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Julia Fiedorczuk

The Problems of Environmental Criticism: An Interview with Lawrence Buell

Lawrence Buell (b. 1939) is currently a Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature at Harvard University. His scholarly interests include nineteenth-century American literature, postcolonial Anglophone literatures and literature and the environment. One of the most outstanding researchers of American Transcendentalism and a pioneer of ecocriticism, Buell has published six books, the most recent of which is *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Blackwell, 2005), an important study marking the author's shift from first-wave to second-wave ecocritical analysis. His book on Emerson (*Emerson*, Harvard University Press, 2003) earned him the Warren-Brooks Award for outstanding literary criticism and *Writing for an Endangered World* (Harvard University Press, 2001) received the 2001 John G. Cawelti Award for the best book in the field of American Culture Studies.

Buell's interest in environmental issues, considered especially in connection with the problem of American national identity, dates back to the beginnings of his academic career. His first ecocritical book appeared in 1995 under the title *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and The Formation of American Culture* (Harvard University Press). Buell's erudite knowledge of Anglophone literature, combined with his impassioned search for what he describes as "mature environmental aesthetics" , contribute to the body of work that is eminent in its scope and profundity and that constitutes a challenge to the dominant ways of thinking about the relationship between the environment, culture and politics.

***

JULIA FIEDORCZUK: *What is ecocriticism?*

LAWRENCE BUELL: The so-called ecocritical movement is still only a dozen years old. So perhaps I should start with a definition. For more detail, please see my book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005). Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement committed not to any one methodology but to a particular subject: the subject of how literature and other media express environmental awareness and concern.

For at least two reasons, "ecocriticism" is a somewhat confusing and inadequate term. For one thing, "eco" suggests a specifically biotic or "natural world" emphasis, too narrow to encompass the broad range of environmental interests actually pursued by self-identified ecocritics, many of whom are at least as concerned with the built environment and its effects on both human and non-human life forms. And secondly, many literary scholars who are passionately concerned with environmental issues—including two of the three scholars whose work I am about to discuss—would object to the label of "eco-critic" as excessively restrictive, because "ecocriticism" in the first instance was used especially to designate a particular kind of literary criticism that focused preeminently on nature writing and post-Wordsworthian nature poetry with a view to emphasizing its potential for reconnecting people to nature. Hence I myself prefer the less familiar but more capacious rubric of "environmental criticism." But "ecocriticism" is nonetheless the omnibus term, or nickname, by which environmentally-oriented literary studies is most likely to be known for the foreseeable future; and so I retain use of it here.

Can you talk a little about the beginnings of ecocriticism?

Ecocriticism did not start as a transnational project, but rather as a movement within U.S. and British literary studies. But since then it has spread worldwide. In China, two major conferences have taken place during the autumn of 2008. And, increasingly, American ecocriticism, which still leads the movement, stresses the importance of thinking of national imagination and national territory as interconnected with the rest of the world, not distinct from it. It now seems self-evident that such prominent ecocritical concerns as the representation of environmental instability or endangerment and the theory of "place" or "sense of place" must be understood in comparative terms. It could even be argued that ecocriticism was always at least incipiently transnational. For instance, the first of my own three ecocritical books, *The Environmental Imagination*, centers especially on Henry David Thoreau and U.S. nature writing, but it prepares the way for this by surveying how the dissemination of Eurocentric pastoral ideology throughout the Afro-Atlantic world helped form the bases of various counter-colonial discourses of nationalism in a wide number of national cultures throughout Europe, Africa and the Americas–not just in the U.S.

I'm glad you mention the terminological issue. I think the problem with the term eco-criticism, beside its narrowness, is that the prefix "eco" is so dramatically overused, for instance in marketing. Such designations as "eco" and "bio" are commonly used to make products more sellable.

On the other hand, one must remember that ecology (and, by extension, ecocriticism) is sometimes viewed negatively on the grounds of its alleged naivety (the stereotypical image of the ecologist is that of a simple-minded tree-hugging individual who does not understand the higher orders of economy and infrastructural development). Does this negative stereotype of the ecologist and the ecocritic exist in the United States? If so, how does ecocriticism respond to this problem?

The extent that the "eco" in "ecocritic" is negatively viewed by non-literature types is more because of the construction of focus of the very early ecocritical efforts than because of the eco-PR industry you allude to. That too has not passed without criticism, but I don't think it affects the humanistic critical project. For that matter, the terms "environment" and "environmentalism" are also used in grossly elasticized and/or misleading senses to the same end, as with the first President Bush claiming that he wanted to be "the environment president."

Regarding the politics of ecocriticism itself, most ecocritics think of their ecocritical work as implicitly, if not overtly, progressive political interventions, although within the movement one finds the same tension as in environmental history between a nature-centric protectionist strain and public health environmentalism concerned especially with such issues as pollution, global warming, and environmental justice. Broadly speaking, the center of ecocritical interest has been shifting from the first emphasis to the second, and as part of this shift one sees a certain amount of "intratribal" criticism of the kind you rightly mention as often coming from outside—namely, contempt for "tree-hugging" images and the like. This internal critique is directed toward the conceptual or theoretical naivety of simplistic versions of "deep ecology" as well as motivated by political commitment.

Is the use of the term "environmental" part of the solution to these problems? (Perhaps you will find this interesting: "environmental criticism" is not easily translatable into Polish. While the Polish noun "środowisko," usually used with a specification such as "natural," "urban," or "chemical," means more or less the same as the English "environment," the adjective "środowiskowy" has a different set of connotations than the English term "environmental").

You do well to call attention to translation problems. As ecocriticism continues to spread, these are becoming increasingly consequential. Polish is not the only language with no precise equivalent for "environment." In China too, so I am told, the standard translation for environment is a term (huan-jing) that means something more like "mi-

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lieu"—the sense of physical environment is attenuated to the vanishing point. Some day there ought to be a multilinguistic task force deployed to work on this kind of issue. A retirement project for me, perhaps?

