistic transcript of a debate around the relevance or adequacy of humanism for the black intellectual in the 1960s. While engaging in the process of deconstructing the legacy

of European liberal thought, the narrative places at its center two historical events: European colonization and the Holocaust. That Williams would address the history of European colonial imperialism seems to be a highly predictable gesture in the wake of the rise of anti-colonial movements in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. The novel's empathy with those whose personal stories have been dwarfed by the forces of colonial history is more than obvious. The protagonist sadly records the vestiges of colonial psychology among the African population in the newly liberated countries; and in the streets of Paris he is moved by the low position of African Arabs living off the material and ideological crumbs of the former colonial empire. He quickly identifies with the marginalized and the subaltern and sees parallels between slavery and the imperialist European logic of colonization. Right at the novel's opening, he stresses the link between himself and millions of nameless victims of the Middle Passage. While sitting at a café in Amsterdam and appraising a Dutch crowd of people moving in front of him, he muses: "*Ah yes,... you Dutch motherfuckers*. *I've returned. 'A Dutch man o'warre that sold us twenty negars,'* John Rolfe wrote, *Well, you-all, I bring myself. Free! Three hundred and forty-five years after Jamestown. Now. . . how's that for the circle come full?*" (4). Max is not just a black American tourist revived by Dutch racial tolerance, but a descendant of slaves dehumanized by the Europeans. Proudly affirming the survival of those who were sacrificed on the altar of the European ideas of a "better" human society, Max challenges the white-washed version of European history. It tends to juxtapose European history, motivated by the belief in humanism and human brotherhood, with the history of the United States, fuelled by the tradition of racism and racial segregation. Such bipolar historical thinking, which downplays the European role in the development of the world-wide system of servitude and racism, even if it conveniently simplifies the historical picture, is in Max's eyes, reductive and historically dangerous. The rift between Europe and the United States is not as wide as some, especially European intellectuals, would want it to appear. Rather than being Abel and Cain, Europe and the United States are identical twins motivated by a similar greed and drive for power.

Max's historical musings in Europe are amplified by his awareness of the traces of WWII and the Holocaust. Max is attuned to the presence of the traumatic memory of Nazism in Europe; while visiting Amsterdam, he is "sad... and angry" (30) when he comes across the house in the basement of which Anne Frank sought shelter during the war. While driving to Leiden, the Netherlands, he registers the irony behind the signs reading "welcome" in German. However, it is through his personal involvement with Regina, a Holocaust survivor who makes her life in the United States, that Max is exposed to the magnitude of the Nazis' crime and its power to thwart people's lives years after the war. Regina Galbraith (formerly Goldberg), at the time of the war a little child,

managed to survive, despite her family being "gassed and cooked, most likely" (161). Taken to Scotland, Australia and later brought to the U.S., she joins hundreds of Holocaust survivors who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. Unable to establish a stable relationship, she suffers from a series of nervous breakdowns, which, in an ironic twist laden with significance, occur usually at the time of Christmas. She has no illusion about Europe's propensity for violence and can see through what she perceives to be European hypocrisy. Therefore, observing Max's compulsive returns to the old continent, she considers it "foolish to go back to the slaughterhouse just because slaughtering had stopped for a season or two" (231). Her story alerts Max both to the consequences of the use of the rhetoric of the science of eugenics and to the danger of uncritical acceptance of the discourse of universalism. Regina's family is described as "nice people, willing to please everyone, more German than Jewish," and speaking *Hoch Deutsch* (161). Their desire to assimilate and to wipe off the vestiges of their ethnicity not only did not spare them but rendered them more vulnerable to the operations of the machine of racial hatred. This conclusion echoes Horkheimer's and Adorno's argument in the *Logic of Enlightenment* (1947), where they deflate the Jewish trust in the strategy of assimilation in the prewar period as a buffer against anti-Semitism. Critics bewail Jewish attempts at integration and the abandoning of the "older mythic (irrational) identity [which] deprived them of a protection against the Enlightened Society" (138). Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Max believes that the Enlightenment and Western humanism are premised on an ideological deception: they posit a universal acceptance of the discourse of the Enlightenment, but, at the same time, they reserve equal treatment and human rights to the gentleman's club of the few. In the formulation of Adorno and Horkheimer, they "promise liberation to the bourgeois individual but give him cruelty" (138).

Max's skepticism about the tradition of the Western Enlightenment and humanism reaches its nadir during his last trip to Europe. While driving a rented Volkswagen, he conducts an extended interior monologue. His bitterness, cynicism and lashing criticism of the Western civilization finds an outlet in a series of rhetorical questions that he poses:

> *Question:* How many men can I kill if I dig out the Suez Canal?
> *Question:* How many men can I kill if I build myself a Great Pyramid?
> *Question:* How many men, women and children can we kill if we retake the Holy Land from the heathens? (We'll call it a Crusade)
> *Question:* How many men, women and children can we kill if we establish a slave trade between Africa and the New World?

Question: How many men can we kill to make the world safe for democracy?
Question: How many men can we kill to make the world safe for communism?
Answer: Hundreds, thousands, millions, billions.
And then we will start all over again. (68)

Seeking some kind of historical synthesis, Max notes the cycle of oppression by the Western world endlessly repeating itself from the inception of the Western civilization. Europe is the incubator of a refined armature of murder, and its rhetoric of progress only shades or sublimates the more primitive drive for power. New religious and scientific discourses have the virtue of replacing the stale rhetoric of used-up languages but have not really offered a radical departure from the obsessive Western desire to rule the world. In this scheme of things, the project of the Enlightenment is tainted from its beginning: it carries with it a hidden potential for violence which animates the Western civilization.

The feeling of encroaching violence, aggravated by Max's travels, observations and personal misfortunes rooted in widespread racism, initially results in his growing desire to respond with the same violence. Recording Max's psychological condition, the narrator concedes: "Max Reddick was in a state of evil. He wanted to punch every white face he saw. Evil was beyond anger; it was a constant state, the state of destruction, someone else's" (106). Acknowledging the fact of being caught up in a deceitful system, Max, just like Franz Fanon, trusts in the dialectical violence of the oppressed under colonialism. He enacts what looks like Fanon's pattern of colonial oppression: the colonized cannot but lash out against the colonizer in a fit of despair but also to end the chain of colonized violence.

After many years of struggles with the system in the United States and with racial hypocrisy in Europe, however, Max resigns himself to the existing situation. When the reader encounters him two days before his death, he is described as a man

> bored with all of it, the predictability of wars, the behavior of statesmen, cabdrivers, most men, most women. Bored because writing books had become, finally, unexciting; bored because The Magazine too, and all the people connected with it, did their work and lived by formulae. He was bored with New Deals and Square Deals and New Frontiers and Great Societies; suspicious of the future, untrusting of the past. (17-18)

Max posits himself as a tourist of the world, exiled from his geographical and intellectual home. His intellectual doubts about the validity of political systems and actions an-

ticipate the skepticism of the post-foundationalist anti-humanists such as Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault. Foucault's assertion that, as a result of the findings in psychoanalysis and linguistics, man as a subject has been "decentred" and therefore can no longer "account for his sexuality and his unconscious, the systematic forms of his language, or the regularities of his fiction" (13) resonates with the anti-humanist pose Max assumes by the end of his life. His freedom to act, think and speak is limited since, regardless of his liberal, leftist or rightist sympathies, he is trapped in the discourses from which he cannot escape. He is no longer seen as an independent subject, capable of meaningful actions, but as an entity shaped by political and linguistic forces beyond his control. Max is facing his own personal "end of man" whose demise coincides with his dying.

Despite his anti-humanist insight, Max is still not prepared to face the full consequences of anti-humanist determinism. When confronted with a voice from his unconscious which challenges the assumption of the power of reason, another feature of classical liberal humanism, Max rebels. Despite the deluge of questions welling up from his unconscious, he stubbornly clings to his "humanness." His chant-like repetition "I am" is indeed the cry of a desperate man who, despite his skepticism, refuses to give up on his trust in man's power to mold the world:

> You am whut, Max Reddick, you piece of crap? Turd. Lost a small hunk of asshole. Big deal. You am what?
> The end of line, as far as it's come.
> What fuckin' line?
> Man.
> Man? You tougher than rats, bedbugs, roaches; angleworms, bluebottles, houseflies?
> Yes, I kill them all.
> Tee, hee, yeah, but you don't breed as fast, and what you breed, man, sometimes, I just don't know.
> This is not the same and you know it; an insect or a rodent can never be a king. I am . I am a man. I am a king.
> A whut?!
> A king.
> You am a fool. Look around you. You ain't related to these other fools?
> Yes, we are kings.
> O, Max, whut a king look like with maggots crawling out his eye sockets?
> I don't mean then. I mean now. Nobody counts then. It's all over.

It's all over now. It was over when you were born. Youse a fool.. . . You ain't no king. Know whut youse is? Wanna know? Yuse a stone blackass nigger. Hee, hee, hee. Say sumping'. I'm right, ain't I? Tongue fell off, nigger?

. . .

I am. I am a king.

You an ass. This ain't nuthing'; this ain't shit and needer is you.

I AM, I told you, damn it, I AM. (187)

Max's dialogue with his skeptical alter ego is framed within racial discourse. Even though as a black man he has been denied access to the fruits of Western humanism, he still, just like Ellison's invisible protagonist from *Invisible Man*, wants to observe "the principle." The principle is based on the trust in the power of human language and actions to change the world into a better place for other men. Exposing historical abuses of the humanist rhetoric, yet refusing to renounce trust in its fundamental principles, *The Man* anticipates the arguments of those who, when the wave of anti-foundational euphoria and anti-humanist rhetoric subsided, decided to risk a debate on a new pluralistic humanism devoid of its earlier imperialist, homogenous and coercive aspirations. The pronouncements of Edward Said expressed forty years after the publication of *The Man* in his lectures on *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* read like a commentary on *The Man*'s ideological skirmishes. "[I]n my opinion, it has been the abuse of humanism that discredits some of humanism's practitioner's without discrediting humanism itself"(13), asserted Said in his discussion of what he saw as a new face of humanism being birthed with every day practice in a multiracial and multiethnic United States.

Williams's novel skillfully traces the nuances of a black intellectual's journey from humanism towards anti-humanism and back. Nearly giving in to the utmost skepticism concomitant with the rejection of what Said labels "the worldliness" and withdrawal into apolitical nomadism, the novel includes an element of defiance. Although it concludes with Max's death at the hands of two undercover black agents, as if confirming the insignificance of his existence, simultaneously it creates a narrative space which challenges the book's surface message of anti-humanism. Before his death, Max finds himself in the possession of secret documents which reveal the plan of controlling the black population world-wide and, if the need arises, of setting up concentration camps for the black population of the United States. The King Alfred Plan terrifies Max and the man decides to take action. Aware of the danger he finds himself in, in a phone conversation he entrusts the content of the document to Minister X, a play on Malcolm X. In the face of the magnitude of the encroaching violence, and despite the fear of political consequences, Max makes a conscious choice, which is his moment of affirmation of control over his life.

The novel's turn towards the language of choice and responsibility cannot but evoke Jean Paul Sartre's insistence on the power of human action in his 1945 lecture "Existentialism Is a Humanism." At the time when Williams was working on *The Man*, Sartre's philosophy of existentialism continued to appeal to African American writers. The younger generation of African Americans respected the French philosopher, who in *What Is Literature?* had the courage to acknowledge the genius of Richard Wright, but also viewed existentialism as a potent tool do describe their condition of entrapment and absurdity. Repudiating one of the precepts of the humanism of the Enlightenment, that of human nature, Sartre claimed that "man is nothing other than what he makes of himself" (22). Man's actions and responsibility for himself and "for all men" constitute his humanity and thus, according to Sartre, man has the capability of being free. It is through his actions that "he is free, he is freedom" (23). While toying with the Sartrean argument, *The Man* refuses, just like Max, to surrender to the overwhelming and convincing language of anti-humanism and ironically anticipates the major clash between Sartre's existential humanism and Derrida's anti-humanist philosophy that is to come by the end of the 1960s. According to the novel's logic, anti-humanists and skeptics may generally be correct in their arguments and their rejection of man on the basis of his entrapment in Western metaphysics. When confronted with the physical world, however, in which bodies, not ideas, matter and where people's lives and dignity are at stake, they have to revise their position. There are moments in the lives of nations, groups or individuals when old-fashioned trust in the will of the human being can be the only buffer against the power of violence. The 1960s, especially after the death of Malcolm X, constituted such a moment for African American writers, and Williams, despite his initial repudiation of humanism and affinity with anti-foundational skepticism, celebrates the value of the action of the black man. Facing what may be a Pyrrhic victory, he celebrates the moment of injecting his voice of protest in the middle of the dominant Western discourse of deception: *I AM, I told you, damn it, I AM*.

Read today, *The Man* offers a rich insight into the complex history of the black intellectual's attraction to and repudiation of the precepts of humanism in the 1960s. Steering away from the reductionism which tainted African American nonfictional writing of that period, the novel invites the reader into a complex debate. In a Socratic manner, it poses questions and provokes with answers, suspending political allegiances and the correctness of tone. Moving through the minefield of Western humanism, anti-foundationalist rhetoric and what looks like new existential humanism, the novel engages the reader in a dialogue. It trusts the reader's ability to understand the word and to make the right choices. And probably this belief in the power of human communication is the most humanist gesture of the whole novel.

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Jerzy Kamionowski

Poetry from a Shoebox: Cooking, Food and Black American Experience in Nikki Giovanni's Poetry

Food and cooking are conspicuously frequent motifs in Nikki Giovanni's later poetry. Implemented as central metaphors in her work, they add to the diversity of black experience and allow the poet to reflect on the physical and cultural survival of African Americans within an oppressive white order—thus, they testify to the black experience of America.

Visible in the art of patchwork-making, a jazz-like openness to a variety of ethnic influences and free mixing of traditional folk heritage with elements taken from contemporary popular culture finds its expression also in the eclectic character of African American cuisine. In Giovanni's later collections: *Blues For All the Changes* (1999), *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea* (2002), *Acolytes* (2007), and *Bicycles* (2009), there are many poems which feature the motif of preparing and eating meals. Undoubtedly, the poet suggests that quilting, black music and black cuisine, taken together, provide a foundation for survival—not only in a strictly biological, but also in a cultural sense, emphasizing African American identity and the poet's appetite for blackness. Only in this context can the formal and thematic components of her writing be understood and appreciated. She writes: "We need food for the Soul / We need poetry… We deserve poetry / We owe it to ourselves to re-create ourselves" (*Acolytes* 35).

This paper discusses Giovanni's poetry as a form of emphasizing the unique black experience of America and of an intentional strengthening of the bond between generations of black women, who have been marginalized within the official discursive practices in the United States. Arguably, Giovanni's standpoint should be seen as *womanist*. By eschewing academic aporias, her "soul food poems from a shoebox" can also be perceived as a move towards "saying it like it is," and an urgent need for linkage among black women experiencing America as a wild zone group.[1]

[1] The concept of the wild zone was borrowed by Craig Werner from Elaine Showalter's feminist reflections for the purpose of research into African American literature in order to demonstrate the position of the experience of the black community in relation to the language of the dominant white majority, the language sanctioning itself as a universal language. Werner shows how the experience of a group marginalized polit-

Blues, quilting and cooking as forms of African American art, with their sense of improvisation, become tightly interwoven in a half-bitter, half-jocular poem entitled "Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea," which compares a possible future trip to Mars and the Middle Passage. In Giovanni's presentation, both experiences are linked by two things: the vastness of space traveled through and the absolute strangeness of the environment arrived at. Reminding the reader that the ancestors of modern African Americans experienced a sort of a journey "to another planet," the poet says that NASA experts should consult with black Americans on how to overcome a great fear of the unknown and cope with a sense of loneliness and alienation. They should also ask: "How were you able to decide you were human even when everything said you were not… How did you find the comfort in the face of the improbable to make the world you came to your world" (*Quilting* 4). Giovanni provides the answer on behalf of her people, pointing out a fundamental role of music and food as a basis of survival in conditions however hostile:

> you will need a song… take some Billie Holiday for the sad days and Charlie Parker for the happy ones but always keep at least one good Spiritual for comfort… You will need a slice or two of meatloaf and if you can manage it some fried chicken in a shoebox with a nice moist lemon pound cake… a bottle of beer because no one should go that far without a beer (*Quilting* 4)

Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker are not only two giants of jazz, but they stand for the quintessence of melancholy and of elemental spontaneity, respectively. Together with spirituals, they represent the full spectrum of African American musical expression. It should be emphasized that Giovanni does not use any examples of African songs and music brought to the New World by slaves, but refers to more contemporary examples, although rooted in older traditions. The music, whose lowest common denominator is the blues, stands here for food of the soul. At times the poet even erases the border between

ically, economically, socially or sexually, which involves individual experiences of its members and finds its expression in this group's "dialect," is not allowed to enter the level of discourse that affects the shape and character of the language of a given culture. The critic claims that instead of taking into consideration a variety of experiences, which would be characteristic of an ideal pluralistic culture, in American culture we deal with a situation where a pseudo-universal dominant language, being essentially "the dialect of the dominant group" (62), i.e. of white heterosexual men holding power, imposes on minority groups and their individual members its own rules of expression of experience. As a result, any kind of experience incompatible with the norms of the dominant language must be recognized as trivial, unimportant, irrelevant, narrow, abnormal, sick, not-pertaining-to-us etc. In this way, a marginalized twilight language zone is constituted—in Werner's presentation, this is the wild zone where experience incompatible with the norm is expressed. The official language, hostile to extending the space of publicly expressed experiences to include those insisting on their own integrity, generates a solipsistic culture which, by its nature, prevents the Other from entering the field of discourse.

food and music. For example, in "Boiled Blues" Giovanni admits: "I like my blues boiled with a few tears" (*Bicycles* 83), and then moves on to paraphrase the blues poet Langston Hughes by adding: "But I ate well and grew" (*Bicycles* 85).

Yet the above-quoted longer passage argues that equally important for survival in a foreign environment is food in the literal sense: unsophisticated, rich in calories and, above all, familiar and evoking home. The phrase "some fried chicken in a shoebox" calls for a word of comment. In *The Black Family Dinner Quilt Cookbook*, which is illustrated with pictures of patchwork quilts and combines recipes with food anecdotes about events involving activists of various organizations that worked towards a better life for African Americans, there is a story about Dr. Dorothy I. Height, President of the National Council of Negro Women. An anonymous witness recalls that when Dr. Height had come to the South from New York for the first time in the early 60s, being hungry upon arrival, she had to eat a "poor little meal out of a shoe box" (18), since the rules of segregation did not allow blacks to eat in the railway station restaurant. As a result, the President experienced blacks' standard way of eating under Jim Crow: "That's what a lot of Negroes did when they had to travel in the South and knew that they'd want to eat something" (18). Thus, during the trip to Mars, Giovanni proposes making use of a simple and well-practiced way of surviving in a hostile and inhumane environment.

We should also notice a striking, though apparently coincidental, similarity between the structure of Giovanni's volumes and the structure of *The Black Family Dinner Quilt Cookbook*, characterized by Sally Bishop Shigley as a "nexus of recipes and quilts and memories and nutrition," which reminds us that "possibility and hope and power lie within the patchwork of mind, body, heart, and head that makes up all women" (315). Arguably, Giovanni has the same purpose: to give her ordinary women readers a sense of belonging to a larger group in which racial-and-gender consciousness is conspicuously foregrounded. Simultaneously, this sense of belonging is almost mythical in its inclusiveness as here we can find no discrimination against women because of differences in age, education or social class.

Giovanni deploys culinary references with a full awareness of their group-binding character. This awareness is expressed in her own version of the folk tale of Stone Soup, included in "Redfish, Eels, and Heidi," where the poet also talks at length about her eating preferences:

> And then there was Stone Soup. Everybody liked to read that story as if the old beggars got away with something but I always thought they showed the village how to share. The stone started to boil when they asked for a few potatoes, then a couple of turnips, then maybe a piece of meat if some was available and just a little bit of

> milk and by golly if we had some bread this would be a feast! And everyone was happy. Which when we allow our better selves to emerge is always the case. (*Quilting* 106)

Giovanni openly shifts the stress away from the common conviction that the beggars, who were cooking the Stone Soup, cheated the villagers by making them believe that they had a rare opportunity to cook *together* in a jam-session-like manner and to enjoy the result, which points to her intention to perceive cooking as a symbol of sharing not only food but, above all, wisdom. This sort of cooperation results in "allow[ing] our better selves to emerge."