I think that many languages will probably end up adapting English terminology. That often happens in critical discourse. For instance, the English term "gender" is now widely used in Polish (Polish uses the same word to denote "sex" and "gender"). Speaking of which, I have noticed that skeptical reactions among Polish academics echo the kind of responses that gender or queer studies evoked, say, ten years ago. I would like to ask you about the affinities (and differences) between ecocriticism and other kinds of political criticism, such as feminist criticism or postcolonial theory. In The Future of Environmental Criticism *you say that ecocriticism "has not yet achieved the standing" accorded to those other discourses but you also say you believe it eventually will. Why do you think it is still not treated with the same amount of respectful scholarly attention? Is it just because it is new, or is it because, ultimately, it deals with non-human otherness?*

As to why ecocriticism or environmental criticism should have lagged behind race, gender, sexuality, and postcolonial studies, one reason, surely, is that environmental imperilment did not become consistently "front-page news" until about the 1980s. Another reason, perhaps equally important, is that "environment" differs from the others in being a non-human, or let's say, a transhuman entity, and on that account not in so obvious, self-evident a sense a part of personal or social identity. Thus it might be argued that environmental criticism would predictably be a harder sell than the other two revisionisms, especially insofar as it involves privileging the welfare of the non-human equally or more than the human. On the other hand, the lines of distinction are hardly absolute, and there has been mutual cross-pollination, as in the case of ecofeminism and environmental justice criticism (discussed in chapter 4 of my *The Future of Environmental Criticism*). These synergies, as I intimated before, help account for the shift from the more ecocentric paradigm of first-wave ecococriticism to the more sociocentric paradigm of second wave ecocriticism that now more or less prevails.

Could you say more about environmental justice criticism? What is it and how does it differ from what you call "first-wave ecocriticism"?

"Environmental justice" refers to the problem of (in)equitable distribution of environmental ills and benefits across population groups. In the U.S. this has been associated

especially with "environmental racism"—targeting minority communities as sites of hazardous waste facilities and other bearers of toxification. Outside the U.S., and also to a certain degree within, the question has been raised as to whether the key factor in producing environmental injustice is poverty rather than race. Both seem very important to me, and I am not sure whether it is possible (or fruitful) to insist on one alternative rather than the other—even though in the U. S. and many other countries there is a suspiciously high correlation between racial or ethnic minority status and social immiseration of every kind. But to move more closely to the subject of (literary) discourse, environmental justice revisionism tends to focus on urban rather than rural or backcountry settings, in minority and other subaltern voices, and in discourse of the past half-century or so rather than earlier eras—although it can legitimately claim antecedence back to at least the start of the industrial era.

Another kind of accusation that is sometimes made against eco- or environmental criticism is that it is not theoretically sophisticated: according to this hostile view, ecocritics express their love of nature where they lack intellectual rigor. Is this kind of suspicion still present among American academics? If so, what is your way of responding to it?

This is indeed a common but increasingly outdated charge. The very first ecocritics did indeed sometimes exhibit what Paul de Man famously called "resistance to theory" in their anxiety to reinforce traditional nature writing and nature poetry's ethos, as they took it, of "return to nature," over against poststructuralist decoupling of word world and material world, the new historicist push to represent figures like the Romantic poet Wordsworth as dis-invested in nature. But since the mid-1990s ecocriticism has become increasingly, although not universally, more sophisticated. One has only to read the most recent major book, Ursula Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (Oxford University Press, 2008), to perceive that.

I have recently come across an article by Dana Phillips, titled "Ecocriticism, Ecopoetics, and a Creed Outworn", in which the author expresses his very critical views on ecocriticism in general, and Jonathan Bate's ecopoetics in particular. Let me quote some fragments: "ecocritics … have been trying to revive forms of common sense that they suppose to have been vital to the earth-centered traditions of the past … Unfortunately, it has met with and is likely to continue to meet with limited success, in part because it is at odds with the facts of contemporary intellectual life"; "Too many ecocritics are fond of assuming the posture of the faux naïf, and while standing in that posture like

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to suggest, among other things, that environmental literature (and art) ought not to be read (or viewed or audited) in the critical sense of the term. Instead, they go on to say, one ought to absorb, accept, and then promulgate anew its earth-friendly, ecocentric values simply because that is manifestly the right thing to do."

Further, Phillips speaks of Jonathan Bate's "ecocritical fundamentalism." He sketches the parameters of the disagreement between the New Historicists and an eco-poetics enthusiast such as Bate. The argument is rather brilliant, though I think his choice of quotations from Bate is tendentious. Phillips's discussion of Bate suggests that ecocriticism is something extremely reactionary, intellectually lame, almost aggressive in its insistence on the intuitive, rather than intellectual, reception of art. Do you have a way of responding to this kind of wholesale critique? Would you agree that ecocriticism is about reviving a kind of "common sense" approach? And if so, in what sense is it at odds with "the facts of contemporary intellectual life"?

Phillips, together with Timothy Morton (*Ecology without Nature*, Harvard University Press, 2007), have written probably the most intelligent and slashing internal critiques of the ecocritical movement in English. Both are worth reading. Phillips, incidentally, attacks a great many ecocritics (including me), not just Bate—whereas Morton pursues his argument at a higher level of conceptual abstraction. My own summary judgment, in brief, is (a) that both overstate their cases (Morton for example strikes me as off-base in suggesting that ecology can do without nature even though he is right about the many abuses and ambiguities of "nature"), (b) that Phillips' book rests on a quite selective culling of an earlier stage of ecocriticism beyond which the movement's best work had evolved in point of critical sophistication by the time his own book appeared; but (c) both books are nevertheless thought-provoking, challenging books whose irreverence, including even the extremes to which they go, is a sign of salutary ferment within ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism is an engaged practice. How do you envision the passage from criticism to activism? Can textual analysis ever bring us closer to a sounder—or simply saner—environmental practice?

Ecocritical practice at the level of ecotheory and discourse analysis is obviously not the same thing as activism. On the other hand, I believe (and have heard this credibly affirmed by others) that its (re)readings of world literature from the standpoint of attention to environmental emplacement and environmental concern can have a public consciousness-raising effect, and all the more so when one considers the combined impact

of scholarship, non-specialist writing, public lecturing, and pedagogy in which most serious practicing ecocritics engage. Furthermore, engagement in such work is likely to reinforce for the ecocritic as well as some of his or her hearers, the motivation to engage in on-the-ground activist work. All that having been said, I am inclined to fall back on a haunting line in a poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Nor knowest thou what argument thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent." To measure the social impact of any intellectual intervention is tricky if not impossible. Here one can only hope.

Thank you.

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Andrea O'Reilly Herrera

Transnational Diasporic Formations: A Poetics of Movement and Indeterminacy

How many doors do you have to knock on
before you find your own?
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

As many theorists have noted, the realities of modern-day globalization, with its technological exchanges and circulation of people and all things popular and cultural, prevents us from maintaining stationary or exclusivist paradigms when analyzing transnational diasporic formations. As a result of this movement and circulation, "the immigrant, the exile, the tourist and the urban wanderer," Nicolas Bourriaud observes, "are the dominant figures of contemporary culture" (55-56).[1]

The Cuban diaspora—the primary focus of my scholarly and creative work—serves as an interesting case in which to explore and rethink the manner in which diasporic subjects self-identify, or are identified by others, in the context of movement and flux. In some sense, all Cuban diasporic discourses and cultural expressions measure, consciously or unconsciously, against a central absence. That absence is the island. Certain strains of this discourse share with other diasporic articulations the tendency to idealize the past; make nativist claims to *authentic* cultural, racial or ethnic, and/or national identity, and express a utopian sense of *patria* or homeland as a fixed and unchanging physical place

[1] See Nicolas Bourriaud's *The Radicant*, in which he discusses at length the manner in which a radicant aesthetic is unlike Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome (first developed in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Noting the rhizome's non-hierarchical and fluid structure, as well as its interconnected significations, Bourriaud nevertheless distinguishes this image from the radicant by pointing out that "unlike the rhizome, which is defined as a multiplicity that brackets out the question of the subject from the beginning, the radicant takes the form of a trajectory or path; the advance of a singular object…The radicant implies a subject, but one that is not reducible to a stable, closed, and self-contained identity. It exists exclusively in the dynamic form of its wandering and the contours of the circuit it describes, which are two modes of visibility. In other words, it is movement that ultimately permits the formulation of an identity…[it] views the self as constructed out of borrowings, citations, and proximities…[and] differs from the rhizome in its emphasis on the itinerary, the path, as a dialogical or inter-subjective narrative that unfolds between the subject and the surfaces it transverses, to which it attaches its roots to produce what might be termed an installation: one "installs oneself" in a place or situation in a makeshift or precarious way, and the subject's identity is nothing but the temporary result of this encampment, during which acts of translation are performed. Translation of a path into a local language, translation of oneself into a milieu—translation in both directions. Thus, the radicant subject appears as a construction or montage, in other words, as a work born of endless negotiation" (55-56). A huge thanks to my dear friend Cafetera Angela Valella for introducing me to Bourriaud's work.

of origin. Adhering to the teleology of origin and return, another common feature they share is the impulse to describe the experience of displacement in terms of constructing a temporary "home away from home" (Safran).[2] Defined as such, the condition of diaspora or exile, as postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha observes, "falls in the shadow" of an "idea" of nationhood that is fundamentally static and territorially or temporally defined (200-204).

In my previous writing on the Cuban scattering, I have argued consistently for a more nuanced, malleable paradigm that moves away from essentialist, and territorially and linguistically-based concepts of racial and/or ethnic, national, or cultural identification, and posits instead a poetics of movement, multilocality, and indeterminacy.[3] As an island—a geographical space with mutable and porous borders—Cuba has never been a fixed cultural, political, or geographical entity. In consequence of its strategic location, the island became a site of convergences, a place of migratory interactions, a circuit and receptacle for all manner of exchanges, some of which predate the first Spanish colonial interventions.[4] As a result, Cuban culture is stratified and striated by multiple and varied influences; the sea that circumscribes and ultimately defines the island suggests perennial fluidity, constant movement, and cross-pollination.

Just as Cuba and its people have absorbed and been transformed by diverse presences and cultural elements, it has also become a moveable nation, a traveling, prismatic site of rupture and continuity resulting from continuous out-migrations and scatterings. Rooted in both the indigenous and colonial pasts, the realities of migration and exile fundamentally inform and temper contemporary Cuban history and are the underlying conditions that inform the Cuban diasporic experience.[5] Cuba's cultural continuity, in turn, has always depended on a process of absorption, translation, transformation, and synthesis that has occurred in this context of movement. Thus, when speaking of present-day Cubans, one is referring simultaneously to those who reside on the island as well as to a multilocal population that has spread across the globe and now includes three generations born

[2] See William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return"; see also James Clifford's "Diasporas" in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. The text was originally published in *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-338.

[3] See my edited collections *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) and *Cuba:* Idea *of a Nation Displaced* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

[4] Precolonial Cuba was frequently the destination point, for example, for Caribs canoeing to the island from present-day Venezuela and Colombia. Indigenous groups, such as the Arawaks also migrated among the islands in the Caribbean.

[5] Following the conclusion of the Ten Years War (1868-1878), a cohort of separatists, as well as thousands who sought work outside of Cuba because of the economic depression that occurred in the aftermath of the war, left the island. Exiled separatists established themselves in various parts of the United States, Latin America, and Europe. The most prominent figure in this struggle was the renowned poet, journalist, and philosopher José Martí, the leader of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano y Puertorriqueño (Cuban and Puerto Rican Revolutionary Party).

outside Cuba following the 1959 revolution. The way to locate Cuba, therefore, is not simply by fixing one's gaze on the island, but also, as Tagore suggests, by "knocking on others' doors."

My most recent investigation into Cuban diasporic discourse, *Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora: Setting the Tent Against the House*, seeks to build upon and extend my previous work by developing a more creatively unstable theoretical approach to diasporic subjectivity—one that takes account of the fluid and shifting aspects of situated or contextual subjectivity, and troubles traditional concepts of spatiality yet remains rooted in the local and the historical.[6] Specifically, it rethinks transnational diasporic formations through the lens of visual cultural expression by interpreting the work of an expanding and alternating group of diasporic artists who participate in an evolving, itinerant, ongoing, and multi-media exhibition called *CAFÉ: The Journeys of Cuban Artists*.[7] The Cafeteros represent different generations, including several from the Cuban avant-garde, and some were actually born in the diaspora following the 1959 revolution or left the island as infants or young children.

Due in part to the multivalent social and political positionings and perspectives of the nearly forty artists I interviewed for this study, the various and oftentimes conflicting manner in which the Cafeteros self-identified served as an ideal metaphor by which to explore critical questions regarding the many and sometimes paradoxical ways diasporic subjects self-affiliate or situate themselves in the narratives of scattering and displacement. Although they were ostensibly linked by the realities of displacement, their positions were not identical as a result of a range of variable factors. In turn, the distinct responses to their work by critics and curators both on and off the island reveals the vastly different ways they are perceived and identified or categorized as a result of the fact that they are no longer residing on the island.