In many poems from the volumes discussed here, we find enumerations of meals prepared and eaten on various occasions, as well as without a particular occasion, together with family and friends, and recipes for specific dishes. They appear with noticeable frequency in many poems pertaining to the poet's private life, for example: "The Faith of a Mustard Seed", "Truthtelling", "Be My Baby", "Sunday", "The Things We Love About Winter" (in *Blues*); "I Always Think of Meatloaf", "Blackberry Cobbler", "Redfish, Eels, and Heidi" (in *Quilting*); "My Grandmother", "The Old Ladies Give a Party", "The Most Wonderful Soup in the World", "Indulge", "The Best Ever Midnight Snack" (in *Acolytes*); "So Enchanted With You", "No Translations", "Twirling" (in *Bicycles*). Both the sheer number of these poems and their content testify to the importance of the theme of eating for Giovanni, a popular or even populist poet who simultaneously highlights her black identity as well as racial and gender consciousness. It would not make sense to discuss all of these poems. Nonetheless, it is worth stressing the fact that they are linked with a specific African American cultural phenomenon known as "heritage food", i.e. food with African roots, enhanced by the Southern cuisine and the Indian, Caribbean, and French traditions. The quintessence of "heritage food" is "soul food", defined by Lauren Swann as "food made with feeling and care" (200), which means that it is as much "food with soul" as "food for the soul." In this context, the title of a cookbook by Ruth Gaskins published in 1968—*Every Good Negro Cook Starts with Two Basic Ingredients: A Good Heart and a Light Hand*—seems to be particularly significant. Certain constant elements especially matter here: good intentions, emotional involvement and a sense of improvisation, not just the professional skills of a *nouvelle cuisine* type that serve to satisfy the palate of even the most fastidious gourmet-client. Swann explains the phenomenon of soul food in these words:

> As slaves, African Americans were not permitted to learn how to read or write, so they cooked not from recipes but 'by knowing', giving strong credence to the essence

> of 'soul food.' Slaves had virtually no control or choice in life, so cooking became a way to express feeling, share love and nurture family and friends. Meals were a time for sharing common feelings of happiness and sorrow. Food was comfort while in bondage, and because they could control cooking, it was one of their few real pleasures, a way to feel free. (200)

Apparently, belonging wholly to the sphere of privacy, cooking meals and eating them with the loved ones simultaneously took on a political meaning by delineating a space of freedom and resistance within the culinary wild zone. This clearly corresponds with the approach to poetry-writing assumed by Giovanni and those other black female poets who never accepted a compromise with "white" rules of practicing high art. Such a metaphorical understanding of preparing and eating soul food by black Americans is not surprising, as it is coded within their culture. Shigley quotes Charles Camp, who researched the role of food in American culture and observed that "ordinary people understand and employ the symbolic and cultural dimensions of food in their everyday affairs," turning it, in Shigley's words, into "an important part of community mythmaking" (316). A book like *The Black Family Dinner Quilt Cookbook* substantiates the thesis that this sort of awareness becomes even more striking in the case of minorities that had been exposed to discrimination.

Giovanni's later poems may be treated as an exemplification of this thesis. It is also worth noticing that the author of *Acolytes* emphasizes the role of women in passing on and sustaining the symbolic heritage inherent in food and cooking. Reading her food-poems the way one reads her quilt-poems makes it more apparent how ordinary women have used, as Shigley puts it, "the discourses available to them to make profound and effective statements" (316). Giovanni does not separate African American culinary heritage as a whole from her individual family tradition in this sphere, yet in her case, as a rule, passing it on occurs via the matrilineal route. A good example of this can be found in the poem "I Always Think of Meatloaf," in which Giovanni describes in detail the process of preparing the eponymous dish, referring both to her childhood memories and her present experiences:

> I wanted Meatloaf. I always think of Meatloaf when I want a comfort food.
>
> My Grandmother did not like Meatloaf so it became an elegant presentation when she cooked it. In her day, even to my remembrance, you could go to the butcher and purchase a piece of round steak. The butcher would grind it for you on the spot and Grandmother always had a couple of pork chops ground with it.…

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> The meat is cold so your hand will get cold while you mix so be sure to keep a little running water on warm to get the color back in your fingers. When the egg and beef are well mixed but not overtly so, add your spices… onions and peppers. I cheat… and go to the freezer department of my local supermarket and purchase frozen peppers in a bag. I sauté them in olive oil while I do my egg and meat mixing. I add them to the bowl just before the spices. I still turn it by hand, however. (*Quilting* 16-17)

The presentation of the subsequent steps mentioned in the text—preparing the meat for the meatloaf and the right way of cooking it—reaches a conclusion in the final sentence that reads: "My grandmother taught me that." Another striking aspect is the lack of any deep philosophical reflection about "meatiness" itself, which, as argued by Jolanta Brach-Czaina, can be part of the experience of a person who knows what it means to "touch raw meat. Hold it in one's hands. Squeeze it. Let it come out between one's fingers" (161; trans. J. K.). According to the philosopher, touching meat can lead to probing into the essence of "elementary facts" (162; trans. J. K.), such as death, killing, and suffering, without elevating them onto any spiritual level. Her essay "The Metaphysics of Meat" can be perceived as a useful negative context for understanding Giovanni's poem in the sense that it allows us to see that the poet treats the preparation of the meat dish as a ritual of love, understood as an elementary fact: both the grandmother's love for her granddaughter in the past and the granddaughter's love for her late grandmother at present. The meatloaf strengthens the sense of safety—it is referred to as a "comfort food," but the safety seems to be derived not from the dish itself, but from the recipe for it inherited from the grandmother. Moreover, joining the familial culinary tradition does not entail slavish imitation and repetition; the granddaughter's visit in the supermarket to "purchase frozen peppers in a bag" does not signify a betrayal of her grandmother's heritage, but the ability to adapt it to contemporary conditions and customs, which proves that the heritage truly lasts. As Shigley puts it, "the soul food or heritage recipes" become, together with "more updated dishes… essential components in the 'canon' of African American cooking" (317).

Another significant feature of the tradition of soul food, which, as has already been mentioned, dates back to the times of slavery, is the fact that many dishes were made from scraps and leftovers from the white master's table. As Swann emphasizes, "slaves cooked with their whole heart, doing their best with sparse ingredients" (201). Here arises the subject of the essence of black functioning in America, which is also highlighted in Giovanni's quilt-poem "Hands: For Mother's Day." According to the poet, this functioning demands affirmation of survival by transforming the experience of want and privation into the experience of love and care, and "taking that which nobody wants and not

only loving it… not only seeing its worth… but making it lovable… and intrinsically worthwhile" (*Those Who Ride* 17). This metamorphosis of the image of scraps and leftovers into an expression of love is a theme in the poem "The Most Wonderful Soup in the World," whose opening stresses the significance of soup in the African American diet: "Soup, where I come from, is sacred…the food of the gods… the most wonderful thing on Earth to eat because it is so hard to make" (*Acolytes* 87). Half-jokingly, the poet informs us that "[t]he key to this soup is courage," as the soup is not made on the basis of a recipe but must be a result of improvisation, of cooking from intuition, "from knowing," just as the real soul food should be. The possible ingredients (surely in accordance with the rule of "a good heart and a light hand") are leftovers gathered and kept in jars. The poet enumerates them carefully:

> I would keep a little snippet of whatever we ate. At first it was potatoes… Then it was a bit of the roast, a bit of the chicken, a snippet of the pork chops. There were green things: green beans, greens, okra because I eat okra at least once a week, asparagus. My jar was filling up. There were squashes: zucchini, yellow squash, the squash with the neck. Eggplant, turnips, parsnips. We looked around at the end of the month and the jar was almost full. Let's make soup we said almost simultaneously. (*Acolytes* 88)

The approach to cooking as presented in the above-quoted passage differs fundamentally from that of "a materially richer culture," as emphasized by the motto, dating from the times of slavery, that nothing must be wasted. It is also worth pointing out the collective character of cooking the soup in the poem and the women's exclusive participation in it: the text mentions the poet's late grandmother, mother, and sister. In a way characteristic of Giovanni's poetry in general, the consciousness of race is intertwined with consciousness of gender marked by its womanist provenance.

It could seem that, by writing about women who prepare food, the poet sends them back to the kitchen, reducing them to the stereotypical feminine role of the cooks / feeders of their family, the role from which women have been to some extent freed by the feminist movement. Yet, it would be rash to jump to this conclusion and to perceive the feminist attitude to traditional feminine roles in such a one-sided way. Susan J. Leonardi, a feminist critic who discusses food in literature by women, labels cooking an "almost prototypical female activity" (131), and does so not in order to sustain existing stereotypes, but with the purpose of demonstrating how this domain may contribute to building a sense of bonding and strength among women. A similar point is made by Harriet Blodgett, who aptly notices that

> [f]eminism since the 1960s has significantly impacted the use of food imagery [in literature], for besides encouraging realistic, recognizable literary versions of female life in place of sentimental stereotypes, it has inspired vociferous complaints about woman's traditional role as purveyor of food yet also directly and indirectly championed her nurturing abilities. (263)

In this case the word "nurturing" must be understood in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. The latter unquestionably dominates within the field of black feminism and in literature written by African American women.

In employing the motif of cooking, Giovanni underscores the vital role of women in the functioning of the African American community as well as affirms their, to use Harriett Blodgett's term, "nurturing abilities" in its physical and psychological meanings. In Giovanni's poems, women, when they cook and feed, offer not only food, but above all a sense of transgenerational identity and physiological memory of their own roots. In the poem "Symphony of the Sphinx," an important part of knowledge of "what is Africa to me" has been acquired not through words, but through the taste of okra, which is a permanent ingredient of the home diet:

> Those bits of ham or roast beef or the skin of baked chicken and onions and carrots and cabbage and cloves of garlic and church and club and cabaret and salt and okra to bind the stew.
>
> If it wouldn't be for okra maybe Africa wouldn't mean the same thing. (*Quilting* 19-20)

The inclusion of "church and club and cabaret" in the list of ingredients for stew made from various bits and leftovers reveals Giovanni's attempt to treat food as an element that binds her community on the spiritual and symbolic level. A similar role in the dish itself is ascribed to okra, a vegetable of African origin whose characteristic feature is a slimy stickiness that glues the dish together and positively affects digestion. The emphasis put on okra's culinary function may be interpreted as Giovanni's intention to give this staple ingredient of African diet a role in binding the black community together.

> I like my generation for trying to hold these truths self-evident. I like us for using the weapons we had. I like us for holding on and even now we continue to share what we hope and know what we wish.

> And if we just could have found a way to keep the barbecue warm, the chitterlings cleaned and frozen, the pork steaks pounded and the beer on ice we might have gone just that much further. (*Blues* 13-14)

This passage demonstrates that, in Giovanni's understanding, food is invested with a certain ideological and political potential. Moreover, the poet underlines its anti-doctrinaire character. In her view, food removes strict divisions and rigid categories in her community. Its role is to make people come and *be together*, not just unite and *do something* for a particular cause.

Such an idea of food has great significance for Giovanni's ambition to bring black women close together, regardless of differences among them. By evoking the space of the kitchen and by including recipes for heritage food in her texts, the author of *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea* proves that the presence of an educated woman and poet in the kitchen is not an anachronism, and it is as natural and positive as a housewife leaving the kitchen and entering the public sphere. In turn, this signifies a refusal to accept binary oppositions that force women to choose between two extremes, which, as a result, leads to a lack of understanding and solidarity among them. Patricia Yaeger mentions a similar necessity to overcome the barriers set up by the strict rules of functioning within the patriarchal system and to reject the way in which female experience has been codified in language. Yaeger puts emphasis on using a "happy tongue" which easily transcends the existing categories decreed by the power of the (patriarchal) tradition (1-33). By using the "happy tongue of the kitchen," Giovanni removes the apparently obvious divisions between women and establishes a space of freedom and communication.

Ethel Morgan Smith points out that Giovanni's poetry is as deeply rooted in African American culture as food: "[t]he offering of food is the teaching and practice of family and feeling. Food is about tolerance and how we relate to each other, and therefore, how we relate to ourselves" (174). In a like vein, Mary Anne Schofield describes food as a "metaphoric matrix, a language that allows us a way to get at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life" (1). For Giovanni, food and poetry are inseparable as they both express black women's identity and creativity. In the poem "Paint Me Like I Am," Giovanni goes as far as to define poetry as a linguistic form of soul food, a "nourishment" that all black Americans need, a staple diet that allows them to sustain their energy and thanks to which they can transcend their personal limitations: "We need food for the Soul / We need poetry… We deserve poetry / We owe it to ourselves to re-create ourselves" (*Acolytes* 35). Accordingly, in her recent output, the art of poetry becomes virtually tantamount to the art of cooking in expressing black experience and the appetite for blackness.

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In her six volumes of poetry, from the 1983 collection *Those Who Ride the Night Winds* to the latest 2009 *Bicycles: Love Poems*, Giovanni has managed to create a poetic patchwork with a set of complementary components: the commemoration of outstanding African Americans, the evocation of social and political events (historical and contemporary) important from the black perspective, the employment of the motifs of quilting and cooking. Expressing her personal views and talking about her private experiences, Giovanni remains a poet of revolutionary origins in the sense that she is invariably concerned with the public issues that affect the situation of black Americans and seeks the affirmation of their positive identity which springs from the readiness for mutual support. Giovanni herself offers such a support in her poems mainly through the metaphors of patchwork-making and preparing soul food dishes. As a result, she brings to the surface of discourse the importance of black women's presence, activity and creativity. This fundamentally womanist standpoint confirms that Giovanni speaks in an authentic voice of the wild zone.

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REVIEWS

Text Matters. A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture 1 (2011). Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2011.

Text Matters is a brand new, English-language journal which has just appeared on the Polish academic scene. It deserves notice from readers of *The Polish Journal for American Studies* not only because of the content of its first volume, but also as a serious publication with an impressive international advisory board—in other words, as yet another publishing opportunity for scholars working in the fields of American literature and culture. The first issue of *Text Matters* appeared in 2011, the second issue is on its way. The journal is an ambitious project conceived of in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Łódz and prepared in cooperation with the Department of Editing of the Polish Institute. According to the statement of intent written by the editor-in-chief, Dorota Filipczak,

> the journal… seeks to engage in contemporary debates in the humanities by inviting contributors from literary and cultural studies intersecting with literary theory, gender studies, history, philosophy, and religion. The journal focuses on textual realities, but contributions related to art, music, film and media studies addressing the text are also invited. (front cover flap)

By outlining so widely and inclusively the range of potential contributions to the publication, the editors not only throw open its doors to scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, but also demonstrate their awareness of the undeniable fact that English and American Studies departments and programs in Poland (as elsewhere in the world) have within the last thirty years greatly expanded their range of interest and gone interdisciplinary, producing in effect the kind of scholarship that eludes traditional rigid classifications. Here is a journal, then, that welcomes contributions across disciplines as well as across geographical and cultural boundaries, from scholars working in English, Irish, Canadian, Australian and American studies, in history, even in theology.

To prevent a complete thematic miscellany of contributions, the editors of *Text Matters* organize each issue around a topic. In no. 1, 2011, this topic, "Women and Authori-

ty," is explored by over a dozen contributors, including two philosophers and one theologian, in addition to literary scholars. This main section, almost surprisingly unified in focus, is followed by a section labeled more inclusively (if not all-inclusively) "Word/Image/Sound" and presenting articles on a wide variety of subjects, from the place of religion in contemporary art to dance as a tool of subversion. Closing the book-size volume (over 300 pages in all) come reviews and two interviews, one with the Australian aboriginal writer, Jared Thomas, the other with the English theologian, Alison Jasper, whose article also appears in the volume.

In the most general terms, the section on "women and authority" comprises commentaries on various relations between the two, exploring the culturally-sanctioned denial of authority to women, women's submissive or rebellious attitudes to authority, women's sense of their own authority and their efforts to assert it. The article by Pamela Sue Anderson, propitiously chosen to open the volume, sets the tone for the discussion by addressing the problem of women's marginalization by the western philosophical tradition. She writes about the implications of Kant's imagery in *Critique of Pure Reason* ("the island of understanding," "the land of truth," "the stormy sea of uncertainty") upon women's "negative education" (11) which has inhibited their ability to think critically and with confidence. Another text by Anderson, a book-length study entitled *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, informs the argument in Dorota Filipczak's article devoted to the Canadian novelist Jane Urquhart, whose women protagonists, by venturing beyond the confines of the Kantian "island of understanding," discover their power and thus assert their authority. In an admirably balanced and carefully phrased essay, Alison Jasper, in turn, takes issue with the generalizing habit of feminist criticism to view all women as victims of male normativity, to the unintended effect of de-emphasizing the accomplishments of those women who did find ways, courage and strength to be independent and original, even in the most untoward context of Christian theology and practice. Jasper's example is Michèle Roberts, the English novelist, discussed as a singular theological and literary genius—in Julia Kristeva's understanding of the concept—who has pursued a unique understanding of God on her own, non-androcentric terms. Interspersed with articles exploring several novelistic and poetic polemics with women-marginalizing cultures (Katarzyna Poloczek's study of the Irish poet Mary Dorcey's lesbian poetic manifesto; Małgorzata Myk's article about Virginia Woolf's Rhoda in *The Waves* as a character whose conflicting sense of selfhood makes her "an astute critic of gendered reality"; 106), one finds analyses of texts which explicitly deny women not only authority, but also agency and the ability to control their own lives. And so Agnieszka Łowczanin writes of the complete disempowerment of Laurence Sterne's Mrs. Shandy, contrasting his novel's experimental spirit with the "fossilized" (44) perception of wom-

en it endorses, while Joanna Kazik takes a look at some late medieval and early modern English texts in which humor becomes a means of exerting control over and dominating women.

Does anything like a cumulative message emerge from the thirteen articles collected in the "Women and Authority" section? Collectively they reiterate, articulating in fine detail, the by now well known fact that women have been denied authority by core philosophical, mythological and literary texts of western culture and that for generations some women at least have questioned, resisted and artistically sabotaged the androcentric order. Less predictably, the contributors to *Text Matters* more or less directly point out that the Herculean cultural project of the past two centuries of restoring dignity and authority to women remains light years away from successful completion. Despite the cooperative effort of feminist activists, philosophers and theologians, generations of women artists have learned that the androcentric culture yields its strongholds (including those in academia) only grudgingly and only to reclaim them at the first opportunity. This fact is expressed most poignantly in the article by Alex Ramon, who reflects on his personal experience of repeatedly coming under censure for being a male critic writing about a female writer, Carol Shields. Ramon exposes the persistence in the scholarly world of thinly-veiled prejudices and reports the denigration and patronization of scholars who transgress certain tacit understandings and hierarchies of value. He observes: "Writing about women's writing seems to require justification for the male critic, but for the female critic writing about male authors it appears that fewer questions are asked" (173). This retrograde tendency in the academia to stick with (or revert to) gender- or race-based thinking (only women critics, we hear now and then, can do full justice to women's fiction, only Native American scholars understand Native American texts) has its parallel, Ramon claims, in the anti-feminist backlash observable in the larger world of popular culture which seems to be re-embracing old ideas of gender segregation and gender identification. His diagnosis of the responsibilities this new cultural turn imposes on critics and theoreticians of culture could be read as a justification of the entire "Women and Authority" section in *Text Matters*. He writes: "I would concur, that, as popular discourse on identity categories grows increasingly divisive, we require both literary and theoretical texts that provide a counter-narrative, allowing male and female readers more room for movement between gender and other identity positions" (174).

In the "Word/Image/Sound" section two articles deserve special mention. One, by Paul Tiessen, is an intertextual reflection on some essential discrepancies between how the Canadian writer, Rudy Wiebe, has represented the same Mennonite environment of Depression-era Canada in two of his books, published nearly fifty years apart from one

another—his 1962 novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, and his 2006 memoir, *of this earth*. These discrepancies, sometimes astonishing, are highlighted by Tiessen not only to propose a re-reading of the writer's first novel, but also to reflect on the factors—historical, literary, and personal—which account for the change in his treatment of the subject. Another noteworthy contribution is Katarzyna Ojrzyńska's "One Mad Hornpipe: Dance as a Tool of Subversion in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*." This study of a blind female character who dances her protest against patriarchal control over her body and fate could just as well have been placed in the "Women and Authority" section. Yet the amount of space the author devotes to the roles and meanings of dance in Irish culture and history as well as the symbolism of dancing in the play explains the editorial choice to emphasize these other aspects of Ojrzyńska's concerns.

For an Americanist, the first issue of *Text Matters* offers relatively little in terms of direct commentary on topics specifically American. There are two reviews, one by Agnieszka Salska, the other by Grzegorz Kość, of recent Polish publications on American literature. The only full length essay devoted to matters American is Małgorzata Poks's discussion involving Denise Levertov's nature poetry of "caressive sight", which, the author argues, allows us to view the poet as a "romantic modernist" (147), one who overcomes modernist spiritual skepticism to seek spiritual implications in natural beauty. For nearly all other contributors to the volume, the frame of reference is either British or Canadian. Even so, their reliance on and engagement with contemporary theory, especially feminist criticism, becomes a meeting ground on which those working in American studies cannot fail to spot parallel preoccupations, ideological continuities or counterpropositions, and nooks for potentially fruitful comparative exploration. Another such meeting ground is suggested by the interview with the Nukunu writer, Jared Thomas. Rich in information about the Aboriginal literary scene in Australia, the interview also illustrates the soundness of the fundamental assumptions of postcolonial studies—the commonality of colonial practices the world over and the similarity of fates suffered by the colonized, many of whom, including Australian Aborigines, do not even see themselves as living in a postcolonial era. Moreover, Thomas's remarks on the situation of contemporary Aboriginal writers and their responsibilities as spokespeople for their tribal groups bring out numerous correspondences between their predicament and the problems faced by ethnic, especially Native American, authors in the United States.

One last thing about *Text Matters* that by all means deserves mentioning is its graphic design. It is not only exceptionally elegant, but also clear and reader-friendly. The conspicuously set-off article titles and abstracts (the latter being longer and therefore more informative than the customary 500-word synopses), the pleasantly legible table of contents, the large page numbers, unconventionally placed, with an evident aesthetic intent,

on margins half way down the page—all of these taken together give this publication a distinct and attractive look, communicating on the visual level the journal editors' ambition to make a difference.

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Glenda R. Carpio and Werner Sollors, eds., *African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges*. Special Issue of *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 55.4 (2010). 232 pages.

African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges, a special issue of the journal of the German Association for American Studies, guest edited by Glenda R. Carpio and Werner Sollors, offers a stimulating combination of literary texts and critical contributions by leading African American studies scholars from the United States and Germany. The temporal and thematic scope of the publication ranges from the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary performance poetry. The articles address many significant issues in the most recent African American studies debates, such as the transnational paradigm and "the end of African American literature."

The issue opens with five short stories by Zora Neale Hurston, reprinted for the first time since their appearance in black magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. This section is remarkably attractive to any Harlem Renaissance scholar not only because of the previous scarce availability of the material but also because the short stories challenge the most common classification of Hurston as a folk-inspired artist, whose texts represent black communities in the American South. The works published in *Amerikastudien/American Studies* are all set in the Northern urban context and mostly deal with the problem of the Great Migration and the dichotomies of rural/urban and private/public. They are preoccupied with the influence of migration on black gender relations, which is especially visible in multiple representations of naïve sugar daddies, mulatto gold-diggers, and rough Southern women. Most stories are written in an experimental style that combines the biblical verse, the folk vernacular, and the black urban idiom, which was later developed and perfected in Hurston's masterpiece, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. The text "Back Room" stands out from the other reprinted works and Hurston's output in general, since it represents the dilemmas of an urban, upper-class emancipated black woman and is written in standard English and traditional interior monologue. The stories are accompanied by useful introductions by Glenda R. Carpio, Werner Sollors, and M. Genevieve West, as well as by two previously unpublished Hurston

letters, introduced by Carla Cappetti. Interestingly, this part of the issue is concluded with an essay by Jamaica Kinkaid, who daringly admits that she has "never liked her writing" and criticizes Hurston's representations as limited in their humanity and unchangeable (600).

The following section continues with a focus on Hurston, moves to the Harlem Renaissance in general, and ends with an essay on Richard Wright. Daphne Brooks introduces a less known pursuit of Hurston, that is her recorded singing performances, which she produced as an anthropologist doing her research in the South. Brooks argues that through these recordings, Hurston undermines the hegemonic boundaries between the researcher and the object of study, outsider and insider, performer and listener, individual and community, as well as folklore and modernity, and she "illuminates the critical instrumentality of sonic black womanhood" (624). In the subsequent essay, Frank Mehring analyzes the work of Winold Reiss, an important German presence in the Harlem Renaissance, whose illustrations were used by Alain Locke in his seminal anthology *The New Negro* (1925). The text focuses on Reiss's three-month stay in Mexico in 1920 and the way it developed his interest in non-European cultures and racial representations. The following article, by Ernest Julius Mitchell II, continues the focus on the Harlem Renaissance. Mitchell discusses different names that were used to refer to the outburst of black artistic creativity in the 1920s and 1930s, especially the shift from the original "(New) Negro Renaissance" to "Harlem Renaissance," popularized in the 1960s. He claims that the change of the name also translated itself into a change in the understanding of the phenomenon: from the international, interracial, and intergenerational project envisioned by Locke to the black only movement in the 1920s in Harlem, which ended in failure. The section ends with an essay exploring the intertextual connection between Richard Wright's *Savage Holiday* and social psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's novel *Dark Legend*. Contrary to the common assumption about Wright's postwar shift from the social to the psychological orientation, Stephan Kuhl's reading reveals the interdependence of the personal and the environmental in Wright's later fiction.

The issue concludes with an especially interesting section that presents "New Directions and New Challenges" in African American studies. In the first article, George Hutchinson interrogates the concept of transnationalism and the black diaspora as used in contemporary American studies and argues that the elision of the nation-state has frequently been too idealistic and myopic. He also claims that the transnational paradigm has been decisively shaped by American understandings of black identity, such as the one-drop rule, which resulted in the exclusion of other experiences and codifications of race. Hutchinson's discussion is illustrated with a wide range of examples of black transnationalism, ranging from Caribbean blacks and Afromestizos to Afro-Deutsch

identity. In the following text, Jeffrey Ferguson challenges another dominant African American studies concept, the blues. He contests the attempts to use the blues aesthetic as the grounding paradigm for reading African American cultural tradition. Ferguson briefly outlines the history of the blues, its significance and uses by African American artists and scholars, and argues that the contradictory meanings and over-generalized definitions of the blues preclude its effectiveness as a single explanatory paradigm for the black tradition. He concludes with a reference to the recent controversial publication by Kenneth W. Warren, *What Was African American Literature?* (2011), which has provocatively begun the debate about "the end African American literature." Also George Blaustein's essay alludes to and embraces Warren's iconoclastic thesis, which is illustrated in his text with an analysis of Paul Beatty's satirical fiction. Warren himself has also contributed to the issue with a short essay that justifies his audacious thesis. He claims that African American literature was a concept determined by the logic of the Jim Crow regime and was meant as a vehicle of racial uplift. In post-Civil Rights America, it has lost its legitimacy and cannot be anymore the basis of representation for such an increasingly class-divided group as black Americans. Warren's claim is one of the most radical voices that contributes to a larger social debate about the post-racial character of American society that began with the Barack Obama campaign and to the recently renewed academic discussion of racial representation, a need for which has been articulated for example in Gene Andrew Jarrett's "The Problem of African American Literature" (2007). The section ends with a personal essay by Ishmael Reed, which indirectly challenges Warren's thesis. Reed traces back the origins of Black Studies, claims that "the phasing out of Ethnic Studies is a huge step backwards in American intellectual life" (753), and hence, implicitly disputes the claim about the end of African American literature. Whereas many critics perceive the election of the black president as a milestone towards a post-racial society, Reed argues that it led to a powerful backlash, most visibly embodied by the Tea Party movement.

African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges is a noteworthy combination of literary texts, personal essays, and scholarly analyses, which outline and address the most current issues, dilemmas, and questions in the field of African American studies. Its first part will be of special relevance to the scholars interested in the Harlem Renaissance, whereas the concluding section, which presents the new directions in the field, is a must-read for any researcher of American culture. Thanks to a number of essays that contain transatlantic perspectives and intertextual readings, the issue will be especially interesting for European Americanists.

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Bucholtz Mirosława. *Henry James i sztuka auto/biografii* [Henry James and the Art of Auto/Biography]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2011.

If it is true that we live in the age of auto/biography, as some contemporary critics claim (Everett 6-10), then it appears that there is no better exponent of a present intellectual and cultural turn towards life-writing genres than the great Henry James. In the last decade of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century, one witnessed an unprecedented convergence of attention on the Master who became the subject of three major biographies (by F. Kaplan, L. Gordon and S.M. Novick), dozens of critical studies (by E. Haralson and W. Graham, among others), as well as at least five novels (including C. Tóibín's *The Master* and D. Lodge's *Author, Author*), one novella (C. Ozick's *Dictation*), and two short-stories ("The Master at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 1914-1916" by J.C. Oates and "Silence" by C. Tóibín). A revival of interest in James as the man of flesh and blood (and—one needs to acknowledge the fact—the meanders of Henry James's flesh have been found particularly irresistible to biographers and novelists of all provenances) has been accompanied by a renaissance of enthusiasm for James's literary legacy—not only in the English-speaking countries, where his position among both critics and readers has long been assured, but in other parts of the world as well. Suffice it to say that in 2011 one saw the publication of first (*sic!*) translations of *The Golden Bowel* and *The Wings of the Dove* into Polish, the latter being listed among the best books published last year by the editors of, for example, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Książki* quarterly (Kurkiewicz, "15 najlepszych" 62).

Undoubtedly, such a proliferation of Henry James's "versionings" should stimulate researchers' interest and encourage their scholarly pursuits in the field—especially those who have devoted a significant part of their academic career to the study of the Master's life and work. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that Mirosława Buchholtz, Poland's most eminent James scholar and a professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, has turned her attention to Henry James as both a subject and an object of various auto/biographical endeavours, which inhabit the ever-intersecting realms of fiction and non-fiction. Her findings are now available to the Polish readership in the form of a study entitled *Henry James i sztuka auto/biografii*. The book, which can well be read as a companion to the many lives of Henry James that have emerged over the past decades, addresses two interdependent and intertwined phenomena, namely Henry James's life and work. And, one needs to admit, it approaches the issue with a profound knowledge of (and love for) its subject.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Mirosława Buchholtz's book—brimming with precision, intellectual discipline, compendiousness, and stylistic brilliance—is nothing

short of a success. It deserves to be hailed as an essential read that any student or consumer of James's works should be encouraged to consult—indisputably, hers is the best academic work on James ever to have been published in Poland. However, *Henry James i sztuka auto/biografii* also stands out as a breakthrough study and an invaluable contribution to contemporary literary studies in Poland. Regardless of their language orientation, Polish academics have not held auto/biographical writing in high esteem and often locate (if at all) life-writing at the margins of both literary and critical activities. Mirosława Buchholtz makes a strong case for life-writing and for its centrality in contemporary critical discourse, and, in my opinion, succeeds like no one has before her. One should be grateful to the scholar and her publishers for making such an important study of present perspectives on auto/biographical writing available to the Polish audience (academics but general readership as well, due to the lucidity of Buchholtz's argument).

Henry James i sztuka auto/biografii consists of four chapters followed by extremely helpful annexes which, for example, provide one with a comprehensive list of Polish translations of James's novels and short-stories. Chapter One entitled "Studia auto/biograficzne" [Autob/biographical studies] discusses the phenomenon of life-writing. Mirosława Buchholtz's research is detailed, meticulous and, frankly, impeccable. She does not limit her inquiry to simple recapitulation of the most important concepts and theoretical models which have been operating in the field of life-writing (from S.T. Coleridge and L. Strachey, via P. Lejeune and J. Lacan, to J. Watson, S. Smith and G.T. Couser). She also presents Polish contribution to the debate on subjectivity and its representation (the studies on "autofiction" by R. Lubas-Bartoszyńska and J. Lis, as well as the volume on biography edited by R. Kasperowicz and E. Wolicka)—a commendable act as the contribution in question is relatively humble and not easily accessible (unlike English or French sources). A proof of Mirosława Buchholtz's profound understanding of her subject is manifested in her insistence on the use of one slashed word, i.e. auto/biography. She abandons an awkward term prevailing in the Polish academia, i.e. "literatura dokumentu osobistego" [literature of personal document] in favour of "auto/biography," and rightly so, since her proposition does not only reflect a tension between biography and autobiography, but it also emphasises the dialectic and genre-bending characteristics of any instance of life-narrative, generally considered a borderline and threshold phenomenon. One should note that Buchholtz refuses to outline past and present debates concerned with the reality of life-writing only. On the contrary, whenever possible, she provides her readers with extended commentary as well as her own observations and interpretations—most laudable, perhaps, in the formulation of "p/akt biograficzny" [biographical p/act] and "u/mowa biograficzna" (the latter inspired

by her reading of Lacan and considering "mowa" [speech] to be inhabiting the realm of the Other [*l'Autre*]).

The following three chapters offer an essential read to anyone interested in both the work and life of Henry James. Chapter Two, tellingly entitled "Wszyscy biografowie Jamesa" [All of James's biographers], offers an account of *all* (literally) kinds of biographical endeavors that have been concerned with Henry James and his life. Mirosława Buchholtz's research is, once again, all-embracing and exhaustive, as she does not limit her inquiry to the investigation of biographies only, but, in line with the dominant life-writing paradigms, she welcomes and reports on different versions of Henry James as constructed by, for example, his contemporaries (through reminiscences of family and friends), literary and cultural critics, editors of his letters, notebooks, and, finally, novelists that, in recent years, have shown such enthusiasm for portraying the Master in their biographical novels, novellas and short-stories. Buchholtz never simply recounts their claims or speculations, but each time responds to them with a discerning judgement and vast knowledge (manifested, for example, in her reading of limitations of Novick's two-volume biography of James). Buchholtz's search for Henry James (and her truly dialogical model of that search) continues in Chapters Three and Four. The former discusses the Master through the prism of his attempts at both biography and autobiography (James's biographies of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Wetmore Story as well as three volumes of his autobiography, among others). She focuses, in particular, on the questions of self-projection (biographical act as an attempt at autobiography), self-invention and incompatibility of James's auto/biographical acts with pacts that one is expected to "sign," e.g. with the subjects' relatives or readers.

However, Mirosława Buchholtz's truly masterly command of her subject reaches its peak in the last chapter of her study which, in a thoroughly original manner, offers a close scrutiny of visual representations of James. Once again, one cannot but admire the comprehensiveness of Mirosława Buchholtz's enterprise, as she analyses an impressive number of photographs, paintings, engravings, sculptures and cartoons showing Henry James or, to put it more accurately, Henry Jameses. Most importantly, she never misses the central aspect of her study, namely the ambivalence between the subject and object of knowledge. Diverse forms of art and visual representations of the Master are, again, consistently seen as a joint effort of the photographer and his or her model; hence, providing a perfect illustration of the major concern addressed by life-narrative.

John Carlos Rowe concluded his introduction to *The Other Henry James* with hailing multiple Henry Jameses in the following way:

> The Jameses we discover in his place are anxious, conflicted, marginal, sometimes ashamed of themselves, utterly at odds, it would seem with the royal 'we' that James assumed in his last deathbed dictations, slipping in and out of Napoleonic delusions. The new Henry Jameses are instead full of life and interest, not only in their times, but for our own, which as we begin to understand it continues to wind its way back to its early modern origins as it unfurls into our new century. (xii)

Miroslawa Buchholtz could not have possibly paid a greater tribute to her subject than by refusing to imprison Henry James in any of the existing versions of the Master. Her study is, indeed, populated by numerous Henry Jameses, however, none of them is claimed to be definitive or conclusive. By leaving a space for creative imagination and inviting herself as well as her readers to the act of individual re-creation of Henry James, she triumphantly transforms her book and elevates it from a purely academic study into a true work of auto/biography—the art of negotiation.

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Gordon M. Poole, ed., *A Hundred Years After: New Light on Francis Marion Crawford*. Sorrento: Franco Di Mauro Editore, 2011. 286 pages.

Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909) was one of the most popular as much as prolific American writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Born and raised in Italy—a son of the American sculptor Thomas Crawford—and educated in England and the United States, he was an epitome of social prominence and a true cosmopolitan. In 1886 he decided to settle down in Italy and took residence at a beautiful villa called Sant' Agnello in the town of Sorrento near Naples. By that time, he had already written six novels; their success encouraged Crawford to stay in the literary profession. His life away from the U.S. did not weaken his ties with the country and its people, as Crawford often traveled to Boston, New York and other American cities to promote his new books. The occasions for such literary trips were, indeed, numerous because for Crawford pro-

ducing two volumes of prose a year was something of a professional routine. However, prolific writers are often looked at with suspicion, and critics tend to believe that, in literary writing, the quantity can easily spoil the quality. In any case, the very voluminousness of Crawford's output can be one of the reasons why the writer's work sank into a relative oblivion after his death. Even though his prose is quite varied in terms of themes and genres, nowadays Crawford is chiefly remembered for his horror stories, a handful of which regularly appears in anthologies of this genre. Hopefully, this state of things will change in the near future, as the ongoing debate over the shape of the American literary canon and the growing significance of Transatlantic contexts in the field of American studies stimulate interest in authors like Crawford. A centennial volume entitled *A Hundred Years After: New Light of Francis Marion Crawford*, edited by Gordon M. Poole, possibly anticipates a forthcoming reappraisal of the writer. This collection of nine essays devoted to Crawford's life and work as well as to the artistic achievements of other members of his family was published under the auspices of the F. Marion Crawford Center for Research and Study in Sorrento.

The first part of the volume includes four essays on Crawford's literary art and begins, very suitably, with Richard Ambrosini's discussion of the writer's exclusion from the Anglo-American literary canon. In the critic's view, the main factor behind it is the predominance of modernist criticism in the first half of the twentieth century. Namely, modernist critics treated the works of pre-modernist and modernist authors like Henry James, Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf as models indicating how to assess literary value. Crawford himself said that his novels served a completely different purpose than James's "ethical studies," as he appreciatively called them. He believed that the value of fiction depended, in a big degree, on its marketable qualities and that romantic sensationalism was an asset rather than a drawback. In fact, in his 1893 critical essay *The Novel: What It Is*, Crawford described himself as a "novelist who belongs to the romantic persuasion" (31). Ambrosini points out that Crawford was not the only late-nineteenth-century writer to take such a view of fiction and, for example, he agreed on crucial literary issues with Robert Louis Stevenson. Therefore, the critic postulates that a possible strategy for recovering Crawford's work for the Anglo-American canon can consist in placing it more firmly in the context of the contemporary literary production which was much more varied than modernist critics were later willing to admit. Ludovico Isoldo extends the presentation of Crawford's ideas of literary writing by contrasting them with William Dean Howells's views as formulated in his most important and influential critical essays: *Criticism and Fiction* and *Novel-Writing and Novel Reading*. The critic claims that the essential difference between the former's "romantic" model of the novel and the latter's "realistic" model is more political than esthetic. Craw-

ford accused Howells of using fiction as a vehicle for promoting his own ideological position; in general, he believed that a manipulative use of the novel as an ideological tool was a serious threat to the status of the genre. Howells completely disagreed with Crawford's accusations; however, even if the Italian-born writer's assessment of the American literary authority was exaggerated, he deserves credit for his defense of literature's autonomy. The remaining two articles in the first part of the collection deal with much more specific subjects: Patricia S. Hageman explores Crawford's unpublished play *Evelyn Hastings*, arguing for the author's reappraisal as a playwright; whereas Taeko Kitahara analyzes the patterns of narrative construction in Crawford's stories of the supernatural.

The authors of the essays in the second part of the volume take up different aspects of Crawford's biography; interestingly enough, two essays out of three touch upon the writer's relations with women. Thus, Alessandra Contenti examines Crawford's correspondence with Vittoria Colonna, a young woman from the Italian noble class, and describes the nature of their friendship. She sees their letters, above all, as a "chronicle of infatuation" (88). In turn, Jane H. Pease presents a brief record of Crawford's acquaintance with several women and ponders how his preference for female rather than male company may have influenced his writing. According to the critic, Crawford, who believed that novels transmuted the author's experience into fiction, wanted to endow his female characters with the qualities of the women he knew, but he faced a major problem of how this was to be accomplished within the frames of the literary formulas on which he relied. Pease traces an evolution of Crawford's treatment of female characters that reflects his perception of the women from his circle: his earlier novels focus on male protagonists, his later works gradually introduce ambivalent secondary female characters, and finally, some of his last books directly address such subjects as marriage and divorce and construct a presumed female perspective. The third paper, by John Charles Moran, presents the history of Crawford's correspondence with Father Daniel E. Hudson, an editor of a minor Catholic journal in Indiana. What began as an occasional exchange of letters entailed a continuing correspondence and a growing mutual appreciation to the point that after Crawford's death Hudson was the one to receive a letter from the widow with her account of the writer's last moments. The third part of the volume contains two essays about the artistic achievements of Crawford's close relatives: Richard Dalby looks at the forgotten writings by Mrs. Hugh Fraser, or Mary Crawford—Francis Marin's sister—and Daniela Daniele offers a reappraisal of Thomas Crawford sculpture work.

A Hundred Years After presents an interesting, but still relatively unknown, chapter in the history of Transatlantic literary and, more broadly, cultural relations. What is of spe-

cial significance about this volume is that some contributors try to attune Crawford criticism to the current tendencies in literary studies. The essays that read his novels through the lens of gender studies or in the light of the politics of canon formation can help attract the attention of critics who work on related subjects, but so far have overlooked Crawford. Three outstanding contributions to the volume—admittedly the essays by Ambrosini, Isoldo and Pease—establish the standards of contemporary Crawford scholarship. *A Hundred Years After* is a volume of conference proceedings and suffers from a sort of incoherence typical of such publications, so a more systematic critical presentation of Crawford's writings is now in order. The book is a bilingual edition, and all papers have English and Italian versions.

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Miriam B. Mandel, ed., *Hemingway and Africa*. New York: Camden House, 2011. xxvii + 398 pages.

Among the manifold fields of scholarship that link Hemingway's restless life with his literary output are his numerous travels to and sojourns in various parts of the world which sparked his creative talent, notably Italy, France, Spain, the Gulf Stream, and East African regions. Whereas the presence of the European countries in his novels, short stories and nonfiction has been subjected to multifaceted studies, Africa, Cuba and the Gulf Stream have generated scant scholarship. Mark Ott presented the pivotal significance of the latter two areas in Hemingway's life and writing in *A Sea of Change: Ernest Hemingway and the Gulf Stream* (2008). In her "Introduction" to *Hemingway and Africa*, Miriam B. Mandel notes that "Africa is still an understudied area in Hemingway" (31); however, she unduly states: "This book is only a beginning" (32). Actually, Linda Welshimer Wagner and Kelli A. Larson's reference guides to Hemingway, published in 1977 and 1990, respectively, and Kelli A. Larson's "On Safari with Hemingway: Tracking the Most Recent Scholarship" included in the book under review reveal that *Hemingway and Africa* is not a "beginning," though, undoubtedly, so far, the best account of the subject. It contains eleven undertakings, arranged in four sections providing a fresh reading of Hemingway's biographies and African-anchored fiction mostly based on his posthumously published *The Garden of Eden* (1986), *True at First Light* (1999), and *Under Kilimanjaro* (2005). Miriam B. Mandel precedes the sections with factual material: a calendar of "Hemingway's African Narratives" published during his lifetime and posthumously (xvii-xix), and a record of six unpublished writings amounting to eighteen

handwritten and typed pages, now in the JFK Library (xix-xx). Most of the essays, in various degrees, penetrate the underwater part of Hemingway's "iceberg" theory he first defined in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), confirmed and rounded out in an interview with George Plimpton (*Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*. Second series, 1968): "The iceberg theory of writing is also a theory of reading, one that seeks to engage readers in a creative kind of reading" (248).