Taking account of and validating these various and frequently conflicting positionalities while allowing them to co-exist proved to be quite a feat. It required me to rethink transnational diasporic designations in a more relational as opposed to unified manner in order to orchestrate these artists' "contrapuntal" perspectives (to borrow Edward Said's term) within what proved to be a densely woven, kaleidoscopic narrative of displace-

[6] This essay is excerpted from the introduction to this book-length project: *Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora: Setting the Tent Against the House* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/hercba.html

[7] *CAFÉ*—an acronym for Cuban American Foremost Exhibitions—is curated by Cuban artist Leandro Soto and directed by his wife Grisel Pujalá. *CAFÉ* disrupts traditional western modes of curating art exhibits. Rather than having a fixed set of showings in predetermined institutional locations, the exhibit is itinerant and ongoing; its location is unplanned in advance, and exhibits may be presented in a wide range of venues. In other words, Leandro Soto does not know where the next showing will be located, and he does not have fixed ideas about whom he will include in future exhibits.

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ment and dislocation.[8] In considering the manner in which the Cafeteros self-identify or self-affiliate, I was confronted immediately with a myriad of discrepant historical and political accounts, and divergent articulations and renderings of the "real" and the "symbolic" island. These accounts reflected their variegated ideological and social or political positions as well as their diverse experiences and perspectives. More often than not, they pivoted on a range of questions regarding authenticity, such as: Who is a *real* Cuban? Who is more Cuban? Who can create Cuban art? Can Cuban art only be created on the island? If so, does it cease to be Cuban art if it is produced outside of Cuba?

A host of intersecting social determinations complicated individuals' experiences or memories of life on the island, for they were informed by the entangled relationships all diasporic Cubans have with the island. Churning in the mix were the experiences and expressions of Cub*ands*,[9] either born or raised outside the island, who claimed to possess a Cuban consciousness shaped by their *second-hand experience* of exile.[10] Though they are clearly aware of their unstable positioning in relation to other Cubans and their status in the diaspora, several Cafeteros insisted that they experience what Marianne Hirsch refers to as *post-memory*—the historical traumatic effects of dispersion that persist in haunting them through generations—like phantom limbs—at both the unconscious and conscious levels (22).[11] Some observed that they experience by association a profound and perpetual sense of cultural non-belonging, even though they were born or bred outside the island. They perceive themselves to be strangers in their own natal land searching for a cultural "home." Such a position suggests that having a nomadic, exilic, diasporic, or migratory perspective does not necessarily imply spatial movement. The

[8] Edward Said is cited in James Clifford's essay "Diasporas"; as Clifford observes, Said employs the term *contrapuntal* in reference to "an originality" or the "plurality" of the diasporic subject's position and perspective, which "gives rise to [a contrapuntal] awareness of simultaneous dimensions." For more on this subject, see Said's "Reflections on Exile," *Granta* 13 (1984): 171-172.

[9] Cub*ands* is an elastic and all-inclusive term I developed as a way of intervening in Cuban exile discourse. The term simultaneously takes account of the layered presences or nations that constitute Cuban culture (such as the taino, Spain, Africa, Ireland, France, the United States and the former Soviet Union, etc.) as well as allow room for the complex identities that are continuously rooting and re-rooting, translating and transforming in an ever-changing diasporic context, which is at once global and transnational. See my introduction to *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora*.

[10] In her essay "Los hijos del exilio Cubano y su literatura" ("The Children of the Cuban Exile and Their Literature"), Carolina Hospital accounts for this Cuban sensibility as an acquired phenomenon – a strict product of socialization and acculturation, which results from the external influence of kinship networks or extended communal associations. As Hospital puts it, "Some people ask how it is possible that... individuals who are either raised or born outside of Cuba can have a consciousness of exile. The answer resides in their participation in an exile community that has strong ties with the Cuban situation.… The works of these writers reflect a search for forms, images and themes that permit them to grow in this new experience of being between two cultures." See *Explicaci de Textos Literarios* 16 (2) (1987): 103-14.

[11] This portion of my introduction was first presented in a sustained piece titled "'Inheriting' Exile: Cuban-American Writers in the Diaspora," *Contemporary U.S. Latino/a Literary Criticism*, ed. Lyn Di Iorio Sandín and Richard Perez (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 283-323.

emphasis then is not so much on locating "home," but on the process of "voyaging" (to borrow Evelyn O'Callaghan's term) amid multiple identities and worlds; in other words, the journey itself *is* "home".[12]

An additional, overarching challenge lay in addressing the paradoxical notion that historical and cultural continuity coexist with movement, variation, and change—the idea that difference always resides alongside continuity (Hall 228).[13] Globalization, Nicolas Bourriaud observes, has shattered our very notion of space. The discourses of diaspora must, therefore, be modified and adapted when speaking about the experiences of the displaced, the "unhomed" or *desterrados*. "What is at stake," diaspora theorist James Clifford points out, "is a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling and traveling: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling" (228).

An attendant difficulty lay in the need to smith vocabulary elastic enough to capture all of the possible modalities of placement and displacement, rootedness and movement, without losing meaning altogether. As suggested at the outset of this essay, the Cuban diasporic experience has been structured rhetorically according to highly politicized, bicameral and binary concepts demarcating home and nation.[14] In the process, the misleading dichotomy of island or diaspora, of the here/*aquí* or the there/*allí*, has been established as an oppositional category. The emphasis in much dominant Cuban diasporic discourse both on and off the island, therefore, has been on territorial claims to both nationhood and culture.

Clearly, the term diaspora "offer[s] an alternative 'ground' to that of the territorial state," as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin note, and the concept enables scholars (such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy)[15] to move away from essentialist claims about culture, race, ethnicity, and nationhood (Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diasporas* 10; Edwards 82). Nevertheless, as Brent Hayes Edwards points out, the term has been applied both liberally and loosely. Currently, he stresses, no word adequately takes stock of the divergent

[12] This passage is partially excerpted from my essay "The Politics of MisRemembering: History, Imagination and the Recovery of the *Lost Generation*," which appears in my edited collection *Cuba:* Idea *of a Nation Displaced*, 177-193.

[13] Gilroy uses this phrase throughout *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. I am adapting Stuart Hall's claim in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" that difference "persists—in and alongside continuity."

[14] Brent Hayes Edwards makes the same point in his entry in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*.

[15] The Birmingham scholars (associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, England), such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, began to define culture within a diasporic framework in order to draw attention to what one scholar terms the "absolutism" that defines culture as a racial, ethnic, or national essence. As my colleague, Carole Woodall observes, Gilroy "put forth the Black Atlantic as a unit of cultural analysis in order to reveal formations of distinctly transnational subjectivities beyond the dictates of distinct national or political cultures." For more information, see Brent Hayes Edwards's "The Uses of Diaspora." *Social Text* 66 (2001): 45-73.

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experiences and responses to scattering as well as the different circumstances that have prompted individuals or groups to leave their respective homelands.[16] Edwards' claim would indeed hold true in respect to the Cuban case. The preeminent diaspora scholars William Safran and James Clifford, for example, fail to consider fully the significance or role of multigenerational transmissions of cultural memory, especially as they pertain to future generations.[17] Neither do they allow for the possibility of sustaining multiple, transnational identifications, or take into account in any profound manner the generations claiming a vicarious cultural consciousness and memory.[18]

Rather than attempting to mint or coin a new term or phrase in an effort to clarify my particular positioning regarding the diasporic condition, my inclination is to de-clutter with the aim of avoiding altogether the limitations that yet a new tag would impose on the experience of displacement. In this manner, I preempt an essentialist approach to identity with-

[16] As Edwards observes, contemporary usages of the term *diaspora* emphasize an idea of movement that is self-contained, and current appropriations tend to conflate related yet distinct terms such as *exile*, *scattering*, *migration*, *transnationalism*, *immigration*, *expatriation*, *minority* or *refugee* status, and racial or ethnic difference. See his *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*.

[17] William Safran—expanding on Walker Connor's definition that a diaspora consists of "that segment of a people living outside the homeland"—defines a diaspora as follows (though it is well rehearsed, it bears repeating): expatriate minority communities whose members or ancestors: 1) have been dispersed from an original "center" to two or more "peripheral" or foreign regions; 2) retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and, therefore, feel partly alienated and insulated from it; (4) regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; (5) believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) continue to relate, personally or vicariously to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. Safran's definition—like James Clifford's—tends to emphasize what appear to be essentialist territorial claims to culture and nation, and deemphasize the relational aspects of diasporic self-identification or categorization. Safran's definition is noteworthy in its acknowledgment of multigenerational transmissions of diasporic memory; nevertheless, it falls short of developing any deep discussion regarding this sector of the diasporic population. Though Clifford regards Safran's paradigm as exclusivist and calls for a less rigidly defined concept of diaspora—a definition that accounts for transnational identity formations and points up the relationship between mobility and stasis—his work disregards altogether the significance of the generations born in diaspora. See "The Impact of Homelands on Diasporas," in *Modern Diaporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1986), 16-46 [cited in Safran's essay "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," 83-84].

[18] As I point out in the introduction to my edited collection *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora*, a number of Cubans with whom I interacted objected to my use of the term diaspora entirely. The primary reason for their objection is the idea that the term suggests scattering or dispersal and thereby contradicts their perception that this movement of people has a center. Not surprisingly, those who expressed discontent were from Miami, which contains the largest portion of the Cuban diasporic population. Certain sectors of the Cuban population residing outside the island have gained considerable political clout in the United States; as a result, they feel entitled to claim a representative status in the dominant narrative regarding the post-1959 exodus. In my edited collection *Cuba*: Idea *of a Nation Displaced*, I consciously and intentionally de-centered Miami in order to interrupt what has become a monopoly on Cuban diasporic discourse. In this manner, I attempted to dispel the illusion of a coherent national, cultural, and/or political vision. For a discussion of the various ways in which the generations born or raised outside the island claim a vicarious cultural consciousness and memory, see my essay "The Politics of MisRemembering: History, Imagination, and the Recovery of the *Lost Generation*" in *Cuba*: Idea *of a Nation Displaced*, 176-193.

out endorsing a relativist or dogmatic universalist analysis. In addition, I skirt the possibility of obscuring once again the variations that occur within all scatterings, or leveling individual or group experiences. Rather, I apply a relational, multi-axis analysis in order to capture the movement of culture, history, and memory across time and borders. "A relational analysis," Ella Shohat tells us, "address[es] the operative terms and axis of stratification typical of specific contexts, along with the ways these terms and stratifications are translated and reinvoiced as they 'travel' from one context to another" (11).

Though I continue to employ terms such as *diaspora*, *scattering*, *migration*, *exodus*, and *exile* throughout my study, I do so with caution and consciousness regarding their nuanced meanings and histories. I also avoid using the concept of identity as an analytical tool, especially as it relates to the contructivist, postmodern stance that treats identity as being in a constant state of flux, with no stable points of reference or connection. I suppress the impulse to treat identity as a concept that suggests some essence or core of allegedly foundational aspects of selfhood. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper point out, identity has also become a "hopelessly ambiguous" and frequently reductive and essentialist term.[19] In their seminal work, they propose alternative, processual and active analytical idioms, such as "identification, self-understanding" (17),[20] and *categorization*—terms considerably less encumbered by conflicting meanings, which resist reifying essentialist categories or definitions.[21] Such terminology allows for fluidity, variability, and indeterminacy, at the same time that it indicates locality and situated subjectivity.

Finally, I consciously steer away from the label postmodern, and tend toward Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of the *altermodern*. "Postmodernism," he writes:

> resembles a mode of thought based on mourning, a long depressive episode of cultural life…. This melancholy posture constitutes the first period of postmodernism: it is characterized by an intensive citing of identifiable forms from the history of art as well as by the theme of the 'simulacrum,' in which image replaces reality in reality it-

[19] Many thanks to my colleague Walter Kusters for bringing attention to Brubaker and Cooper's essay "Beyond 'Identity.'"

[20] "The term 'self-understanding,'" Brubecker and Cooper note, "is not meant to imply a distinctively modern or Western understanding of the 'self' as a homogenous, bounded, unitary entity.... In some settings, people may understand and experience themselves in terms of a grid of intersecting categories; in others, in terms of a web of connections of differential proximity and intensity" (17).

[21] Brubaker and Cooper sketch out five common usages of the term identity that are frequently at odds with one another. "Clearly, the term 'identity' is made to do a lot of work," they observe. "It is used to highlight non-instrumental modes of action; to focus on self-understanding rather than self-interest; to designate sameness across persons or sameness across time; to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects of selfhood; to deny that such core, foundational aspects exist; to highlight the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collective self-understanding; and to stress the fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of 'self,' a self unstably patched together through shards of discourse and contingently 'activated' in differing contexts" (8).