In her "Introduction" (1-37), Miriam B. Mandel explores Hemingway's peripatetic life as a *conditio sine qua non* of his writing, demonstrating that all his habitations were "away-from-home places." She argues, not convincingly for some critics, that Africa denoted for Hemingway freedom from all the constraints imposed by the traditional idea of "home." She fails to mention, however, that safari offered him the opportunity to follow his passion: hunting, just as did the Gulf Stream for his passion of fishing. None of the European countries he repeatedly traveled to rendered such opportunities.

The first section, "Knowing What Hemingway Knew," consists of three contributions, two of them documentary texts, the third one an essay. "Hemingway's Reading in Natural History, Hunting, Fishing, and Africa" (41-84) presents an impressive bibliography of 623 publications compiled by Miriam B. Mandel and Jeremiah M. Kitunda. It reveals his profound interest in the eponymous topics, testifying to his intellectual mind. Symptomatically, on the frontispiece of the book the publisher placed a photograph of Hemingway reading during a walk on his second safari (August 1953-March 1954). The scholars admit that the list is incomplete and declare that "[w]e can never know all that Hemingway read on any subject" (44).

In the alliterative subtitle "Ernest Hemingway on Safari: The Game and the Guns" (85-121), Silvio Calabi briefly recounts Hemingway's evolution of his hunting ethos, defending him against critics who regard him a senseless killer of animals, a conventional sportsman, and a "top-shelf trophy" hunter; he allots thirty pages to Hemingway's study and use of hunting weapons and ammunition indispensable in safari. Calabi's contribution will be appreciated by sports and professional hunters.

Jeremiah M. Kitunda, the author of the essay (122-148), calls us to remember that Hemingway liked killing game, claiming he killed "cleanly—his sense of killing as another dunghill" (133), thus justifying the subtitle of his contribution: "Ernest Hemingway's Farcical Adoration of Africa." Among the contributors to the collection, Kitunda is the only one who knows several African languages, being familiar with African legends, folklore and epigrams such as the one that opens the long title of his article: "'Love is a dunghill.... And I'm the cock that gets on it to crow'" (This is Harry's statement in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"), Kitunda succinctly presents the meaning of the writer's comic attitude to Africa: the farce in Hemingway's African writings affects "love, sex, and

power relationships" (137); it does not apply to the landscapes which he romanticizes. For the narrator, whom Kitunda identifies as Hemingway, Africa is a place of recreation, a retreat from industrialized Europe, and, above all, a better place for writing; at the same time, he grumbles over Europe's destructive impact on the environment and the indigenous population. Of all the authors of the collection, Kitunda draws us closest to the multifarious presence of Africa in Hemingway's writings, though his study attends mostly to *Green Hills of Africa*.

Four papers make up the second section "Approaches to Reading." In "Canonical Readings: Baudelaire's Subtext in Hemingway's African Narratives" (151-175), Beatriz Penas Ibáñez presents the creative phases in his literary career animated by his safaris. She reads Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* and *Under Kilimanjaro* in the light of his iceberg metaphor and identifies the novels as postmodern fiction inspired by Baudelaire's aesthetics "of lies and makeup."

In "Tracking the Elephant: David's African Childhood in Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* (176-198), Suzanne del Gizzo censures the prevailing gender analysis of the novel. She polemicizes with critics who view it as a "gender battlefield," and directs readers' attention to the importance of David Bourne's childhood experiences for his writing as an adult who "attempt[s] to recover a childlike vision of the world which he associates with Africa" (191), notably an elephant hunt and its impact on him. By viewing David Bourne as the *porte parole* of Hemingway, the reader comes to understand his opposition to hunting elephants.

Chikako Tanimoto presents her reading of the unpublished text of the novel in "An Elephant in the Garden: Hemingway's Africa in *The Garden of Eden* Manuscript*"* (199-211). She criticizes Tom Jenks's "editorial intrusions" in the manuscript of the novel, distorting the real meaning of Africa in Hemingway's life and work. As early as in *Green Hills of Africa,* published in 1935, Hemingway writes of Africa as "home," yet *The Garden of Eden* " shows that a pure Africa does not exist in the world Hemingway depicts" (206).

In "Between Ngàje Ngài [House of God] and Kilimanjaro: A Rortian Reading of Hemingway's African Encounters" (212-235), Frank Mehring combines Rortian reading with ecocriticism to reprove Harry of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and other Hemingway characters (and implicitly Hemingway) for their cultural indifference to Africa in the 1930s. By analyzing the story's noteworthy flashbacks, Mehring reads it as "an artistic confession" (224) and dismantles Hemingway's ambition of finding regeneration in Africa. He also claims to "liberate the text from the familiar accusation brought against Hemingway: that he brings an ethnocentric, white racist, and male chauvinist perspective to his characters" (229) (implicitly and paradoxically Hemingway's views of Africa in the 1930s) accusing them of their "cultural incuriosity" (215).

Section three "On Religion and Death" begins with Philip H. Melling's "Memorial Landscapes: Hemingway's Search for Indian Roots" (239-272). Of all articles in the volume Melling's is the most complex piece, albeit he deals mostly with *Under Kilimanjaro*, perceiving the nameless narrator as Hemingway, confirmed by the presence of Mary, his wife. Melling points out that Hemingway "held many versions of Africa" (242). In *Under Kilimanjaro* he embraces Africa "wholeheartedly" (256), becomes a member of the Wakamba tribe, follows its rituals to the point of self-mutilation. Melling describes how the rituals were similar to those practiced by Native Americans, as Hemingway makes Africa a part of his Michigan childhood related in the Nick Adams stories, which "offers him entry to a tribal landscape and a personal atonement for the sins of his nation" (263). Melling also explores the hunt motif pointing to its spiritual meaning in contrast to the hunt in *Green Hills of Africa*. In *Under Kilimanjaro* the hunt attains a nearly transcendental meaning. Melling should be credited for his criticism of Hemingway's ducking politics, for ignoring Kenya's aspirations to independence, for his silent acceptance of the destruction of African culture (266), already mentioned in *Green Hills of Africa*.

In "Hemingway's African Book of Revelations: Dawning of a 'New Religion' in *Under Kilimanjaro*" (273-298), Erik G. R. Nakjavani dives deeper into the underwater part of the iceberg than does Philip H. Melling to explore the religious motif. The quasi-fictional narrator perceives Africa as the ancestral home of the human species (279). He opens up his senses to its natural world and embraces it with a childlike imagination and love Nakjavani identifies with *agape*—"the natural world as sentient and sacral" (282). The narrator "tells us that his 'new religion' is coincident with that of some Indian tribes of North America" (295). Nakjavani also refers to the narrator's art, revoking Hemingway's Nobel Prize acceptance speech in which he identifies himself as "an alchemist of the art of language." The alchemy enables the narrator to transform nonfiction into fiction and reverse its direction at will (287). Philip Melling and Erik Nakjavani refrain from dealing with Hemingway's religion comprehensively, thus omitting his disposition to Catholicism lately discussed by H. R. Stoneback in "Pilgrimage Variations: Hemingway's Sacred Landscapes" (*Religion and Literature* 35. 2-3: 49-65), annotated by Kelli A. Larson in the book presently reviewed (365).

In "Barking at Death: Hemingway, Africa, and the Stages of Dying" (299-319), James Plath, co-author of *Remembering Ernest Hemingway* (1999), a collection of interviews, discusses Hemingway's treatment of death in his African fiction, notably "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," about which he once remarked: "[I] never wrote so directly about myself as in that story" (A. E. Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway,* 1983). To recall: he wrote the story after his first safari during which he faced death as a result of dysentery. Twenty years

later, during the second safari, he again confronted death due to two plane crashes. Paradoxically, all three confrontations with death magnified Hemingway's passion for life and writing if only "to make enough money so that I can go back to Africa" (310). Plath discusses death in his writings as a process of five stages, following Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's "seminal" work, *On Death and Dying* (1969), yet cryptically notes that he was "in rebellion against death" throughout most of his life (312).

The last section, "What Others Have Said" (about Hemingway's Africa, of course), contains only Kelli A. Larson's bibliography with cognitive annotations, "On Safari with Hemingway: Tracking the Most Recent Scholarship" (323-383). It continues her *Ernest Hemingway: A Reference Guide* (1990) down to 2010, summarizing 227 publications out of which over forty discuss *The Garden of Eden,* nearly thirty *True at First Light*, and fourteen *Under Kilimanjaro*, starting from 2006.

To sum up: Miriam B. Mandel's book reveals successful attempts at penetrating Hemingway's multilayered works, consciously or not, following his invitation extended to George Plimpton and, by implication, to all readers: "Read anything I write for the pleasure of reading it. Whatever else you find will be the measure of what you brought to the reading....[I write] to be read by the eye and no explanation or dissertations should be necessary. You can be sure that there is much more there than will be read at any first reading" (*Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews*. Second Series, 229-30).

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Brygida Gasztold, *Negotiating Home and Identity in Early 20th-Century Jewish-American Narratives*. Koszalin: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Politechniki Koszalińskiej, 2011. 170 pages.

Brygida Gasztold's book *Negotiating Home and Identity in Early 20th-Century Jewish-American Narratives* has a somewhat misleading title. What one gets from this book is, first and foremost, an excellent portrait of the Lower East Side, as the author herself admits in the Conclusion. The panoramic portrayal of this Jewish ghetto in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century, seen through the eyes of several Jewish-American authors with differing personal, political and artistic agendas, is the great value of Brygida Gasztold's book and the prime reason why it should be recommended. Hence, ignore the vague title, and read the book to learn what the Lower East Side was like. And appreciate its being a well written, effortless read.

The ease of reading does not preclude its scholarly value. The author has designed her study to include the key elements of the literary scene relevant to the topic of the social and ethnic situation of the Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe who settled in New York at the turn of the twentieth century. That ethnic tensions awaited the "huddled masses" is no surprise, but overt anti-Semitism of respected writers, such as Henry James and Theodore Dreiser, may come as a lesser known story of the growth of American pluralistic society, in which intellectuals might have been expected to carry the beacons of tolerance and enlightenment. The two most infamous anti-Semites of twentieth-century American letters remain Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, but Brygida Gasztold's book reminds us that these two grew out of a more broadly held attitude of the American educated classes.

Negotiating Home and Identity discusses in detail *The Melting Pot*, a play that everybody has heard of, but frequently knows little about. The play is put into the broad context of the trope of the melting pot in American culture prior to Zangwill's play. The detailed analysis of the text reveals ideological principles that governed its various nuances.

The chapter on Mary Antin shows how early immigrants believed the assimilation possible through English language acquisition. This concept today is seen as somewhat naïve, as language is clearly no longer a sufficient vehicle for complete assimilation. Cynthia Ozick questions this in *The Puttermesser Papers* when she has her heroine, whose English is not only that of a native speaker, but "standardized by the drilling of fanatical teachers, elocutionary missionaries" (Ozick 7), create a female golem in order to succeed in the same New York several decades later. It is fascinating to follow Mary Antin's enthusiastic trust in the strength of the assimilative process, when she easily "substitutes her Jewish religious heritage with a new-born patriotism comparing George Washington to David" (71). Naturally, Mary Antin, in her time, benefited tremendously from the shift to equal opportunities for both sexes, gained *en route* from the *shtetl* in East Europe to the admittedly patriarchal, but still comparatively much more progressive, New York. For Ozick's Jewish heroine in the late twentieth century Big Apple, gender equality becomes a real gain, but peculiarly illusory.

The discussion of Mary Antin's prose shows very well the healing power of autobiographical narrative to overcome the trauma of acculturation. The part of the book devoted to Abraham Cahan, focusing on his disillusionment with the Promised Land, serves well as a counterpoint to Antin's story of Paradise Gained. Cahan's biography in itself constitutes an interesting reflection of the history of an East European Jewish immigrant in America in the twentieth century. The analysis of his main novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky,* explores in depth the complexities of the process of assimilation—the immigrants' anxieties, the burden of the past, the sense of personal loss against the success of the public self, altogether the ambivalent nature of Americanization.

The next chapter of *Negotiating Home and Identity* focuses on yet another female author, Anzia Yezierska, born in a *shtetl* near Warsaw, who was to become "an authentic voice of the tenements" (106). Yezierska is interesting not only because of her literary output, but also due to her biography, including a romance with the famous educator John Dewey, in which relationship she saw "a 'harmonizing' of two cultures: the Jewish and the American" (106). Yezierska's work, somewhat forgotten for a number of years, was rediscovered by feminist critics, who saw in her not only an author of immigrant narratives, but also a creator of female characters capable of finding strength to rebel against patriarchal structures (in this case the traditional Jewish ones, inherited with the European cultural baggage) and recreating themselves in mainstream American culture, thus becoming heiresses "of the Emersonian tradition of self-reliance" (109).

The chapter on Yezierska reminds the reader that Brygida Gasztold primarily uses for her analysis the categories of race, class and gender. The discussion of Yezierska's *Bread Givers* reflects the deprivations of immigrant existence, while the way this Jewish author—and Brygida Gasztold in the discussion of her work—focuses on food, is a harbinger of the current recognition of food (and foodways in a more general sense) as an important sphere of life, strongly reflective of gender-power relations: this is evident in such milestone works as Carole Counihan's *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power* and the proliferation of research on the subject. There is certainly room for more analysis of Yezierska's work in this direction.

The inclusion of the chapter on Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* completes a broad panorama of diversity in early twentieth-century Jewish-American fiction, here focusing on class struggle, with Gold creating a paradigm of the proletarian novel. The class struggle rhetoric used by Gold was later ridiculed by writers such as Max Apple in his *Zip: A Novel of the Left and the Right* (1978). Gold's gender bias or, indeed, his conservative attitude to women in proletarian narratives (or in the leftist movements in general) is very well indicated. One might only add here that this seems to be a permanent feature of the political left, judging by how few women it brings into public life.

The analysis of Gold's *Jews Without Money* adds to the diversity of perspectives on the picture of the Lower East Side, which Brygida Gasztold's book delightfully provides. The rejection of the American hell, as depicted by Gold, is supplemented by idealized memories of East European meadows and forests and happy *shtetl* life. The Jewish community in America is shown by Gold in its full diversity: old animosities with Christian neighbors, conflicts within the Jewish communities, a wide spectrum of Jewish religious groups. Perhaps the most interesting part here is the transformation of Gold's protagonist's identity from his East-European self to a more adequate American one in order to undertake the struggle to free the working class from capitalist injustice:

"Mikey, who is to a large degree secularized and assimilated, further transforms the image of the Jewish Messiah into Buffalo Bill, an epitome of the Native American's fright against the oppression of the United States' government" (147).

The title of the book indicates identity as one of the author's main concerns. It seems that Jewish identity is analyzed here almost exclusively in the context of ethnicity (broadly understood as the Yiddish language, culture and religious observance) versus assimilation (use of English and abandoning the old ways, whatever this might mean). The diversity of Jewish identities is not fully evident. Michael Gold's fiction indicates this diversity, also presenting Jewish characters who were ignoring Jewishness, since their identity was primarily based on the principles of class system and social exclusion as common to all capitalist societies. Jewish identity, even without the extremity of the Marxist stand, remains a highly complicated issue, reflected only partially in Brygida Gasztold's book. But the choice of early twentieth-century narratives which focused on the experiences of assimilation justifies this bias.

The book closes with the Conclusion, which, among other things, anticipates the reader's questions, for instance concerning the absence of other ethnic groups in her discussion, or why the writers in question employed the poetics of realism in their fiction though modernism was just around the corner.

Having already praised the book for its accessible style, I would add that it is quite carefully edited. There are occasional inaccuracies, such as misplaced commas or identifying Abraham Cahan's birth, on the same page, once in 1866, and then in 1860 (85). Neither is it clear to me why Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* is given, along with other titles, as an example of a novel in which the protagonist is seeking social advancement through inter-marriage (21). However, generally, the book has been accorded proper editorial care.

It should be kept in mind that, by focusing on the Lower East Side story, Brygida Gasztold is reminding us of the common heritage of Poles and Ashkenazi Jews who arrived in America from the same part of the Old World. Among the outstanding sites on the Lower East Side there are, for instance, the Bialystoker Synagogue and Bialystoker Home for the Aged at No. 228 East Broadway. Other geographical or semantic echoes of the shared past and locality could be found, both in the reality of the present Lower East Side and in the narratives which Brygida Gasztold brings to life in her book. *Negotiating Home and Identity* is a contribution to American Studies in Poland that is certainly worth attention.

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David Sanders, *A Divided Poet: Robert Frost, North of Boston, and the Drama of Disappearance*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. 162 pages.

Few know that Robert Frost stole the expression "north of Boston" from a real estate advertisement in the *Boston Globe*. North of Boston were properties for sale, moribund farms marketed to rich urbanites who—though agents of modernization themselves—nostalgically began to crave country cottages where they could, in the poet's own words, "run wild in the summer—a little wild." The title of Frost's 1914 volume then perfectly reflects what the well-known Frost scholar David Sanders astutely calls the "drama of disappearance"—that is, independent farmers increasingly on the defensive and yielding to expanding mass-production and mass-marketing industries, agricultural and others. The economic analysis of Frost's region—Derry, New Hampshire—at the turn of the century is one of many highlights of Sanders's book. He shows the decline of independent farming and the correlated rise of industries, shoe manufacturing in particular. He also points to the rise of huge agricultural businesses, such as the Hood Farm, with extensive distribution networks and large urban customer bases. Significantly, Boston entrepreneurs with considerable managerial skills developed these enterprises from retail businesses rather than from farms (9–13). The marginalized world of independent farmers was the realm where the poet found himself and from which he knew he had to escape.

Now, we all remember that Frost sold the Derry farm when he could freely dispose of it and in 1912 went to England to make a name for himself on the wider literary scene. The two years from 1913 to 1914 brought two volumes of poetry, the second of which in particular, *North of Boston*, made him famous across the English-speaking world. This much is common knowledge, but we hardly ever give thought to what David Sanders chose for his subject—the emotional toll this move took on the poet. As Sanders shows, for "at least [the next] thirty years" of his career, Frost was troubled by the moral significance of his act—he wrote an aesthetically innovative book of portraits of his New Hampshire friends and neighbors with the purpose of advancing in the world without them, leaving them to their misery. Having *used* them as his poetic material, he abandoned them to their losing fight against growing marginalization and impoverishment. For years he was pained by the choice he made then, between, on the one hand, his loyalty to his little world which he thought was his inheritance and which for a time had nourished him and, on the other, his economic and literary success. Though *North of Boston* can be read as a generous tribute to the passing way of life in New England, an eloquent and sorrowful elegy to people who were crushed by the Gilded Age, Frost felt a continuous discomfort at this appropriation. His guilt at the betrayal of his people repeat-

edly resurfaces in this and subsequent volumes, and to some extent is the driving force of much of his poetic work.

To return to the title *North of Boston* one last time, it also shows the poet internally "divided." In a well-known review of the volume, Ezra Pound wrote that Frost was "honestly fond" of his people, that the poet had never "turned aside to make fun of" his Derry neighbors except for brief "spells of irritation" with them. Here Sanders's reading is far more engaged and engaging: he shows that in fact Frost was, ambiguously, both *of* the north-of-Boston people, insisting that the world pay greater attention to them, and already detached from them, looking at them as would Boston investors at any anachronism.

Sanders traces the subtlest indications of this uneasiness in a dozen rich examples of "disloyalty, insensitivity, and alienation," in "suspicions or suggestions of exploitation or betrayal, theft or trespass" (18). For my part, I was reminded of the sociologist in Frost's little-known play *The Guardeen*: professor Tom Titcombe delegates his student (and then follows him) to a village where Titcombe grew up for the purpose of gathering data for a "social study" of the community. Charles, one of the locals, attacks Titcombe in a manner that Frost half-expected from his Derry friend Carl Burrell: "But you're writing [a book] now and that's what you're round here for listening to gossip and luring this innocent young dustyrhodes [sic] scholar [the student] to help you rake up stories about us. Don't try to squirm out of it" (Frost 621).

As Sanders argues, the poet's guilt was partly mitigated by Frost's recognition that his defection from his milieu inscribes itself into the natural competition and universal scramble for survival (34). Indeed, after the publication of *North of Boston*, in a letter to his friend, Frost made a striking remark: "All I ask now is to be allowed to live" (Parini 157). It is hard to determine what precisely Frost meant by that: did he fear that his memory of his Derry friends whom he had betrayed would—as Sanders shows it did—now mar his conscience and effectively dog his "life"? Or did he, more atavistically, think that his New Hampshire folk might now be fully justified to go after him and kill him for his betrayal? Most likely—and this is Sanders's other suggestion—with the newly achieved literary prominence, Frost was, in the first place, greatly relieved that his family's survival was now feasible."What [Frost] does to gain recognition as a poet," the critic writes, "may be as necessary as anything in nature, where creatures live in constant competition, frequently at another's expense" (55). Sanders's perspective casts a new light on such nature poems as "A Leaf Treader", with the couplet:

> But it was no reason I had to go because they had to go.
> Now up my knee to keep on top of another year of snow.

Inasmuch as this is Frost's disguised description of treading on his Derry neighbors as if they were stepping stones, his act of disloyalty seems as unavoidable and natural as the change of seasons. In any case, the poet never shrank from the realization that he would be treated likewise—trampled underfoot by subsequent generations.

The example of "A Leaf Treader" shows that Sanders's perspective proves very useful for generating new readings of poems that have come to seem blandly familiar. He offers, for instance, an outstanding interpretation of "A Hundred Collars" as two parallel portraits, of Doctor Magoon and Lafe, warning Frost that in pursuit of a big-time career one could be set apart from the people that "constituted his poetic source" (49–50). It is not only the snobby Magoon, then, who illustrates Sanders's theme (many of us will remember Magoon's superiority when confronted with the ordinary folk he used to play with as a child). At bottom, Lafe, too, is a "double-dyed" spy gathering local intelligence for the enemy of his class. Sanders's new paradigm effectively opens up other poems as well. Where others see in "New Hampshire" smart-alecky cynicism and turn their noses up at such a reductive mode, the author shrewdly finds torturous evasions and impervious self-assertions noisily seeking to muffle his pangs of conscience.

A Divided Poet is written with a remarkable clarity and elegance. One is genuinely charmed by broad swaths of lucid and eloquent prose, carefully laying out its case. Sanders patiently uncovers, one by one, the sedimentary layers of meaning and sentiment. The argument slowly but irresistibly gathers force and gains in persuasion.

The critic looks at the wide frame of Frost's psychic division, but reads closely with equal deftness and can identify the "divided poet" in the dual tone of a mere remark or aside. That is where the greatest pleasure of Sanders's text lies. He is discriminating about his examples and never tires us with too many of them. However, every time he close-reads we have a rare pleasure of true insight. Well-known lines and passages disclose, strikingly, his theme: they become true "luminous details" encompassing all the vectors of the poet's moral imagination.

Now, with the origins of Frost's major theme of loyalty laid out so precisely and extensively, we may be well positioned to move on to a related subject that, I think, still waits to be explored. Though Frost's concern with loyalty *is*—as Sanders has argued—rooted in his betrayal of 1914 and it has left an indelible mark on *North of Boston*, the interest seems to have outgrown its beginnings. Not only haunted by the memory of his defection, Frost went on to study, carefully, such milestones of loyalty theory as William Blackstone's theory of treason, Kant's notion of impartial morality, and Josiah Royce's "loyalty to loyalty." He did so not only because he tried to come to terms with his inner "division," but also because he saw these notions as very helpful in fashioning his later politics, morality, and even his poetics.

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Kristen Case, *American Pragmatism and Poetic Practice: Crosscurrents from Emerson to Susan Howe*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. xv + 160 pages.

American pragmatism is a vexing phenomenon. An indigenous American philosophy, ushering in the professionalization of the secular American intellectual life at the end of the nineteenth century, its roots may be convincingly traced to the eighteenth-century transformation of the Calvinist doctrine. On the other hand, besides the affinity to this religious lineage, pragmatism has been named a most poetic of philosophies, and rightly so, given the inescapably large debt that the classical pragmatists owe to Emerson. Deeply diverse at its genetic stem, affected by the Edwardsian reformulation of faith as experience and Emerson's continuous vacillation between Platonism and materialism, resilient to changes of intellectual fashions, significantly and successfully combining areas of linguistics, psychology, philosophy, religion and aesthetics, pragmatism truly is a most poetic of philosophies, and an illuminating companion, or context, in which to place developments in American poetry, from Emerson all the way down to post-LANGUAGE poets.

No wonder then that, periodically and with shifting perspective, American poetry critics have been reaching for pragmatist themes and analogies to read poets. A work that in many ways broke ground in this area continues to be Richard Poirier's *Poetry and Pragmatism* (1992), which becomes a reference point for numerous later studies in tracking down the complex relations and affinities that American modernist poets reveal with respect to Emerson's thought. Poirier's book is an important indication of the peculiar feature of Emerson's text, which is later going to be so intriguing to philosophers like James and to the whole Emersonian line of twentieth-century American poets: writing is a work-process of thought in the language. Hence, since it is a process, vagueness and instability are inherent in all creation in thinking and writing. This is the challenge of the mutability of truth that, as Poirer shows, is taken up by James in his pragmatist reformulations of this venerable philosophical notion. Combined with Emerson's adjacent insistence on the necessity of form, this constant tension between

making and dissolution, shapes emerging and shapes vanishing, the Emersonian and Jamesian pragmatist insights become the daily writing experiences for Frost, Stevens, and Stein.

This line of argument about poetry's living confirmation/realization of the ideas formulated by philosophers is continued and developed by many subsequent scholars. Jonathan Levine reformulates the process-oriented aesthetic as the poetics of "transition" and focuses on Stevens as its primary exponent.[1] Stevens also seems the central character in the biggest, most comprehensive of these studies, namely Joan Richardson's overwhelming *Natural History of Pragmatism* (2007). Expanding on Poirier and making use of her expert familiarity with the entirety of Stevens's problematic, Richardson reaches back to Edwards in order to document the ages-spanning continuity of the American thinking of linguistic malleability as the crucial emotional and cognitive power that shapes the so-called human reality beyond the mere division into the realms of spirit and matter. This line, in which James is the key pragmatist voice, is crowned in Richardson in the poets', notably Stevens's and Stein's, unique aesthetic formula that proves a valid counterpart to insights of twentieth-century science into the shifty and dynamic process at the subatomic level of the material world.

Another theme in this critical debate stresses the importance of Dewey's attention to material processes of work in the immediate environment of the subject. Here, among the younger critics, Michael Magee's study, bringing together Dewey and Emerson in the notion of "democratic symbolic action", is arguing for the vast political efficacy of the pragmatist aesthetics detected at work in avant-garde poets and black artists such as O'Hara, Baraka, and Ellison.[2] Poets beyond modernity, like O'Hara and Ashbery, are also discussed in the near pragmatist, post-Emersonian contexts by Andrew Epstein, who investigates how the volatile, transitive self described by pragmatists features within the unstable space of poetic rivalry and friendship extending between the texts of O'Hara and Ashbery.[3]

Kristen Case's recent book study, *American Pragmatism and Poetic Practice*, is an attempt to bring together the various strands of pragmatist-poetic themes and affinities. On the one hand, following Poirier and Richardson, Case returns to the rich cluster of continuations between Emerson and James, including James's difference with Peirce, the nominal founder of pragmatism. On the other hand, however, she is also able to make

[1] In a study called *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism, and American Literary Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
[2] See Michael Magee, *Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz, and Experimental Writing* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).
[3] Andrew Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies: Friendship and Postwar American Poetry* (New York: Oxfrord University Press, 2006).

a move in the direction of Dewey. The result is an interesting and so far unregistered mixture of the discussed poetic styles, a lineage and network of relations that starts with Frost and Moore, skips Stevens, and veers into the more materialistic orientation of Dewey-related poetics of Williams. From that juncture on, the way is paved for other fruitful pairings, vitally expanding the list of poets discussed in connection with pragmatism: Case matches Olson with Thoreau, to show the Gloucester poet as an Emersonian continuator of Williams toward an environmental poetics, and finishes her study by returning to James, whose notions of plurality and relationality she sees as active, with a full array of their consequences, in the texts of Susan Howe. These pairings bear witness to the vast potential for recontextualization inherent in the connections between pragmatism and poetry. The connections seem natural, almost programmed by the very genealogy of the philosophical motifs and poetic developments. Based on them, Case formulates the main thesis of her study: the major strains of American poetry stem from the same family of questions that intrigued the Emersonian thinkers of classical pragmatism—Peirce, James, and Dewey—which makes poetry a text that runs a parallel commentary, a continuation, of epistemologically oriented inquiry conducted in writing conceived of as a process.

The departure point employed by Case shows her debt to the scholarship of Poirier and Richardson. We travel back, again, to the very fruitful discrepancy and fissure that fertilizes the text of Emerson. Caught between his neo-Platonist inclinations and his instinct for the actual, Emerson, more than Edwards treated at length by Richardson, is responsible for the ongoing tension in the midst of pragmatist thought—the tension between looking to things local, material, close at hand, and keeping some more abstract, remote, ideal reference points in view. This bipolarity, boiling in the exuberant excessiveness of Emerson's textual melting pots, is then seen as the major cause of difference between James and Peirce. The former, with his understanding of truth as something that "happens to an idea" when it clashes with the indeterminacies of the everyday, will be responsible, along with Dewey, for the American poets' interest in the material relations of the ordinary realm. The latter, with his insistence on keeping a distant, more transcendent end of inquiry always in view, will speak to mentalities, such as Frost's, who would rather curb the impulse of, or faith in, human-sponsored growth, unconstrained by any external bounds. It is this introduction of the Emersonian tension between James and Peirce, and the resulting list of poet-philosopher pairings, that stands behind Case's thesis. The poets not only continue; they often expand the epistemological inquiry of the classical pragmatists.

After this theoretical ground laid down by the introductory chapter, the author moves on to show how the actual-transcendental tension is profitably alive in the poetry of Ma-

rianne Moore, who is here seen as a poetic continuator of Emerson's split metaphysical alliances. Moore's famous attentiveness to the actual material detail is seen to thrive and receive its special flavor because of her ability not to lose the more ideal outposts from view. Also, seen next to Moore's verse, Emerson emerges as a founder and expositor of all those twentieth-century movements in the humanities that understood writing as a nearly uncontrollable element of its own momentum, in which the writer accepts a rhythm between his or her points formulated and then quickly dissolved. It is this rhythm that informs James's notion of truth, Peirce's sense of the necessity of form against chaos, to be then found in Frost, and Moore's ability to show her material findings in the typically American light of, as Stanley Cavell would say, the "uncanniness of the ordinary." Moore may thus be the first among twentieth-century American masters of stunning conjunctions between the abstract and the actual, Stevens being next, and Ashbery, whom by the way Case never mentions, crowning this lineage.

The most conservative motifs in the diverse family of pragmatist approaches, conservative in the area of aesthetics, epistemology, and politics, are found with Case's next pairing. She sees interesting parallels between Charles Sanders Peirce's vision of inquiry as a prolonged communal construction of meaning against the Darwinian background of chaotic forces and Frost's insistence on the necessity of form, his poetics of the "momentary stay against confusion." Peirce and Frost, although diverting on points of politics, inhabit a similar world in which the human cognitive functions are the only mainstay against the elementary abyss of chaos and conflict. Each philosophical inquiry and each poem, as "evolving structures of thought and language," are arrangements of sense against swampy groundlessness. And yet, unlike some more radical continuators of James who would like the world "as such," that is the world independent of human intervention, to be "well-lost" once and for all[4], Case reminds us how both Peirce and Frost insisted that, despite the crucial role of human inquiry, it must always be seen against the hypothesis of a transcendent layer of "objective reality," an area that must be posited as independent of the epistemological activity for it to be possible in the first place. This vacillation between the idea of abysmal chaos beneath human reality and the wish to base the human inquiry on something that is "nothing human," is perhaps the main cause for the quality of evasiveness found in both Peirce and Frost. Especially Frost constructs a difficult, many-layered epistemology that will keep escaping all easy categorization.

[4] I am referring to Richard Rorty's seminal text "The World Well-Lost." See his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

It seems, however, that the heart of Case's argument is found in the next two chapters. One of them describes the development of a specific environmental poetic, found in Williams's reformulation of Dewey's program for the reinvention of philosophy. Williams reformulates Dewey's theses into a poetics of embodied knowledge. This will lead to Olson's poetics of the "kinetic aesthetics" of the poem as environment, discussed in the next chapter. First, Williams, whose views are found in confluence with Dewey's, goes further than the philosopher in his experimentalism toward a poetic of the actual. In doing so, Williams establishes a certain dichotomy of the poetic strategy that is going to be present with later American poetries of the objectivist provenience. He will want the poem to expose the material presence of its very linguistic substance (the "word itself"), while at the same time making present the objects themselves. Both words and objects are supposed to stand alone, freed from the invading and obliterating film of symbolic thinking. Whether this strategy of trying to attain to certain entities "alone," or "in themselves," can be successful at all, or whether it aligns well with pragmatism, is one of the doubts I will address below. Whatever the case may be, however, Olson's continuation of this doubled attention—to language and to the matter of the world—leads to the concept of the poem as an active participation in one's immediate surroundings, a participation that is also a construction of an environment. This accords well with Dewey's formula of inquiry as an activity changing both the subject and the object.

In Olson, Williams's formula of "no ideas but in things" is changed into the practice of the poem as an environment, one that brings forth the material, historical, and geographical actuality of the poet's place and lets him re-find himself in it. The text "asks to be inhabited." The companion text here is, fittingly, Thoreau's proto-environmental and proto-ethnographic writing that shows the impact of the environment on the human. One of the key issues at this point, poignant especially for Thoreau, but reverberating equally clearly in Olson, is the question of the possibility if the dissolution of the human into the non-human element of the environment. Case seems to waver on this point. While admitting, with Olson, that the poem as an inhabitable environment is a measure by which the human will be redefined and re-found in its interaction with the environment, she seems also to be leaning toward the idea that the act may let come fully to the fore an element of the non-human. On the one hand, she expresses reservation about the idea of Thoreau's "abandoning the human"; on the other, she agrees with critics who speak of the non-human as a presence. It would seem that perhaps a pragmatist approach should find ways to bypass the split into the human and the non-human in a manner more decisive than Case's. The thought of the possible receding back into the non-human, which did indeed lure Thoreau at some passages of, say, *Walden,* is a result of the unsolved Emersonian-Thoreauvian romantic dilemma of feeling oneself at once alien from and

part of nature, a burden that it should be the role of pragmatism, as a corrective inheritor of Romanticism, to dispel.

Finally, Case's book makes a leap toward the very contemporary poetics of Susan Howe. This demanding post-LANGUAGE poet is discussed in the context of James's insistence that ours is a world of pluralistic and plastic relationality, in which entities never have their meanings on their own (the very notion of an entity on its own, as a stable reality, becomes suspect with James), and in which there is an ongoing reciprocity between matters of fact and the human description of them, which always is fed back into facts to change them. James's lasting achievement is raising relation itself to the role of a world building element that should be treated on a par with the idea of substance. That it had not been so treated is an act of suppression and exclusion, which is clearly seen in the undervaluing of certain grammatical structures. Thus, James rediscovers a world of active relations and dynamisms that we may sense or get access to if, among other strategies of course, we start to attend more carefully to the so far underrated parts of speech, such as conjunctions or pronouns, which far from being insignificant auxiliaries, are the very motors of experience, bespeaking of its malleable modalities. This message, already employed by Gertrude Stein, and discussed in relation to her poetics, receives a new, clearly politicized formula in the poetry of Susan Howe.

Howe's text is, according to Case, a radical realization of James's poetics of relationality. Her writing is said to show what writing might be if we digested fully the Jamesian message of the centrality of relations as the real objects of experience. But in her treatment of relationality, to attend to relations is to discover the historico-political exclusions that spatter American history. Relationality recovers whole systems of silences and deliberate blanks as the necessary underpinnings of all constructedness of narrative, history, and voice. Thus, when Howe makes her visits to the archives of venerable American universities, she proliferates their systems as an agent of the repressed voices, recalling the whole traditions and lineages of these marginalizations. Running back to the antinomian debates that troubled the Puritan orthodoxy, they also include Dickinson, whose stuttering poetic is now seen in the light of its oppositionality toward the authoritarian order of her day, finally to present Howe herself, who is found inescapably in her text, as she is related to those past voices.

Case's parings and explorations are fresh, imaginative, dynamic and provocative, even if they continue the themes that have been opened up by other critics. The book presents a fruitful personal approach that, when employed properly, is always an asset in discussing poetry. There are, however, two or three problems with the study that I would like to address in conclusion, hopefully for the sake of a fruitful discussion. First, I sense a certain leanness of the volume. In some cases one wishes for the discussion to go on

for a little longer and reach a little deeper. Howe, to give one example, is an extremely demanding poet. Her texts should not be approached solely through the mediating means of theoretical formulas. In short, the chapter on Howe seems undernourished as far as the presence of the poetic text itself goes. As it is, some of the formulations concerning the correspondence between Jamesian relationality and Howe's text seem true and right but might suffer from an air of critical banality. That "all histories are the products of human construction and imagination" is hardly any news in the contemporary humanities, and the originality of Case's own discussion of Howe in the light of James deserves something deeper and more inquisitive.

Finally, there are certain problems at the heart of the objectivist-materialist poetics of Williams and Olson that could be better addressed if the discussion were pushed beyond the epistemologies of the classical pragmatists. It might help to look into the post-Quinean linguistics of Rorty and Davidson to find distance to Williams's and Olson's rather pale and unconvincing hopes for things standing "on their own," being themselves in space, as Williams would like to have them, or of getting words to mean "not a single thing the least more than what it does mean," to give Olson's formulation called upon by Case. It is Rorty's Davidsonian continuation of James's and Dewey's message of relationality that should help us divert from the metaphors of either words or things standing on their own. With this reformulation we might as well see the environmental poem decisively NOT as a place in which the non-human becomes present, but one in which the human becomes a primary context for enlivening the merely dead matter. The poem is an environment, by all means, but it is a created place, one that has not been there before. This environment is something new and unique—not a revelation of a material essence that preceded it in the spatial, temporal or ontological order. This approach, if we agree with it, rules out "the non-human."

Such construction, however, would require us to reconsider the relation between the poetic utterance and the construction of individual subjectivity. Poems as environments, even though possibly inhabited by many, are unique habitats. No two poetic responses to one physical environment will ever be the same after all. To be one with the environment will mean the emergence of different textual selves in the case of each next "environmental" poem, unless we want to end up with the idea that there is an essence to the environmental stimulus that calls for one and the same response in the instance of each interaction. Since it would be non-pragmatist to say so, we are always left with the notion of the individual and the separate—there are thousands of inhabitants of the geographical environs of Gloucester—there is only one body of Olson's text.

The problem is, of course, that American poetic criticism finds it very hard to speak of poetry as a construction of individuality nowadays. The difficulty is responsible for

one of the differences between James and Howe, for example, that Case does not seem to address. While James, a meliorist optimist, always sees the immersion in networks of relation as a strategy employed for the sake of a specific life—a life of choices that expands and acquires an individual shape—Howe is a poet of radical removal of all such constructedness of individuality. Her relationalism might well have more to do with Derrida's activation of negativity than with the pragmatism of James. Pragmatism, both classical and contemporary, has always seen aesthetic action as creating specific, individual, self-developed human entities—not expressions of pre-given subjectivities, but their emergence and evolution through the poem (or, more generally, through intelligent action in the world). A pragmatist outlook should be challenged by the radical departure from any such idea of the construction of subjectivity in poets such as, for instance, Susan Howe. However, in reversal, this poetics could be challenged by pragmatism.

With all these remarks, it remains to be said that Case's is a sensitive and imaginative study, responsive to the vast potentiality of aesthetic and poetic commentary inherent in the midst of pragmatism, which has always been, and continues to be, a strongly Emersonian, poetic philosophy. It is an ambitious and useful attempt to fuse the various strands of the discussions of pragmatist poetics and to open up new connections. I have enjoyed and learned a lot from it.

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Ewa Barbara Luczak, *How Their Living Outside America Affected Five African American Authors: Towards a Theory of Expatriate Literature*. Preface by Richard Yarborough. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010. 250 pages.

The French poet Guillaume Apollinaire has said that one must travel far to know one's home (*Il faut voyager loin pour connâitre sa maison)*, and the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar has said that the writer is like the snail; he carries his home on his back (*El escritor es como el caracol; lleva su casa a cuestas)*. These two statements aptly introduce Ewa Barbara Luczak's book that makes a fine contribution to comparative literary studies and to international studies of American and European literary relations and influences. This book on African American writers in Europe during the 1960s is a stunning achievement for the well-traveled scholar and a tribute to the Institute of English [and American] Studies at the University of Warsaw, where she teaches.

In his Preface, Richard Yarborough provides an excellent context for African American expatriate literature and the arts. This splendid book, as Yarborough concludes, "is

a scholarly achievement of no small order." Besides the 1960s focus of the book, these writers—James Baldwin, William Gardner Smith, Frank Yerby, William Demby, Cecil Brown and John A. Williams—have much in common that makes them fascinating and personally engaging. Like Ewa Luczak, these writers are learned, talented, intelligent travelers; they are wanderers, cosmopolitan writers who have been undeservedly neglected. Their works attest to the value of travel. As experience teaches, travelers see their homes better in everything that they do elsewhere—in the case of these wandering African American writers they saw their homeland—the United States—better.

Luczak's book answered many questions: What were they escaping from? What were they seeking? What did they find, in addition to the bars and sex? The answers to be found in this book include: disillusionment with Europe and sympathy for Algerian immigrants in France, for African and other immigrants, and "outcasts." The writers also acquired an enhanced understanding of Europe and the U.S., of Jews and the Holocaust, and of existentialist thinkers and writers. Because these expatriate writers were living in Europe during the turbulent 1960s, their writing was suspect among some activist black American literary critics.

In the author's conclusions, she makes an extremely important historical point: when men travel without women, inevitably they have relationships with the women of the places to which they travel. This was certainly true of ancient people in the Mediterranean world, and of Spaniards who came to the "New World," and it is no less true of black expatriate writers. The conclusions of this book comment with uncommon insight on the black writers' portrayals of women: African American, white American and European women.

In all, this book is very illuminating and sheds light on black expatriate writers, what they have in common and how they were perceived. The author explains how and why they were treated differently from white expatriate writers. This book also sheds light on varieties of the African American experience of the 1960s. In sum, it makes a good case for "African American-ness being central to the writers' books." After making her case persuasively, the author states: "the European refused to fully integrate African Americans…. Paradoxically, this refusal created for African American ex-patriots [sic] an acute awareness… of their American identity." The author's last paragraph in the book brings us up to January 2009, when the "white house" becomes a "black house."

As the author tells us, the "book is concerned with the change in the African American perception of Europe and seeks to reveal how African American writers of the 1960s responded in imaginative ways to the European scene." Her Introduction precedes the book's six chapters. The author has chosen for her book the works by African American writers that received mixed reviews or that have been unfairly neglected. Chapter 1 examines "This Morning, This Evening So Soon" by James Baldwin and *The Stone Face*

by William Gardner Smith; Chapter 2, Frank Yerby's novel *Speak Now*; Chapter 3, William Demby's *The Catacombs*; Chapter 4, Cecil Brown's *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger*; and Chapter 5, John A. Williams' *The Man Who Cried I Am*. The Introduction provides synopses of each of the chapters. Chapter 6 draws many conclusions that brilliantly sum up her chapters and that point to the Introduction.