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> self.… The second period of postmodernism, in which melancholy gives way to multiculturalism, is born at the end of the Cold War…. The modernist master narrative now gives way to that of globalization: by opening to cultures and artistic traditions other than those of the Western world, postcolonial postmodernism followed the path opened up by the world economy and ushered in a global reexamination of the conceptions of space and time that will remain its historical legacy. (182)

Heralding a new century, Bourriaud calls for an alternative model that emerges from an era "defined by the prefix 'post,'" which united "the most disparate domains of thought within the experience of a single, undifferentiated "afterward." "It is this prefix, 'post-' that will ultimately turn out to have been the great myth of the end of the twentieth century," he claims. "It points to the nostalgia for a golden age at once admired and hated. It refers to a past event that supposedly cannot be surpassed…a mode of thought that is inherently reliant on, even captive to, the origin" (183).

Nicolas Bourriaud critiques the very notion of multiculturalism in a similar fashion, arguing that the term connotes "a system for distributing meaning that assigns individuals to their social demands, reduces their being to their identity, and repatriates all meaning toward an origin regarded as political revealer." Rather, he opts for the prefix "alter," which points toward the end of the "culture of the 'post-'" and is, on the contrary, associated with the notion of the "alternative" and of "multiplicity." "More precisely," Bourriaud writes, "'alter' designates a different relationship with time no longer the aftermath of a historical moment, but the infinite extension of the kaleidoscopic play of temporal loops in the service of a vision of history as a spiral, which advances while turning back on itself" (186). Altermodernity embodies a "nonlinear modernity" that ultimately releases us from what Bourriaud describes as "the tyranny of an illusion, that of Western progressive modernism" (186).

Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora also intentionally moves away from definitions or theoretical paradigms that regard mobility and stability as mutually exclusive terms, or privilege stasis over mobility. "The person who finds his homeland sweet," Hugh of St. Victor tells us,

> is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign place. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong person has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. (qtd. in Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 335)[22]

[22] Hugh of St. Victor was a medieval philosopher, theologian, and mystical writer born in Saxony, France in 1096. My colleague, Jan McVicker, pointed out his quotation after learning about my project.

In emphasizing the positive aspects of movement and translocality, Hugh of St. Victor defies a host of conventional assumptions regarding territoriality and nationhood. Rather than stressing loss or displacement and casting them in a negative light, he envisions the individual who belongs—at once—everywhere and nowhere as powerful and free.

Although some of the Cafeteros interviewed in my study stress the destructive aspects of dislocation and rupture, for many movement functions as a mode of cultural survival as well as a potent form of resistance. It promises, moreover, accumulated knowledge, and oftentimes serves as a source of creative potential and fecund possibility. Consequently, my project examines the strategic advantages of multi-rootedness and translocality. At the same time, it strives to maintain an acute awareness of the potential "dangers of detachment"—what Edward Said characterized as "disorienting loss" and the "crippling sorrow of estrangement"—as well as the reality that many Cuban migrants or émigrés cannot choose to return to the island.[23]

Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora thus offers an alternative or altered concept of nomadism that simultaneously suggests a kind of *weightlessness* or detachment from physical spaces at the same time that it promotes the idea of being rooted in multiple places.[24] Though nomadism is generally understood as "dispens[ing] altogether with the idea of a fixed home or center," it is traditionally defined as a state of being "without the hope or dream of a homeland."[25] The aesthetic formula of nomadism that I propose recasts this definition. It is liberatory, on the one hand, in its emphasis on movement and

[23] A special thanks goes to my colleague Søren Frank for reminding me of Said's now famous expressions. See Said's critical work *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*.

[24] As Søren Frank observes, "migration is the defining characteristic of contemporary life," and "the migrant", he adds (quoting Salman Rushdie), is a person "without frontiers…the archetypal figure of our age." In an unpublished essay titled "Globalization and the Migrant Writer," presented in abbreviated form at the Migration and Intercultural Identities in Relation to Border Regions (19th & 20th Centuries) Conference in Kortrijk, Belgium (May 2010), Frank discusses the mutually dependent phenomenon of globalization and migration and its bearing on world literature. He begins his analysis with a discussion of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's concept of the "elimination of the dimension of space" as a consequence of the electronic age. Frank argues that "migration literature, or *Weltliteratur*, cosmopolitanism, and Europe are all particular instances of the growing independence of particular spaces, but also that they are characterized by reactions of inertia which make them reconnect with dimensions of space." Gumbrecht's characterization of globalization as "a growing spacelessness" underlies Frank's discussion of the migrant's "practice of weightlessness" or "bodilessness" as s/he moves from space to space. Though he cautions against the dangers of detachment from history, language, and territory, Frank emphasizes the potentially libratory aspects of being simultaneously "patriotic and cosmopolitan, rooted and weightless, shaded in local colors and movable in global corridors." For more on this topic, see Gumbrecht's essay "A Negative Anthropology of Globalization" in *The Multiple Faces of Globalization*, ed. Francisco González (Madrid: BBVA, 2009), 230-241.

[25] As John Durham Peters notes, the concept of nomadism was "born metaphorical." Traditionally it has been characterized according to two competing forms: as a threat to the state, a case of "dangerous romantic projection"; or as a "dream of radical liberty," an affront to dogmatism and a "subversion of set conventions". See Peters' discussion of nomadism in "Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon," in Hamid Naficy's edited collection *Home, Exile, Homeland*, 18-41.