Luczak combines her extensive knowledge of European and U.S. social history, and of African American scholarly sources to place the writers and their works in a large context. She vividly describes the 1960s as a fabulous, contradictory—a painful—complex decade in the U.S. and she distinguishes astutely differences among African Americans and their leanings toward competing conceptions of black identity associated with white liberals' conception of the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, PanAfricanism, and *négritude*. In the U.S., this scholar points out that the 1960s were characterized by many viewpoints being expressed by different spokesmen within the Black Consciousness Movement. Rightly, Luczak tells us that it is also a decade of difficult desegregation in the South, characterized by violence and assassinations—John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Robert F. Kennedy.

In providing a comprehensive view of the American decade, the book succeeds in giving reasons why the 1960s writers and their works have been neglected or misunderstood. Luczak addresses the mixed critical reception of their works and of their personal interpretations of the black experience, in the U.S. and in Europe. They had traveled to the old continent, the author tells us, in the hope of finding a color-blind environment and more artistic freedom. However, to point out the consequences for black expatriate writers the author quotes Robert Cole's statement from *Black Writers Abroad*: "Not to return to America at that time and get involved at some level in black revolution could have been a form, ultimately, of literary suicide."

Luczak's book also documents how the writers broke away from the dominance of Paris as the center of black expatriate settlement in Europe. In France, for example she makes the break very clear by dealing with the Algerian War and France's colonial legacy. In each of the chapters the sense of place comes across effectively. The Rome, Copenhagen and Amsterdam settings are well defined and appropriate to the development of the novels' themes: white women and black bodies, reasons why writers became expatriates, and the critique of and their growing disenchantment with Europe.

Luczak's literary and critical scholarship impresses because it is cosmopolitan, international and comprehensive. It is most evident in the chapters dealing with Cecil Brown's fiction, which is characterized by a remarkable knowledge of black street language, oral storytelling and the trickster character. Her personal interpretations of these writers, their individual conceptions of the nature and function of their respective works

and their personal visions, as well as her assessment of scholarly sources and countless issues of racial politics and their impact on the writers' literary art, show that Luczak is an enlightened scholar. Her stylistic literary criticism is outstanding.

Her knowledge of comparative literature and stylistic criticism enhances the biographies of the writers and the psychological analysis of writers and the characters of their fictional works. The historical-social context is further enhanced by attention to the critical reception, mixed and controversial, by black, Negro and African American literary critics. As Yarborough points out in his generously positive Preface, Luczak avoids the pitfall of panegyrics in dealing with ignored or misinterpreted authors. Yarborough correctly observes how nimbly she maintains critical balance and analysis.

In my opinion, attention to the writers' lives enables the author to deal effectively with why African American writers were attracted to Paris and Europe, and later to Africa and non-western lands. In each chapter of this book, the author accounts persuasively and sympathetically for the reasons that explain the disillusionment and critique that writers such as James Baldwin, William Garner Smith, Frank Yerby, William Demby, Cecil Brown and John A. Williams, among so many others, make of European and American racism.

Chapter 2 brings up Yerby's bold views of miscegenation and ancestry. It exhibits the scholar's knowledge of American cinema, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and the literature of the absurd in the work of Frank Yerby. Chapter 3 begins with the Second World Congress of Negro Writers in Rome, and ties in with the Rome setting of William Demby's meta-fictional novel, *The Catacombs*; and in Chapter 4, Cecil Brown's *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger* emphasizes Brown's contribution to European fiction and at the same time his indebtedness to Eldridge Cleaver. This chapter compares Brown's conception of racism with the conceptions of the other writers. Chapter 5 focuses admirably on John A. Williams' encyclopedic fiction, *The Man Who Cried I Am*.

In one noteworthy passage from Brown's fiction, Luczak addresses the sympathy that Brown's character, named George Washington and born on the 4th of July, has with nonconformists and outcasts. She quotes the passage that names George's cultural models. The chapter is excellent on literary influences, and this passage attests to Brown's cosmopolitan learning and cultural knowledge of international arts:

> George Washington could not relate to demoralized Bigger (Nigger, Chigger) Thomas. He could relate to Julien Sorel, to Tom Jones; he could relate to the nigger in Malcolm X., LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin and Eldridge Cleaver. George could relate to the Outcasts of Life and of Literature. He could relate to the protagonists of *The Satyricon* and *The Golden Ass*. But he could not relate to Bigger. He could not relate to stupidity, fear, and demoralization.

Luczak discusses many forms of the novel and fictional portrayals of other African American writers, which lead some of the writers—two excellent examples are Cecil Brown and John A. Williams—to write encyclopedic novels about writing novels and to acknowledge influences and personal experiences from their lives in their fictional works. Luczak's scholarship exhibits impressive knowledge of post-modern, historical and sociological novels of enlightened writers. The scholarship also exhibits praiseworthy familiarity with popular and cosmopolitan culture, and with sophisticated and street language.

The author's understanding of subtle forms of race consciousness and its intersections with identity questions and nationalistic dilemmas is commensurate with the fictional works. Contradictions in French democratic principles of humanism and French perceptions of African Americans and Algerian Arabs are handled knowledgeably. Equally admirable is how Luczak does not flinch at portrayals of female characters, especially in Frank Yerby's *Speak Now* and in Cecil Brown's *Life and Loves*. Her descriptions of the life style of American expatriates, comparing and contrasting them with white writers of the Lost Generation, are persuasively handled. Above all, the pages on the theme of travel are superb.

Luczak's contribution to African American expatriate literature of the 1960s is, in addition, a worthy tribute to the efforts of the MLA beginning in 1975 to bring "minority literatures" into the academic mainstream. This scholarly book is also a tribute to the late Katherine Newman and to the journal that she promoted in the early 1970s, *MELUS*, (*Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States*). Founded in 1974, the journal *MELUS* and the MLA have significantly enlarged the concept of American literature and set it alongside the international literatures of the world. Finally, Edwin Mellen deserves much praise for publishing this insightfully written scholarly book.

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Beata Zawadka, *Dixie jest kobietą. Proza Petera Taylora wobec kwestii współczesnej południowej kobiecości* [Dixie Is a Woman: Peter Taylor's Prose and the Issue of Contemporary Southern Womanhood]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011. 239 pages.

Dixie jest kobietą is a Polish language version of Beata Zawadka's doctoral dissertation, which she successfully defended in 2007. In the introduction to her monograph, Zawadka announces the intention to combine an analysis of the socio-historical data on

women inhabiting the American South and an examination of Southern womanhood as presented in works of literature (9). In order to achieve the above goal, the scholar chooses to focus on the prose of Peter Taylor, an American short-story writer, novelist, and playwright, whose fiction was usually set in Tennessee and probed the conflicts between the traditional values of the rural society and the attitudes of the newer generations in the mid-twentieth century. Zawadka justifies the somewhat paradoxical choice of a *male* writer by pointing out that he was "one of the most penetrating interpreters of the historical and mythological legacy of the South" (11, trans. A.K.-Ł.), capable of offering a multidimensional vision of female characters and giving justice to their complexity. Furthermore, Zawadka posits that although Taylor was often dismissed as too stereotypical in his portrayal of Southern women, his literary works yield fresh insights into the nature of Southern womanhood, particularly against the background of the political and cultural distinctiveness of the region.

The methods Zawadka employs in order to support her central thesis are simple, but effective. Her detailed textual analysis of female characters in Taylor's selected short stories and novels is firmly grounded in the historical and socio-cultural contexts of both the antebellum South and the post-Civil War era. In addition to utilizing rich historical resources, throughout her book, Zawadka consistently refers to the assumptions and philosophy of academic feminism, explaining that this particular "transborder tool" of analysis will help bridge theory and practice in a productive way (12). Even though the historical and feminist perspectives are largely relegated to footnotes in the subchapters devoted specifically to Taylor's *oeuvre*, their highly informative content very effectively complements Zawadka's descriptions of plotlines and female protagonists.

The volume is organized into three rather bulky chapters. Each of them deals with a specific version of Southern womanhood, distinguished either by the marital status of the female protagonists and the less important characters in Taylor's novels and short stories or by their racial background. The chapters are organized according to the same structural principle, namely a general historical perspective concerning Southern women is followed by a detailed analysis of selected works by Peter Taylor. The Civil War provides yet another commonality in Zawadka's book, insofar as it constituted not only a landmark in the history of the United States, but also a watershed moment for the American South, necessitating, among other things, a reexamination of the Victorian ideal of True Womanhood.

The first chapter is devoted to the highest ideal of Southern womanhood as embodied by white, married, and affluent women. While the first part of this chapter is devoted to describing Old South values as well as the ambiguous consequences of espousing the traditional roles performed by Mothers, Wives, and Ladies, in the second part Zawadka

examines Taylor's fictionalized vision of married women and the influence of the patriarchal system on their motivations, agendas and social roles they agree to perform. Drawing upon the research conducted by such renowned scholars as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Tara McPherson, Zawadka stresses the subversive potential of the dominant "masquerade of femininity" in the American South, but at the same time is capable of realistically assessing the limitations imposed by the patriarchal ideology and of addressing the problem of women's active participation in sustaining the oppressive system.

The second chapter provides a thorough discussion of the status and aspirations of single/unmarried women, who are traditionally referred to as Belles, Spinsters or Widows. Zawadka argues that, similarly to the case of married women in the South, their ambitions are very much congruous with and typical of the Ideal Custodian of regional culture. Understandably, Zawadka cannot provide an exhaustive and straightforward answer to the question concerning the exact influence of the Civil War on the situation of those women, but she is keen to remind us that such novels as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* tend to present unmarried women as skilful negotiators who are constantly trying to redefine the boundaries of "free" womanhood (112). In what is arguably the most engaging section of the chapter, Zawadka points out that although widows appear relatively rarely in Taylor's short stories and novels, they nevertheless form a very special subgroup of the Southern elites: "unlike the Belle, and more in accordance with the cultural portrait of the Spinster, [the Widow] seems to be an embodiment of greater female self-awareness" (142; trans. A.K.-Ł.) and gives the impression of being mature and able to control her own life. Sylvia Harrison, the protagonist of Taylor's short story "The Dark Walls," exemplifies some of the contradictions usually associated with the figure of the Widow. Faced with the prospect of returning to her native Tennessee after her husband's premature death, Sylvia decides to stay in Chicago and start a new life, even at the risk of not being able to entirely shake off the old habits and convictions. Having analyzed Sylvia's choices, Zawadka makes a compelling argument about the emergence of "a third, hybridized version of Southern womanhood" (157; trans. A.K.-Ł.).

The final chapter of *Dixie jest kobietą* begins with the discussion of the cultural status of African American women in the South in the years 1830-1865. Zawadka describes the ways in which the patriarchy strove to reduce them to a mere opposite or shadow of True (because white) Womanhood. She also offers a meticulous account of the dominant models of black womanhood as defined by the Southern elitist norm, focusing on the humiliating stereotypes of the "dirty," over-sexualized Jezebel, the hard-working, dumb Mammy, and the overbearing, man-hating Sapphire. Particularly poignant are Zawadka's remarks about the consequences of white planters' domination over black female labor

force: paradoxically, African American women's efforts at emancipation and fulfilling their cultural potential only strengthened the hierarchies and ideals cherished by the white South and underlying the system of slavery. The remaining part of the chapter is devoted to an examination of seven short stories by Taylor. As Zawadka succinctly observes, their black protagonists are "forced to choose between a subservient role in the dominant white culture and personal fulfillment—and thus become an obstacle to cultural progress in the region" (190; trans. A.K.-Ł.). In comparison with the other two chapters of the monograph, here the textual analysis is considerably shorter. Additionally, one might argue that an inclusion of references to the contemporary stereotypes of black women could make the chapter more pertinent, especially in terms of showing the power and continuity of prejudice.

In her concluding remarks, Zawadka suggests that while the sentimentalism of such Southern authors as Margaret Mitchell or Peter Taylor has often been denigrated as a predictable and reactionary exercise in nostalgia, it should be embraced as an organizing principle of Southern culture and examined in a wider cultural context. Ultimately, Zawadka's well-researched and enjoyable book reads like a heartfelt homage to the more traditional aspects of Southern writing and seemingly old-fashioned ways of portraying women whose free will and long-term goals are undermined by the oppressive patriarchal culture. Overall, *Dixie jest kobietą* is highly recommended as a structurally coherent, thematically consistent project which, apart from being a worthy contribution to the field of Southern studies, definitely encourages more appreciation for the diversity and complexity of female characters in Taylor's prose.

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Patrycja Antoszek, *The Carnivalesque Muse: The New Fiction of Robert Coover*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL & Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, 2010. 228 pages.

Patrycja Antoszek's *The Carnivalesque Muse: The New Fiction of Robert Coover* is an ambitious enterprise in which the author reads three of Coover's novels published at the turn of the century within the framework of the theory of carnival. The carnivalesque aesthetics as developed by Bakhtin serves only as a starting point for a discussion of the ways in which the carnivalesque images and strategies work to provoke further considerations of the functions the body and its representations play in the contemporary psychoanalytic discourse. Thus, the carnivalesque becomes more

than a postmodernist fictional device: it is, as Antoszek puts it, a means of mediating the contemporary subject's "individual terrors; it becomes an attempt to represent the unrepresentable" (204).

In Chapter One, Antoszek offers a review of the theory of carnival that she will use in her analysis of Coover's texts, beginning with a comprehensive presentation of the Bakhtinian view of carnival as an outlet for popular culture of opposition, which—through its denial of decorum and hierarchy—becomes a political statement of subversion. The gradual disappearance of carnivalesque practices, Stallybrass and White claim, must be linked to the rise of bourgeois ideology, with its insistence on setting clear boundaries between opposites, a policy allowing for the marginalization, distancing or suppressing of that which is considered "low." Nonetheless, the presence of the marginalized is essential for the achievement of a stable self—drawing on Kristeva's notion of abjection Antoszek suggests that in the bourgeois society the function of the carnival is to "play with the terror and laugh at it" (37). Carnival becomes privatized, interiorized and bound to the individual unconscious, allowing for the staging of and coming to terms with subjective obsessions and wishes, while its "symbols, imagery, imaginative repertoires" enter high culture (39). However, it is only in postmodernist novels that rely on typically carnivalesque categories of parody, eccentricity, excess, grotesque imagery of the body and heteroglossia that a fully-fledged "festival of misrule"—McHale's "fictional carnivals"—appears, the transgressive nature of carnival visible also in the crossing of boundaries between high and low art that these novels accomplish (53). The carnival, Antoszek concludes, becomes a metaphor, a symbol and a reflection of the postmodern reality, and the discussion of the phenomenon must be related to that which arises as the carnival's role as a meaningful social practice seems to disappear: the re-emergence of psychoanalysis and the re-birth of the Gothic. Thus the carnival becomes a means of mediating the repressed, which is exactly Coover's strategy in *Gerald's Party* (1986), *Pinocchio in Venice* (1991), and *Lucky Pierre* (2002).

Each of the following chapters offers an in-depth analysis of Coover's selected texts. Antoszek follows the theoretical framework set in Chapter One, in which the carnivalesque relates to various psychoanalytic concepts (Freud's uncanny, Kristeva's abjection and Semiotic order, Lacan's Symbolic and Real order) and postmodernist practices (fragmentation, simulation or centralization of the marginalized). This allows her to reach convincing conclusions about the function of the carnivalesque in Coover's novels. The conclusions are preceded by a very interesting and sustained argument over the aspects that individuate the texts under discussion. Thus, Chapter Two opens with a reflection concerning the importance of parties—"festive visions"—as instances of surrogate carnival, a modern continuation of the tradition of the carnivalesque feast, albeit without

the latter's religious function or communal scale. Chapter Three offers a scrutiny of Venice as a cultural construct, a seat of Gothic adventure, a place of "literary deaths" endowed with a "fluid, amphibious quality" (112, 113). Chapter Four examines the cultural role of pornography as potential means of articulating "the repressed, culturally unacceptable forms of sexual behavior" (170). In each case, Antoszek skillfully moves from Coover's images of the party, the city, and the film to expose their proximity to the carnivalesque, and then to suggest the implications of the presence of the carnivalesque in particular novels: Coover's focus on the body's nether regions and physiological functions and on the fragmentation of the human body is reinterpreted as fragmentation of the self, suppression of the Other, and the failure of language to fill "inevitable gaps in all representation" (82); his presentation of Venice as both the threshold and the marketplace of the Bakhtinian vision turns the place into "the public square, where the repressed, closeted inner aspects of the self are made public again" (120); while his double parody of pornography and anti-pornographic discourse turns *Lucky Pierre* into "a treatise on the nature of sex, physicality and representation" (168), whose main concerns are "performance, masquerade, and the role of arts in sublimating the abject" (164).

The strength of Antoszek's analysis lies not only in her comprehensive grasp of theory or its skilful application to Coover's novels, but also in the clarity of language and in the precision argument. Her book is evidently well-researched and offers many thought-provoking insights into Coover's novelistic practice.

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Benny Pock, *Mediality, Cybernetics, Narrativity in the American Novel after 1960*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 321 pages.

In his 1984 essay "Is it O.K. to be a Luddite?", Thomas Pynchon famously pointed out that, given the historical origins of the term, a Luddite is not so much a "technophobic crazy" but the one who "denies the machine" of the State (40). In the eyes of many postmodern critics, Pynchon's words offered the most succinct expression of the postmodern sense of rebellion against the imprisoning apparatus of the American military-industrial complex, which has kept the free thinking individual by his throat as "the Sirens of Los Alamos wailed [him] down, and wailed down Wall." Such has been the prevailing, if not "canonical," reading of Pynchon's work, the work of other writers of his generation, and the whole countercultural aesthetics of the early postmodern fiction. Its features, such as stylistically and thematically heterogeneous collage, self-referentiality,

sign-reflectedness, reader-orientedness—the list is well known—have been read as none other than markers of "historiographically metafictional," counter-systemic commentary on the American reality from the 1960s to the 1980s (Hutcheon, Maltby). But in developing this reading, critics seem to have forgotten that when Pynchon said it was O.K. to be a Luddite, he also acknowledged that whereas a Luddite sensibility always rages against the political apparatus, it recognizes that the machine as such is not the guilty suspect: "In the Computer Age" Pynchon wrote, "it may be that the deepest Luddite hope of miracle has now come to reside in the computer's ability to get the right data to those whom the data will do the most good" (41). In other words, a modern Luddite may be one who uses technology in a liberating manner, as a source of creative potentiality, instead of rejecting it as a tool of oppressive power.

Benny Pock's *Mediality, Cybernetics, Narrativity in the American Novel after 1960s* is a successful attempt to explore this creative potentiality in the engagement of postmodern fiction with the technology of new media. The book traces the history of this engagement to Norbert Wiener's theory of cybernetics, formulated first in 1950 in *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* as well as to Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1961) and *Understanding Media* (1964). Pock demonstrates the impact of cybernetics and McLuhanite media theory on the narrative strategies and identity constructs in the works of five writers: William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, Neal Stephenson, and David Foster Wallace. In Pock's view, just as McLuhan was highly critical of the type of subjectivity produced within the print regime of what he called the Gutenberg Galaxy, and proposed more holistic channels of cognition, such as the audio-tactile senses, as offering more suitable means of subjective performance, Pock's writers overcome the bounds of textuality by supplanting old types of narrativity with the more sensually eclectic modes of subjectivity construction made possible by the electronic media. This is especially true of Burroughs and Pynchon, whose works strongly undermine the myth of disembodied textuality, characteristic for the Gutenbergian view of books as carriers for "an abstract transfer of thought," by "invoking the tactile reception of new media, which refers to the increased sensual engagement demanded by television and electronic music" both on the level of formal devices and on the level of content (13).

Before proceeding to examine individual literary works, Pock contextualizes his perspective within the broader framework of poststructuralist theories of textuality and the subject. Although these theories clearly circumscribe the anti-essentialist treatment of subjectivity in the work of postmodern narratives in the 1960s, their impact was facilitated by the intense response of postmodern artists to the cybernetic theory of communication, especially, its concepts of autopoiesis and the feedback loop. Starting with the clarification of McLuhan's theory of electronic media as extensions to human nervous

system and consciousness in the light of the cybernetic models of Wiener, Friedrich Kittler, and biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, Pock explains that since "media give spatio-temporal form to thought, engaging it in a feedback loop that mutually reconfigures thought and medium" (62), and since a literary text is one such medium, its interaction with other memory carriers and transmission tools such as television or a computer works towards the expansion of the boundaries of one's memory, identity, and consciousness. "Literature may thus function as a form of memory which may be employed for individual as well as collective purposes" (67), or as Pynchon would have it, for the purposes of getting "the right data to those whom the data will do the most good." Surprisingly, Benny Pock never mentions Pynchon's 1984 essay, even though his argument at this point moves on to the historical account of what Fred Turner has termed the "cybernetic counterculture," a 1960s movement of which today's media-based Luddites, Yes Men, and digital-rights movement, Electronic Frontier Foundation, are notable remnants. Pock's account of cybernetic counterculture and its fascination with new media as a way of developing a "transpersonal subjectivity" is meticulously detailed: we are given everything from the reading list at the Joan Baez Institute for the Study of Nonviolence to the details of activities of the Manhattan USCO group, Merry Pranksters, John Cage and Roy Ascott, and even the Acid Tests at the 1966 Trips Festival in San Francisco. Pock certainly deserves great credit for reminding today's scholars of the postmodern engagement with technology (especially the ones dealing with science-fiction and its themes of disembodiment) about those early links between technology-friendly art and political subversiveness. This section is one of the strongest moments in the book, though the following chapter on William Burroughs and Pynchon does not fall far from its benchmark.

Pock finds Burroughs an exception among Beat writers in terms of his reflections on the relation between the new media and the counterculture. Not only does Pock emphasize the writer's frequent references to notions of feedback looping and game theory over his interest in psychedelic experiments, but actually re-classifies Burroughs's "expansive" style as a project of making media-based consciousness expansion alive and tactile in the text, a project based on the principle of looping aural elements (tape recordings), visual elements (images) and the medium of written language. According to Pock, Burroughs's *Nova* Trilogy (1961-64) is the most complete example of this enterprise, a "manifesto against the old usage of the book in favor of the newer media" and the best example of what Pock recognizes as a cybernetically structured "expanded subjectivity" (102, 97).

What in Burroughs's writing works best on the level of form becomes a theme in Thomas Pynchon's novels. Pock concentrates especially on *The Crying of Lot 49*, arguing that cybernetic logic underpins the subversive elements in the novel, thus restructuring the environment of Oedipa Maas, the novel's protagonist. By re-reading the oft-

quoted passages from Pynchon's novel—Oedipa's reception of the painting by Remedios Varo, her interactive encounter with Nefastis's machine, her vision of the San Narciso street layout as an electronic circuit, or Mucho Mass's becoming a radio DJ—Pock finds in Pynchon a pattern of characters undergoing a change of consciousness as a result of a sensory media experience, a pattern which links the "countercultural inversion of the Marxist dogma" with "cybernetic information theory" (116).

The following chapters of *Mediality, Cybernetics, Narrativity* deal with writers who represent so radically different types of postmodern aesthetics and countercultural contexts from Burroughs and Pynchon that one would wish to see them discussed in separate volumes. Despite the strength and ingenuity of Pock's interpretations of Auster, Stephenson, and Wallace, the background of their engagement with the theory of cybernetics and the media dominant at their historical moment is not as detailed and illuminating as was the case in the discussions of the writers from the 1960s. Entering a dialogue with Joseph Tabbi's *Cognitive Fictions* (2002), Pock reads Auster through the prism of second-order cybernetics and the neurophysiological notion of autopoiesis (a term denoting the operational mode of all living systems that share the aspects of self-organization, self-transformation, and operational closure). The interpretive angle helps Pock examine the ways in which Auster's work "emulates the moment-to-moment movement of consciousness" (146) and allegorizes memory and cognition processes as ways of structuring and restructuring information and organizing self-narratives on a man-medium platform (142). From Auster, Pock moves on to the cyberpunk writer Neal Stephenson, and although in this case the idea of the writer's engagement with cybernetics and media technology is by no means far-fetched, this chapter marks the moment in *Mediality*, *Cybernetics, Narrativity* where the book seems to be approaching its own heat death—maybe because the novels he deals with are about information overload. The Stephenson chapter stands brilliant on its own, with its careful teasing out of the formal and thematic elements of information processing, or spatial navigation and programming in *Snow Crash* and *Diamond Age*, but just like the following chapter on David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, it gets caught up in the loop of self-replicating levels of commentary and cross-references to texts and writers discussed earlier. This being said, it needs to be admitted that since in Pock's analysis, Wallace's and Stephenson's novels figure as protest declarations against what Raymond Williams has called the "mechanical materialism" of new media, the last chapters of *Mediality, Cybernetics, Narrativity* fulfill its promise of presenting a historical overview of McLuhanite and cybernetic influences in postmodern literature after 1960s. Benny Pock's book is by all means a recommended point of reference for anyone interested in broadening their understanding of the role played by technology in the shaping of postmodernist aesthetics.

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Agnieszka Matysiak, *The Backstage as the Diegetic Space in the (Neo)Gothic Dramas*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010. 128 pages.

Małgorzata Miciuła, *(W)holes in the Eyes/I's: William Gaddis's The Recognitions from the Neo-Baroque Perspective*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010. 124 pages.

These are two first volumes in the Studies in Literature and Culture, a new series published by the Catholic University in Lublin. The two are works by relatively young scholars, devoted to difficult and/or less known texts and characterized by a skillful and innovative use of theoretical devices that, quoting from one of the books, might be described as "neo-solutions."

The first volume in the series, *The Backstage as the Diegetic Space in the (Neo)Gothic Dramas* by Agnieszka Matysiak, is a semiotic study of the theatrical space, both the physical space and the space of meaning. The choice of texts is quite unusual; there is a chapter on Joanna Baillie's drama, and another on Sam Shepard's neo-Gothic plays, but the selection shows the latent possibilities of the Gothic space in seemingly quite remote areas of culture. Such distant affinities are always intriguing and seem to be typical of studies based on "neo-solutions." The theoretical background of Agnieszka Matysiak's book has been derived from structuralist studies of the theatre, most importantly books and articles by representatives of the Prague School, Yuri Lotman and other representatives of the Tartu School, as well as several more specific studies, including Roland Barthes's book on Racine. Such a return to structuralism could be frowned upon as a whim, but the author uses stringent structural vocabulary only as spring board for her own, innovative approach to semiosis, in which she is proposing a close correspondence between physical and semantic (cultural) phenomena. Indeed, such inspired writing is rarely seen nowadays:

> Therefore, I propose to acknowledge the concept of the sign as the entity mirroring a graphic representation of the nucleus of an atom, together with the electron cloud, where the co-existence and cooperation of its three components compose this basic unit of matter. The signified and the signifier may be equivalent to protons and neutrons—the signified being a proton, whereas the signified epitomizing a neutron. Protons represent those nucleons, which are endowed with an electric charge of +1 elementary charge and, thus, they are capable of interactions with other particles. Therefore, the hypothesis may be put forward that since the signified constitutes the conceptual unit of the sign and expresses a particular idea, some energy is also bestowed upon it for an individual concept is never neutral. Furthermore, having the energy, the signified exerts an impact on character of the concretely perceptible signifier as it is an idea that shapes the appearance of its visualized conveyor (whether it is a sound, a written mark like a letter, or a sequence of letters composing a word). (15-16)

Referents transmit energy (like electron orbitals, by absorbing and emitting it), bind or repel other signs, creating semantic fields and, ultimately, the semiosphere, a concept of the Tartu school; given such similarity between physical and semiotic phenomena, the author can question received opinions on both matter and mind, only to show how the similarity, and the questioning, works in texts.

Semiosphere, where referents transmit the energy of signifieds, may be compared to the theatrical space, as it was conceived of by the Prague School and derivative theoretical discussions, most importantly the studies by William Eggington and Michael Issacharoff. Gothic space in the theatre corresponds to a rift between nature and the mind, the rift that occurred in the eighteenth century (Foucault, Kristeva). It is gender-based and structured similarly to the tripartite sign: the male signifier is a sign vehicle (the mind, the electrons), the female aspect belongs to the signified (nature, protons). The female signified corresponds, according to the author, to physical beauty and/or the impact of the theatrical space; the most important repository of signifieds is invisible, in the off-stage, the numinous (Rudolph Otto) theatrical zone behind the significant "content" of a play. The wealth of philosophical and theoretical references is necessary, it seems, for this hidden zone to gain its voice, for it to become expressive in a critic's discussion. Textual evidence comes from a detailed chapter on Joanna Baillie and a somewhat shorter discussion of Sam Shepard's two plays, *Buried Child* and *Fool for Love*.

In Małgorzata Miciuła's book on Gaddis, *(W)holes in the Eyes/I's*, the theoretical background combines the concepts of neo-Baroque, Deleuze's folding, his minor and major strategies, Foucault's heterotopia, Lacan's theory of vision and perspective, and

feminist approaches to visuality, the body, and female *juissance*. All these concepts are essential to the discussion presented in the book, but they revolve around Lacan's discussion of perspective and the vanishing point. Miciuła concentrates on absence and omission (of women characters) in Gaddis's novel; women characters, like the vanishing point in perspective, organize and arrange the visible elements of the novel. The author shows the correspondences between the novel's composition and the paintings mentioned (and forged) in it. In this, the author presents an innovative reading of *The Recognitions*, going beyond the theme of forgery and beyond the development of the main (male) characters. In doing so, the author ignores longer sections with strong and well developed characterization of women, e.g. Esther in I.3, and, Maude in I.5, and, of course, the extensive characterization of Esme. The point holds, however, that it is through their disappearances in subsequent chapters that those characters become vanishing points. Similarly, *(W)holes in the Eyes/I's* has no extensive references to Clementine literature and Goethe's *Faust* as intertexts for *The Recognitions*, which is undoubtedly good for clarity and coherence, but presents a truncated image of the novel.

The rejection of intertextual explication, however, is only an apparent lack and certainly a deliberate decision on part of the author, who, concentrating on references to visual arts, presents the novel as a generator of structures rather than as a structure itself. With the multitude of references, Gaddis's book does not call for a comprehensive interpretation which could take into account all its complexities—such interpretation would probably go against the grain of the novel. The detailed description of the perspective and vanishing point in the novel, however, shows how this compositional device creates and brings out various points of view, subject positions, identities, characters, and, as well, intertextual references. Instead of explaining the novel's structure, a daunting and possibly impossible task, Miciuła uses "neo-solutions" to discuss the text as a generator of self-mirrored, recursively repeated patterns, a generator of infinite complexities. It seems that with the use of "neo-solutions" it is possible to present a discussion of a limited set of elements of the text and still arrive at a coherent global discussion; the intertexts and other omitted elements, like vanishing points, could be easily located and made visible in a more extended critical discussion.

There are two theoretical affinities between Matysiak's and Miciuła's books. First of all, they conceive of texts in visual terms; they are visual readings. This seems to be consistent with the subject matter, since Matysiak's book is about the theatrical space, and Miciuła's about paintings referred to in a novel. Meanings, of the greatest ideological and existential caliber, are not absent, as both authors are sometimes wont of carelessly saying, but hidden or invisible in the visual framework prepared in theoretical parts. In particular, the neo-Baroque, mentioned in both books (although *The Backstage* contains

only a cursory reference), is a visual paradigm. The visuality in the two books, however, is that of illusions and limits of visual representation: infinitely folding and repeating mirror images, automorphic recurrence of fractal shapes within them, vanishing points, optical illusions and distortions, chaos and deluding regularity of strange attractors. This desire for strange and ungainly shapes goes beyond the paradigm set by Joseph Frank in his essay on spatial form, and perhaps even beyond Mieke Bal's visual readings. Secondly, the direction set by both authors seems to be Deleuzian, that is towards a general world-view to which physical science and humanities are two variants of one and the same thing. Are the "neo-solutions" going to be more attractive for future scholars? Do they undermine the traditional paradigm of "theory," pinned down to several poles, such as "figurative," "political," "hermeneutical," or "formalist" ends of a well known continuum? Do Deleuze, Lotman, and other scholars invoked by the two authors, in the radical blend of human and inhuman world, question the very essence of *Geistwissenschaften*, as they were conceived of by Dilthey? These are, perhaps, the most general questions posed by the two books reviewed here.

Last but not least, both books deserve commendation for editing, design, and illustration. Authors, who wish to concentrate on qualities of signifiers that vanish from the referential space while interacting with it, will work on the very physical shape of their books as carefully as on their signification, ponderous as it may be. Both books are set in a wide variety of types (the reviewer could count more than ten), printed on paper that is floating between white and beige, unusually formatted, richly illustrated, and enriched with beautiful cover art. This represents a welcome change in the direction of Baroque publishing practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when books, especially scientific and critical ones, were combined works of art.

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Birgit Däwes, *Ground Zero Fiction: History, Memory, and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 497 pages.
Sven Cvek, *Towering Figures: Reading the 9/11 Archive*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011. 271 pages.

Over a decade after the destruction of the World Trade Center, there exists a huge body of literary responses to 9/11 and its aftermath, and the amount of critical works devoted to this literary phenomenon steadily grows. Such tendencies in literature and criticism are far from being surprising, given the unprecedented scale of national trauma

in the United States as well as the global reaction of shock, compassion and support after the terrorist attack on New York. It goes without saying that events like 9/11 have an overwhelming effect on the human imagination and determine public expectations with respect to the cultural activities helping to come to terms with what is far beyond individual comprehension. A number of American writers immediately responded to 9/11 and published poems, essays and short stories about the tragedy in major magazines and newspapers. Artists from various fields were involved, from the very beginning, in ceremonies commemorating the victims of the terrorist attack. In the course of time—and predictably enough—novels about 9/11 began to appear, and by now they have become so numerous and diverse that it is possible to treat them as a separate thematic genre and even to talk about some kind of canon of 9/11 novels, including not only American books, but also a handful of works by writers from other countries. As it inevitably happens in the process of canon-formation, some books have received greater attention than others. Therefore, before any further crystallization of the canon of 9/11 novels takes place, it is definitely time for some kind of synthesis that would do justice to the diversity of narrative representations of the event. Without a doubt. Birgit Däwes's book *Ground Zero Fiction: History, Memory, and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel*, offering precisely such a synthesis, is a very timely publication. It contains a thorough recapitulation of the state of the genre of the 9/11 novel at the present moment and develops an interpretative classification that will remain a primary reference for future academic critics writing about 9/11 in literature.

Däwes pursues a much more ambitious aim than literary scholars typically do: instead of proving a given thesis on the basis of a limited selection of texts, she approaches a major literary phenomenon in its entirety. Symptomatically enough, she is quite specific about numbers, and numbers do matter in her monograph, providing the best evidence of its scope. Namely, Däwes has identified 231 books that can be classified as 9/11 novels, all published before June 2011; out of these, 162 have been written by U.S.-American authors and constitute the material for analysis in the book. The impressive scope of *Ground Zero Fiction* can be fully appreciated if one bears in mind that the broadest earlier book-length presentation of the 9/11 novel, Richard Gray's *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011), examines seventeen literary works. Däwes's discussions of individual novels are not very extensive—Updike's *Terrorist* has six pages, DeLillo's *Falling Man* has seven, and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* has ten—but clearly she is much more interested in the narrative paradigms that emerge across a variety of texts than in the implications of single novels, however important these may have been for the development of the genre. Referring to numerous examples, Däwes looks at how such paradigms function in the broad and dynamic con-

text of what she calls, after Winfried Fluck, the "cultural imaginary" (6). In this realm, fiction is "a catalyst of transgression and dehierarchization" (7), because it enables the creation of a multitude of discourses whose tentativeness or alternativeness destabilizes the entrenched discourse of commemoration and interferes, on a more general level, with a variety of social, cultural and political issues with which the American public has been preoccupied. Däwes explores the complex symbolic structures encoded in 9/11 novels as expressions not only of immediate emotional and political responses to the terrorist attacks, but also of the lasting epistemological and ontological anxieties of the postmodern age.

Contrary to most critics who have written on the 9/11 novel before her, Däwes does not take the definition of the genre for granted, and she proposes a set of its defining criteria. Thus, she points out three aspects upon which the recognition of the genre depends: the presentation of the setting, the thematic or symbolic significance of 9/11 in the plot, and the characters' perception of the event. Däwes emphasizes that each of these criteria creates a plethora of narrative possibilities, which in turn account for the multiplicity of the variants of representing 9/11 in fiction. Her criteria are valid, indeed, and, in their multifarious combinations, they appear to describe comprehensively the genre model. Some doubts may arise, however, with respect to how she applies her criteria to novels in which the presentation of 9/11 and its aftermath is marginal, if not merely implied. The long list of 9/11 novels in the bibliography includes, among others, such well-known works as Roth's *Everyman*, Powers' *The Echo Maker* or Ellis's *The Lunar Park*, which are not directly concerned with the event and only contain vague allusions to it or mention it, as it were, in passing. For Däwes, such brief references are sufficient to classify the books as 9/11 novels and to place them in the category of "unnaration," the term signifying a refusal to narrate the event. However intriguing all this sounds, one can get a suspicion that Däwes seeks pretexts to expand her list of 9/11 novels to the possible limits, especially by including in it works by established authors whose new books are expected to attract attention. Looking at some titles on Däwes's list, one can perhaps wonder whether most of contemporary American narratives of loss, mourning, menace, remembrance, forgetting, redemption and recuperation would not qualify, in one sense or another, as 9/11 novels. In any case, this is just one aspect of *Ground Zero Fiction* that calls for a serious critical debate, attesting in this way to the book's impact.

The essential part of Däwes's book—300 out of nearly 500 pages—contains the discussion of six models of representing 9/11 in the American novel. The first is what she calls a "metonymic" approach, which relies on the narrative techniques of "premonition, ellipsis, implication, projection, and satirical distortion" (20) as ways of achieving a text's indirect engagement with the event of 9/11. The second approach, described as "salvational," on the contrary, presupposes the necessity to re-enact the event and, ulti-

mately, to establish the terms for its closure. Such narratives often involve quasi-religious themes, such as recovery or redemption, and allude to the cultural traditions infused with religious significance. The "diagnostic" model comes third and comprises novels that explore the social and political consequences of the terrorist attack. In this category, the thematic scope includes "the Bush administration's immediate response, the long-term modifications of both domestic and foreign policies and… the impact that 9/11 had on concepts of gender, ethnicity, class, and national identity at large" (20). Importantly enough, this approach, as a rule, applies to novels written by American ethnic authors. Däwes emphasizes the difference in the treatment of ethnic themes in "diagnostic" and "appropriative" narratives, the latter variety manifestly aiming at reconstructing the voice and the perspective of the Other. In the fifth model, called "symbolic," the events of 9/11 provide a background for the presentation of "personal crisis, loss or decline" (21). The last category includes "writerly" narratives, characterized by formal innovations and freely combining the constitutive features of the other models.

Ground Zero Fiction benefits immensely from the author's evasion of the rigors of a pre-established methodology of reading. Quite on the contrary, Däwes works across a whole spectrum of literary methodologies, both older and newer ones. Her typological approach to the 9/11 novel evokes the spirit of structuralism, but easily transcends the limits of this traditional school of studying literary genres in highlighting the dynamics of literary and extra-literary contexts. In her understanding of the cultural imaginary and of the subversive work of literature, she makes a nod toward Mikhail Bakhtin, even if she does not acknowledge the Russian critic. On several occasions Däwes reiterates her debt to new historicism. Recent developments in literary theory, such as the incorporation of memory studies, considerably substantiate her argument. Interestingly enough, Däwes appears to be somewhat skeptical about the use of trauma theory in the analysis of 9/11 novels, even though it continues to function as a primary interpretative framework for literary scholars writing on narrative representations of 9/11. Strictly speaking, she notices that the predominance of trauma theory narrows down the scope of interpretations and, as a consequence, precludes the recognition of the diversity of 9/11 novels. Däwes has done a titanic job writing *Ground Zero Fiction*; she has proved her sweeping grasp of the subject, ability to create a thorough synthesis of a multifarious cultural phenomenon, and, last but not least, personal determination. It can be said without any exaggeration that *Ground Zero Fiction* marks a new stage in critical explorations of the 9/11 novel. Its encyclopedic quality makes it an obligatory source for all those who will write on related topics for many years to come.

Although in comparison with Birgit Däwes's *Ground Zero Fiction* most of the existing—and presumably forthcoming, too—book-length studies of cultural representations

of 9/11 are bound to appear rather modest, Sven Cvek, in his book *Towering Figures: Reading the 9/11 Archive*, demonstrates that a good selection of material for analysis enables the establishment of a truly broad perspective on narrative depictions of 9/11. Cvek's work shares important premises with Däwes's, offering a new historicist approach to the event and showing how different modes of representation create competing versions of 9/11. What lies at the core of such a proliferation of images and narratives of the event is the issue of power. Reading selected texts, generated by various media and belonging to what Cvek calls "the 9/11 archive," he traces the mechanisms of constructing hegemonic interpretations of the national tragedy, and concomitantly explores the textual strategies of contesting such imposed interpretations. He develops his argument around the concept of national trauma as a sociopolitical phenomenon. Cvek claims that 9/11 strengthened U.S. nationalism insofar as it constituted what he calls, after Dominick LaCapra, "the myth of founding trauma" (11) that facilitated national homogenization through public rituals of mourning and commemoration. At the same time, 9/11 was, unquestionably, a global event that not only redefined America's position on the arena of world politics, but also dramatically affected the ways of experiencing and understanding national sentiments on the domestic scale. Accordingly, Cvek identifies two tendencies in the 9/11 archive: "the archive speaks of a post-traumatic reconstruction of an imagined national wholeness; at the same time many 9/11 fictions also work to reconstitute U.S. nationhood within a planetary context" (11). This dichotomy underscores Cvek's argument and marks an important distinguishing feature of his book against the background of thematically related criticism.

The composition of Cvek's book follows a clearly defined trajectory, from the national to the supranational contexts of the cultural encoding of 9/11. In the first chapter, which is fairly theoretical, the critic examines the ways in which the event was historicized in connection with the hegemonic American historical narratives, but he also points out that the exceptional significance of 9/11 created the possibility of revising thoroughly the categories of historical thinking. The second chapter is devoted to the crucial role of the community as a space of national consolidation through a collective reliving of trauma. The two chapters that follow demonstrate how this process is supported or contested by literary works: thus, one chapter focuses on the uses of melodrama in establishing a narrative model of representing 9/11, and the other shows how literary texts undermine the predominant public discourse on the example of Art Spiegelman's critique of the role of the media after the terrorist attack in his graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*. In the fifth chapter, Cvek makes a leap to the global aspect of 9/11, and in the next three chapters he problematizes such issues as the U.S. economic and political supremacy, fundamentalist Islamic terrorism, global capitalism

and the opposition to it on the basis of Don DeLillo's essays dealing with or alluding to 9/11. By far, the most surprising inclusion in Cvek's selection of analyzed texts is Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*, discussed in the last chapter. According to the critic, this novel, set at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, addresses some problems that are relevant for the situation of the United States in the aftermath of 9/11; in particular, the subject of terrorism, present in Pynchon's novel, provokes a fundamental question about "the possibility and the impossibility of counter-hegemonic political action in a putatively post-historical and post-political world" (15).