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detachment much like Hugh of Saint Victor's concept and akin to the Taoist notion of "impermanence" or "indifference to the world." Embedded in this aesthetic is a particular concept of weightlessness posited by my colleague Søren Frank and based on Han's Ulrich Gumbrecht's characterization of "globalization as a growing spacelessness" (i.e., the gradual "elimination of the dimensions of space" as a consequence of the electronic age).[26] In spite of its insistence on itinerancy and transience, my approach to nomadism is also grounded in a concept of "doubleness" that involves rooting and rerooting, continuity, and as Frank puts it, the simultaneous "elimination and recuperation" of "space." It permits, moreover, a form of "rooted cosmopolitanism" (to borrow Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept) that allows diasporic subjects to "transport their roots" and thereby remain connected to the homeland.[27]

Nicolas Bourriaud perhaps best expresses this seemingly paradoxical possibility in his discussion of *radicant* art. In his critical work *The Radicant*, he describes a "zone of turbulence" in which "aesthetic canons upon which contemporary criticism is based are shattered." According to this vision, instability is valorized above the structure of "circumscribed territories" offered by various media (and other institutional sources one might add) —a notion that ultimately perpetuates what Salman Rushdie refers to as the "conservative myth designed to keep us in our places."[28] "The immigrant, the exile, the tourist, and the urban wanderer," Bourriaud writes:

> [they] resemble those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them, as ivy does. Ivy belongs to the botanical family of the radicants, which develop their roots as they advance, unlike the radicals, whose development is determined by their being anchored in a particular soil…. They grow their secondary roots alongside their primary one. The radicant develops in accord with its host soil. It conforms to the latter's twists and turns and adapts to its surfaces and geological features. It translates itself in terms of the space in which it moves. With its at once dynamic and dialogical signification, the adjective 'radicant' captures this contemporary subject, caught between the need for connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other. It defines the subject as an object of negotiation. (55-56)

[26] Frank affirms a notion first set out by Edward Said that the migrant lives "a contrapuntal life," and that her/his "condition of spacelessness" is simultaneously rooted to and detached from particular spaces.

[27] See Appiah's seminal work "Cosmopolitan Patriots" in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 91-114.

[28] Thanks once again goes to Søren Frank for bringing my attention to Rushdie's quote. See Rushdie's *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995).

The art featured in *CAFÉ* articulates a very particular radicant aesthetic that relates directly to the conditions of dislocation and non-belonging fundamental to the Cafeteros' experiences. Although I explore their connections to past generations of Cuban artists, in stressing movement, displacement, and itinerancy the Cafeteros resist the possibility of being defined or categorized solely in relation to Cuba or to its art legacy, for their work embodies the radicant tendency to re-root in the act of translating, negotiating, transforming, and synthesizing new cultural elements. At the same time, the Cafeteros retain their "primary roots" in the act of preserving certain identifiable elements that remain anchored or located in specific historical, cultural, or local or geographical contexts.

Throughout his work, Nicolas Bourriaud reminds us that translation is fundamentally "a practice of displacement." Giving a new spin on the idea of artistic appropriation and translation, which is oftentimes regarded as negative, he points out that the act of transfer "sets in motion" signs that were "strictly codified" and seemingly "fixed." It "presents the foreign in a familiar form" in what one may characterize as a search for points of connection or similarity, and seeks out patterns of *repetition* as defined by both Cuban theorist Antonio Benítez-Rojo and Bourriaud, as opposed to sameness, mimicry, and replication.[29] Yet it simultaneously connotes newness in the spiral trajectory that it fol-

[29] In terms of specific methodology, *Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora* concentrates on the slippage that occurs between the synchronic and the diachronic by weighing Cuba's sociopolitical history against what Antonio Benítez-Rojo describes as the *poly-rhythmic* cultural *repetitions* or *constants* that have occurred outside the island. In *The Repeating Island* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), Benítez-Rojo proposes a concept of *repetition* that is not mimetic in the Borgesian or Proustian sense (i.e., that events, memories, or experiences can be replicated across time), but, rather, allows for paradox and difference amid regularity. "I have emphasized the word," he writes: "because I want to give the term the almost paradoxical sense with which it appears in the discourse of Chaos, where every repetition is a practice that necessarily entails a difference and a step toward nothingness according to the principle of entropy proposed by thermodynamics in the last century); however, in the midst of this irreversible change, Nature can produce a figure as complex, as highly organized, and as intense as the one that the human eye catches when it sees a quivering hummingbird drinking from a flower." In Benítez-Rojo's view, these cultural *constants* somehow constitute a protean ensemble of identifiable elements passed down through generations both on and off the island. "Within this chaos of difference and repetitions, of combinations and permutations," he tells us, "there are regular dynamics that co-exist."
Seemingly expanding on Benítez-Rojo's concept of *repetition*, Nicolas Bourriaud observes in a meditation on contemporary, *postproduction* art (art that has neither an origin nor a metaphysical destination): "Repetition in time is called a rerun or *réplique*—a replica, a reply. And the term *réplique*, 'aftershock,' is also used to refer to the tremor(s) following a major earthquake. These aftershocks, more or less attenuated, distanced, and similar to the first, belong to the original, but they neither repeat it or nor constitute entirely separate events. The art of postproduction is a product of this notion of *réplique* (replication, reply): the work of art is an event that constitutes the replication and reply to another work or a preexisting object; distant in time from the original to which it is linked, this work nonetheless belongs to the same chain of events. It is located on the precise wavelength of the original earthquake, putting us back in touch with the energy from which it sprang while at the same time diluting it in time, that is, ridding it of its character as an historical fetish" (174).
Throughout my study, I consciously borrow Benítez-Rojo's and Bourriaud's concepts and terminology; yet in addition to echoing their concepts of *repetition* and *réplique*, my usage of the terms also draws upon the British Romantic concept of spiral return. In other words, the notion that during the course of travel or

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lows, for one can never fully recapture or recuperate the original. In other words, translation "inserts" the work of art "into a chain," thus "diluting its origin" (without eradicating it entirely) in "multiplicity" and "asserting the indeterminacy of any code, of rejecting any source code that would seek to assign a single origin to works and texts" (Bourriaud 131). Images and signs are thus never truly static or frozen, hermetically sealed, insulated, or circumscribed. In the act of destabilizing signs, the diasporic artist extends their meaning in an endless, non-linear continuum, in the same way that the transnational diasporic subject extends her or his cultural and national affiliation.

Ultimately, the idea of being rooted but weightless—coupled with the notion that identify is contingent and relational at the same time that it is localized and positioned—acts as a kind of anecdote for the sense of non-belonging expressed by so many Cub*ands*, including those born or raised outside the island. This approach allows the psychically or physically displaced person to maintain simultaneously a sense of connection with the homeland and feel "at home" everywhere. In effect, it transforms the feeling of non-belonging into "double belonging" to borrow Frank's term, or in the case of many of the Cafeteros, "multi-belonging", as Lucy R. Lippard would phrase it.[30] Such an approach expands on the idea that Cuban culture and all of its expressions are, and always have been, simultaneously portable and solidly grounded.[31] Reflecting this aspect of the Cuban condition, my approach to Cuban diasporic subjectivity and cultural formation envisions the island and its culture as a moveable tent (as the subtitle of my work suggests), as opposed to the stationary concept of a house or home.[32] In this way, it strives to *extinguish* the urge to locate one's understanding of culture and nation in "one spot in the world" (Kearney).[33]

voyaging we are permanently altered, thus we can never return to a place of origin in the exact same psychological, emotional, or even physical state.