Birgit Däwes's *Ground Zero Fiction* and Sven Cvek's *Towering Figures* are important European contributions to the study of literary representations of 9/11. Both books emphasize the inescapability of a historicist approach to the event, demonstrate the threat posed by homogeneous and hegemonic historical interpretations, and point to the subversive role of literature. While Däwes and Cvek share certain general assumptions and conclusions, they follow different interpretative routes. The former highlights the formal variety of 9/11 novels, and the latter pays more attention to how literary and journalistic writings about the event and its aftermath are positioned in relation to the dominant political discourse. Ultimately, even if critics writing about 9/11 in literature reach similar conclusions, their interpretative procedures are impressively varied and, therefore, invariably intriguing.

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Michael Butter, Patrick Keller, and Simon Wendt, eds., *Arnold Schwarzenegger—Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Body and Image*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 266 pages.

This volume could not have been published at a more timely moment. The current scandals surrounding Schwarzenegger's personal life have refocused public attention on "The Governator" and have cracked, to put it mildly, his image of the respectable politician and family man. It so happens that the book edited by Butter, Kettler and Wendt discusses from an interdisciplinary academic perspective precisely the shaping of the image that has just been shattered. While I am afraid that the volume may be too theoretical to enter the popular market, it is certainly a most useful read for scholars from the fields of cultural studies, media studies, gender studies and political sciences who want to be able to place Schwarzenegger within the contexts of their respective disciplines and against the backdrop of the American Dream.

The volume was inspired by an interdisciplinary conference, whose topic and focus I find refreshingly narrow, that is a conference devoted solely to an academic analysis of Schwarzenegger. Admittedly, this narrowness is also somewhat deceptive for, as the editors claim, studying Schwarzenegger means studying America. In the introduction, Butter, Keller and Wendt describe Schwarzenegger as "a synecdoche," "an exemplary case" and "a lens" that brings "larger developments into focus" (10). I cannot resist adding that the Austrian-born governor is also a particularly apt figure for American Studies scholars in a German-speaking country.

While Schwarzenegger has received significant media attention, the editors insist that he has so far escaped scholarly analysis. This volume successfully remedies this state of affairs by providing a collection of insightful essays which utilize up-to-date theoretical approaches for studying the significance of Schwarzenegger in American culture. The chapters in the book can be grouped as focusing on one of three thematic areas: body, film and image. These areas correspond roughly to the stages in Schwarzenegger's transformation from a bodybuilder into a movie star and then into a politician. Of course, there necessarily exist significant overlaps, as the editors notice themselves in the introduction. However, the thematic areas also correspond to the different lenses applied by the individual researchers. While it is impossible to discuss Schwarzenegger's movie roles and neglect his body, the essays gathered in the second group (film) are, overall, more interested in the cinematographic strategies for representing the body rather than in the body itself. Meanwhile, essays focused on the body employ primarily the tools of cultural studies to put Schwarzenegger's performance of the male body in a broader cultural context, paying particular attention to bodybuilding, understood as a body technology influencing the appearance of the human body.

The primary issue which the authors of the first groups of essays analyze concerns the body as a site of cultural contestation, negotiation and normalization. The opening essay, Simon Wendt's "Bodybuilding, Male Bodies and Masculinity in 19th and 20th Century America: Eugen Sandow and Arnold Schwarzenegger," examines the cultural reception of the two eponymous bodybuilders in America of the 1890s and 1980s, respectively. Wendt reveals how constructions of corporeality changed over a span of almost one hundred years. Schwarzenegger's career began at a historical moment when muscular male bodies were ridiculed and scorned as implying an almost feminine—and by implication possibly homosexual—preoccupation with external appearance; such perception changed during Schwarzenegger's bodybuilding career. Wendt suggests that Schwarzenegger's success was simultaneously a causative factor and a result of broader changes taking place in the 1980s. Among these, he lists "growing awareness of and attempts to improve one's body in American society" (40), Schwarzenegger's success as

a movie star and "efforts by bodybuilding promoters and the print media to rid the sport of its gay image" (41). It is in this list of factors where I detect the one weakness of this article; that is, I do not find them exhaustive. One significant addition to the list of reasons mentioned by Wendt is a return to the exaggerated gender differentiation characteristic of the periods of social conservatism; and the 1980s were most certainly such a time. This argument has most often been uttered by feminist scholars writing about the female body, for example Susan Bordo, but it can also be extended to the hypermuscled male body.

In fact, one does not have to look far to see it phrased, because the two essays that follow Wendt's, Danijela Albrecht's and Michaela Hampf's, do precisely this through the analysis of the normalizing influence of the presence of Schwarzenegger's body in mainstream public discourse on the ideal of the feminine body. Albrecht analyzes Schwarzenegger's guidebooks for bodybuilding enthusiasts as solidifying certain notions of "perfect" masculine and feminine corporeality. Albrecht shows how these notions are reflected in the vocabulary of the guidebooks: men are encouraged to "build" their bodies, while women should focus on "shaping" theirs. An interesting take that Albrecht offers on this notion is that the guidebooks also present such perfect bodies as a stepping stone on the road to upward social mobility, using the author himself as the best example. Meanwhile, Michaela Hampf looks at Schwarzenegger's bodybuilding documentary *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, noticing that while the film is clothed in the rhetoric of women's liberation, it in fact propagates a very conservative femininity, not only in the sphere of corporeality. Continuing the theme of performativity, Scheller reads Schwarzenegger as a postmodern artist who merges art and life and who "can be defined primarily as a paradigmatic postmodern, postessentialist, "campy," and "dandy-like self-designer" (99). Scheller compares Schwarzenegger to Andy Warhol, emphasizing that the two are "two sides of a coin" (99) on the basis of the similarity of their lifestyles and attitudes. I do find this comparison somewhat problematic, and even if Warhol and Schwarzenegger can both be described as campy, in the case of the latter, it most certainly is the kind of camp that Susan Sontag described as "naïve," while Warhol's self-fashioning as campy was conscious and deliberate. And for a postessentialist, Schwarzenegger puts a lot of effort into reflecting his manly "essence" in his physical appearance.

The section of the volume devoted to Schwarzenegger's movies is highly interesting as a whole, as are the individual chapters. Julian Hanich analyzes the appeal of Schwarzenegger's "hard-body" movies using the concept of "somatic empathy," which he defines as "reflexive, pre-reflective form of participation or feeling with others" (107). Hanich claims that because the flexing of the character's muscles serves no narra-

tive function, the appeal which it holds for viewers is that of partaking in the character's exceptional strength, albeit obviously without identification. The two essays that follow, Lisa Gotto's "Incorporations: On the Mediality of Arnold Schwarzenegger's Cinematically Built Bodies" and Michael Butter's "From Rough Guy to Family Guy: The Transformation of Arnold Schwarzenegger's Star Persona in *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*" are, in my eyes, the strongest in the volume. Gotto traces how Schwarzenegger's movies seem to create very rigid dichotomies related to human bodies (masculine/feminine, technological/biological, mobile/immobile) which they then proceed to transgress. Not only are these boundaries deconstructed in each single movie, but also when Schwarzenegger's choice of roles over a period of time is examined more closely, it can easily be discerned that his entire career can also be read according to the paradigm of setting borders and then transgressing them. Reading Butter's essay after Gotto's, the transition is very fluent as Butter elaborates on the transformation of Schwarzenegger's star person over a period of time, starting off as Conan the Barbarian and Terminator and ending up as the first ever pregnant male in *Junior*. While the transition may seem, at first glance, quite dramatic, Butter shows how the latter "family guy" roles depend on the "hard-body" movies, because they "engage and transform" (152) Schwarzenegger's image by "off-casting" the actor. However, and this is the most important point Butter makes, the consolidation of features of the old image (physical strength and the resulting agency) and of the new image (preoccupation with family life) contributed to making Schwarzenegger successful at obtaining the office of the governor of California. Rudinger Heinze makes a somewhat similar point, claiming that Schwarzenegger's Terminator image—in a nutshell: a physically strong outsider who enters an ailing community in order to "clean it up"—was also successfully used by the actor in his political campaign.

The last group of essays, those focused mostly on Schwarzenegger's "image" as politician, reveal The Governator to be a highly pragmatic politician, who skillfully caters to all of his diverse constituents. Frank Sauer analyzes Schwarzenegger's transformation from a Hummer-fan into a proponent of alternative energy sources and pro-ecological regulations and claims that his sudden love affair with "tree-hugging" is rooted in the California economy. The last chapter, authored by Bischhof and Strobl, probes Schwarzenegger's self-presentation in his public speeches against the backdrop of relevant biographical sources. The chapter does seem to be one of the book's weaker parts, with a simple thesis, according to which Schwarzenegger manipulated his biography in a way that makes him look like the quintessential immigrant living out the "Horatio Alger trajectory" (237). Bischof and Strobl correctly point out these manipulations and analyze them in the context of the American Dream.

Overall, this is a truly outstanding collection, even if the quality of the essays is sometimes uneven. The editors deserve due recognition already for the idea of writing a scholarly volume about Schwarzenegger and for putting the idea into life quickly—the conference took place in September 2009 and the book was on my desk in October 2011—and efficiently. The essays are well-edited and organized into a coherent whole. The volume will be engaging for scholars of several disciplines and could appeal even to readers from outside the academia, if one bears in mind the recent media interest in Schwarzenegger's personal life.

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Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, David Mauk, and Ole Moen, eds., *"E pluribus unum" or "E pluribus plura?" Unity and Diversity in American Culture*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 306 pages.

The very title of the collection *"E pluribus unum" or "E pluribus plura?" Unity and Diversity in American Culture* points to the broad framework of an ambitious interdisciplinary project which owes its publication to the European Association for American Studies Biennial Conference in Oslo in 2008. The volume is divided into three sections, devoted respectively to cultural, literary and historical explorations of unity and plurality, homogeneity and diversity, fusions and severances that infuse American Studies in all their conceivable research areas. In contrast to more run-of-the-mill collections which tend to concentrate only on one reading of the "e pluribus unum," usually in the form of historical analyses of the nation's formative years or cultural explorations of racial and ethnic identification, Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, David Mauk and Ole Moen, the editors of this volume, decided to include essays that shed an altogether new light on the eponymous notions. After all, the tensions between the centrifugal and centripetal forces that weigh on the matrix of the American public and private life can be discerned not only in the classic struggle between assimilated (or freely chosen) identities and those that were violently imposed but also in a subtle juxtaposition of literary stimuli in poetry, unremitting friction between federalist and anti-federalist tendencies in politics, political agency and subversive authority of national emblems, or even in imaginary and imagined architectural space that allows its inhabitants to escape or, conversely, to merge with the thronging multitudes.

Since each of the eighteen contributors brings a wholly unique perspective on the intersections of "e pluribus unum" and "e pluribus plura," it might be expedient to map out

a few smaller themes that are dispersed throughout the collection. The first of these revolves round the ideological underpinnings of American Studies and the transformations which this part of academia is currently undergoing. In a comprehensive essay "The Romance with America: Approaching America through Its Ideals," Winfried Fluck contends that after the founding myths, of which European scholars used to be so enamored in the past, have crumbled under the heavy weight of revisionist critiques, only the narrative of perpetual trauma remains standing. He warns his fellow scholars that by focusing on transnational, transcultural and transdisciplinary studies, in which diversity, otherness and marginality constitute the focal points, they may be in fact perpetuating the romance with America and its utopian promise, which though not (as yet) realized is undeniably appealing. The shift from perceiving the US as an exceptionalist nation to a profane one might just be the way to avoid such romantic misconceptions. Nevertheless, as of now the project put forward by Winfried Fluck is still to be developed and implemented.

A much appreciated essay by George Blaustein outlines the beginnings of American Studies in postwar Europe—"'Other' American Studies: The Salzburg Seminar, American Intellectuals, and Postwar Europe." He offers a valuable insight into both the lecturers and students of the Salzburg Seminar and the problematic nature of exporting American democracy to Europe ravished by war and stripped off of its intellectual and moral dignity. Blaustein provides not only a meticulous historical analysis supported by massive biographical research, but, even more importantly, he notes that the duality of America, which has inspired so many contemporary debates on the limits and scope of American Studies in Europe, is a part of a long-standing discussion, inaugurated perhaps more than sixty years ago in Salzburg.

Questions of identity form a second thread that emerges in a number of essays. Here, the eclecticism is in high demand, and rightly so, as the contributors analyze a number of absorbing, if a tad unrelated, subjects. Struggle over one's identity and ethnicity form the backbone of Hans Bak's "Language, Identity, and Politics in Multicultural New York: Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*" in which he demonstrates how the city can be read as both the arena of multicultural and interracial conflict and an open-ended possibility to negotiate the instances of being silenced and of regaining a voice, of being visible and remaining invisible, all accomplished through linguistic exertion and semantic games. Bak splendidly reveals how Lee's novel shares a number of affinities, as well as curious discontinuities, with Ellison's *Invisible Man*, primarily in terms of painting urban milieu as the site of assimilation, rebellion and cultural (re)negotiations between dominant white English-speaking city dwellers and non-white immigrants bringing their own incorrect, but ultimately instructive, versions of hyphenated English.

Though African-American experience often comes to the foreground in explorations of the "unum" and "plura," in this collection the two groups that enjoy most prominence are those of Jewish Americans and the Southerners. The former group is perhaps best represented by Susan Winnett's instructive essay "Back to the Fold: Memoir, Conversion, and Community," in which she analyzes the memoirs of people discovering their hitherto unacknowledged or unknown Jewish origins. Showcased as a process of inscription rather than conversion, the newly-found identities prove a shared need to access the "postmemory" which is invariably mediated through their families' traumatic pasts. Commenting further on the importance of returning to one's original community is Dana Mihăilescu with her elegantly written "Lower East Side Fiction and the Displacement of Unified Jewishness." The essay proves how apparently unified and homogenous groups were, or still are, highly diversified. Such "diversity within unity" transpires particularly well in Lower East Side Jewish fiction in which this specific New York borough is presented as "a place of dislocation and transformation" (225), even though it eventually offers the Jewish immigrants a reformulated sense of community.

The issue of southernness is explored by Marcel Arbeit in "Southern Writers outside the South and Their Identities: The Case of Elizabeth Spencer." Arbeit probes how southern identities are (re)constructed in order to handle, on the one hand, the fossilizing stereotypes ubiquitous in mainstream representations of the South, and on the other hand, the heterogeneity of newly-sprung identities. The southern subject reappears in Jan Nordby Gretlund's "Unifying and Diversifying: Southerners Caught between Jefferson and Hamilton," which examines how the two politicians' early debates saturate contemporary southern art. It is always refreshing to observe how seemingly unconnected interpretative paths come together in a scholarly work; in this case, Gretlund aptly demonstrates how political and social discussions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reverberate not only in twentieth-century literature but also in country music. Moving even further South, Susan Castillo in "George Washington Cable's Caribbean Gothic" seamlessly fuses postcolonialism with economics while investigating the "violated boundaries" of the phantasmatic protagonists in Cable's works. The in-between-ness and indeterminacy of these characters are correlated not only with territorial violations, colonial abuse and slavery, but with gender, class, nationality and race.

Stimulating readings like those already mentioned are supplemented by essays that cover a truly diverse territory beginning with the impact of Japanese prints on Amy Lowell's poetry in Elisabetta Marino's superbly written essay, through the history of jazz reception in the Czech Republic in Josef Jařab's text, Sophie Vallas's examination of the urban locale in Ed McBain's police procedural novels, Jude Davies's rigorously

researched concept of "solidarity across difference" in Theodore Dreiser's non-fiction, and ending with Laurence Gervais-Linon's investigation of the paradoxical nature of gated communities, to name just a few. The collection's very eclecticism and essential interdisciplinarity do, however, result in somewhat erratic jumps between the subjects covered by the contributors, whereas the assessment of "e pluribus unum" and "e pluribus plura" professed by the title is only marginally present in some of the texts. Nevertheless, the volume's impressive range shows the wealth of contemporary American Studies research which encompasses not only conventional ventures into literary and cultural quarters but also highly illuminating explorations of political thought, architecture, jazz, the methodology of teaching and transformations of American academia. All in all, it is undoubtedly an inspiring volume that fittingly demonstrates the breadth and depth of American Studies and the increasing diversity of research conducted in Europe.

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Jerzy Durczak and Paweł Frelik, eds., *(Mis)reading America: American Dreams, Fictions and Illusions*. Kraków: Universitas, 2011. 472 pages.

The volume *(Mis)reading America: American Dreams, Fictions and Illusions* offers a rich and varied perspective on different aspects of American culture. The collection is divided into five sections dedicated respectively to readings of American identity, explorations of the past, interpretations of dystopian futures or alternative histories, reflections on ethnic literatures and media analyses. The overall emphasis of the collection, as already suggested by its title, is on the idea of constructing, interpreting, misinterpreting and remapping the image of America. The idea of a metaphorical, but also physical cartography is strongly present in the first essay the opening section. Andrea O'Reilley Herrera's article, indeed entitled "Cartographies of Knowledge: The Remapping of American Literature and Culture," suggests the emergence of a perspective on American studies that is increasingly transnational in scope, emphasizing experiences of mixed and hybrid forms of national or personal identity. This view emerges in opposition to the increasing visibility, found in contemporary American politics, of a discriminatory and intolerant discourse. On the other hand, Maciej Masłowski's piece concentrates on the notion of reading and interpreting America, focusing on two different modes of interpretation, represented respectively by seventeenth-century Puritan hermeuntics and the con-

spiracy theories that have flourished in American culture and may be found in literature as well, exemplified by Pynchon's or DeLillo's texts. Masłowski locates a connection between these aspects in the idea of a Manichean and deeply interconnected world. In both cases, an act of interpretation is implied in an attempt to "read" an elusive American identity.

This attempt to read, interpret and define American identity is projected towards a sometimes very recent and often traumatic past in the second section of the book. This part of the collection begins with Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis's reflection on the role of houses in literary representations of the decay of the Southern aristocracy, in particular in association with the characters of spinsters. In these narratives, exemplified for instance by Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," the houses become powerful symbols of patriarchy, sexuality, secrecy, decay and different forms of deviance, reinforcing the gothic textual frame. Subsequently, Justyna Kociatkiewicz addresses issues related to historical fiction in her discussion of Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, a novel controversial for its treatment of the Rosenberg trial, whereas Jerzy Kamionowsky takes into consideration readings of 9/11 by Toni Morrison and Amiri Baraka. In the subsequent section, the focus shifts from reflections on the actual past to "visions of the future and pasts that never came." Significantly, the opening article by Anna Gilarek compares two alternative histories dealing with a dystopian Nazi presence in the United States: Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. Gilarek's conclusion to her analysis of these two works is that while depictions of a totalitarian America can be considered far-fetched misinterpretations, the dominant discourse of the U.S. as an open, pluralistic society also represents a misconception, as shown by the persistent presence of nativist and xenophobic movements throughout American history, which render the fictional evocation of a Fascist America less far-fetched than it may appear at first. Dystopia is also present in Kamil Rusiłowicz's reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. This novel is juxtaposed to the cinematic genre of the catastrophic film, which throughout the decades embodied different collective fears before entering a post-apocalyptic perspective in the aftermath of 9/11. Rusiłowicz indicates that both *The Road* and the more recent catastrophic movies point to a condition of trauma from which America has not recovered yet, reflecting a deepening sense of uncertainty.

The following section of the book contains articles dedicated to ethnic literature with an emphasis on the construction of minority identity, as in Ewa Antoszek's paper dealing with the struggle to define the female self in Chicana literature, going beyond the impositions of traditional Catholicism or of the legacy of conquest and colonial exploitation. Latino literature is also present, this time in a Puerto Rican angle, in Jerzy Ducrzak's

paper. Durczak analyses the work of Junot Diaz in parallel with that of the representative of another minority, the African American Claude Brown. Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* and Diaz's *Drown* are placed within the broader tradition of the coming-of-age/autobiographical novel. Durczak contrasts these two texts written forty years from each other, illustrating how the two ethnic coming-of-age stories ultimately embrace diverging views of the United States, since the former endorses the notion of American success whereas the latter rejects it, emphasizing a bleak sense of alienation.

The fifth part of the volume, which concentrates on media representations, explores different aspects of visual culture in America, including, in Zofia Kolbuszewska's article, a study of Jim Jarmusch's film *Dead Man*. Kolbuszewska considers the film as a reinvention of the American frontier mythology. She locates in this representation a form of "neobaroque imago," which stresses elements of hybridity as well as of tensions between majority and minority discourse.

(Mis)reading America weaves together disparate strands and elements to create a multifaceted yet harmonious collection of articles that offer new directions to read and interpret America and its cultures. It encompasses reflections on the distant past represented by the legacy of Puritan America and attempts to imagine possible dystopian futures. It includes analyses of different elements of American literature, going from classics of the traditional canon to the recent narratives of disparate ethnic minorities, as well as considering different genres, media and trends. Many articles reflect on the consequences of 9/11, which, along with the theme of interpretation that gives the volume its title, is also a recurring motif in the collection. Thus *(Mis)reading America*, the work of mostly Polish scholars of American studies, is a thoughtful meditation from an external standpoint on the past and present of U.S. cultural identity.

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