[30] See Lippard's discussion of the multiple sense of place in *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

[31] As Eric Gary Anderson points out in a discussion of American Indian space, temporality, and movement, "migrations are, paradoxically, constants" in many cultures, though all native groups are deeply tied to the earth. The idea that movement is a mode of survival—that movement is knowledge and power—is an ancient concept that defies conventional western concepts regarding property or ownership, and is widely embraced by many Native-American or indigenous groups. While discussing this topic, a colleague pointed out that a critical difference between the Native experience and that of diasporic Cubans is the idea that many Cubans cannot return to their native land, whereas nomadic or migratory Native-American groups generally followed seasonal migration patterns in order to locate food sources. As a result, they often returned to the same locations. Nevertheless, when read in the context of relocation, one can imagine the parallels that can be drawn among these groups. See *Indian Literature & the Southwest*, 17.

[32] See Peters' extensive discussion of the etymology of the term "tent" and the manner in which it has endured as a sign in "Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora," 24-28. In "Framing Exile," Hamid Naficy points out that any traditional notion of home involves legal categories such as rights, property, and possession as well as their opposite (5-6).

[33] I am consciously appropriating Richard Kearney's term, which appears in the title of his critical work *Post-nationalist Ireland, Politics, Culture, Philosophy*. In the same vein, I am borrowing and inverting Harry

Finally, general principles expressed in quantum physics have offered a form of intuitionistic logic that gave me new ways to think about nomadic diasporic identifications and cultural expressions, for certain threads of its particular discourse admit the possibility that multiple "realities" or states of being can co-exist.[34] This particular theory relies on a concept of nonlocality that is less concerned with determining the exact physical location or state of a particle or object at any given moment than with the probability of where it might or can be located in both physical and temporal terms.

As I have suggested at the outset of this piece, the diasporic condition operates on the quantum principles of translocality and positionality. Loosely akin to the concept of nonlocality, the identifications that Cuban diasporic artists assume and the conceptual spaces they inhabit are multiple. At the same time, their understanding of self is always measured inadvertently against the "absent presence" that is the island. In this sense their art, represented in each manifestation of *CAFÉ*, simultaneously signifies and collapses the geographical distances between the *here* and the *there*, and thereby presents an uncanny *repetition* of the island, which defies traditional cartographical conventions regarding spatiality. It articulates, moreover, the manner in which one reconstitutes, translates, and transforms the self in diaspora; and emphasizes the role these artists play in producing alternative cartographies as they re-create or re-imagine space in response to a non-linear modernity.[35]

Recent trends in quantum thought also posit the notion that "something that happens now is affected by something that happens in the future" (qtd. in Begley 49). This possibility bespeaks the sense of contemporaneity or cross-temporality implicit in the various presentations of Cuban diasporic art of which I speak in *Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora*, for each exhibition heralds the future at the same time that it invokes both the

Berger, Jr.'s phrase "set the house against the tent," which is quoted in and drawn from a discussion of the Mosaic and Davidic covenants in Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin's essay "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity."

[34] The quantum version of the double- or two-slit experiment, in which a single photon is seen passing through two slits in a screen simultaneously, provides a good example, as does the paradoxical "thought experiment", Schrödinger's Cat.

[35] The French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre was one of the first theorists to explore what he termed the "production of space" (*The Production of Space*; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991). He questioned the "binary logic" of how we understand spatiality and proposed a concept of "spatial variability" that examines the relationship among historicality, sociality, and spatiality. Among other things, Lefebvre considered the "multiple meanings of space" and the "interplay between the social and the spatial." Lefebvre's concepts have been expanded on by theorists such as Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and Jean Baudrillard, as well as more contemporary scholars such as Dorothy Hayden, Doreen Massey, Monika Kaup, and Mary Pat Brady. Other prominent figures engaged in "re-envisioning" traditional concepts of spatiality include Edward W. Soja, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Trinh T. Minh-ha. I wish to express my gratitude to my dear friend and colleague Ewa Antoszek for introducing me to the work of several of these critics including Hayden, Massey, Kaup, and Soja. See Antoszek's unpublished dissertation *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings* (2010).

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present and the cultural and historical past. These collective aspects of quantum thought—of an infinitely malleable idea of interstitial spatiality, contemporaneous existence and momentum, and the possibility that the present and the future not only interface but overlap—have allowed me more than any other conceptual framework to problematize and imagine an alternative perspective regarding the transnational diasporic formations as well as what one critic terms Euro-Americans' "imaginary constructions of space, land, time, and history" (Anderson 38).

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Eliud Martínez

A Writer's Perspective on Multiple Ancestries: An Essay on Race and Ethnicity

As an American of Mexican ancestry—a Chicano novelist—who came to adulthood in the fifties, I lived the first sixty-five years of my life in the twentieth century. Growing up in Austin, Texas, I learned in junior high school in the 1940s about what scholars call Texan Anglo and Texan Mexican conflicts. When I was a child, our Mexican parents used to call the Texan Anglos *americanos*. We were *mexicanos*. The *americanos* that we knew and those who went to school with us were poor people like us. Some differences were that some had blond hair and blue eyes, and the rubicund working men received higher pay than our Mexican fathers for doing the same construction work. Our *mexicano* fathers could never hope to supervise the blond-haired men.

Even as an elementary school child, long before I heard them called "white people", I was attentive to the *americano* children's nationalities; my little classmates' parents were of German, Czech, Polish, English and Irish *ancestry*.

I emphasize *ancestry*, because due to international and postcolonial migrations national identities have become unreliable. In addition, people of different nations may or may not share common *multiple ancestries* and, at the same time, observe different cultural traditions and religions. *Genes and chromosomes, however, cut across national, cultural, and religious borders.* This is true of postcolonial England and France, and of Middle Eastern, Arabic, Latin American and other countries.

In junior high school, as I have said, I learned about some of the causes of Anglo and Mexican conflicts. When I was a child, only a few miles away from the elementary school that I attended, at another elementary school—Zavala in East Austin—American teachers were washing out children's mouths for speaking Spanish. Teachers were making children write on the board fifty or a hundred times that they would not speak Spanish on school premises.

In doing so, the teachers were making the children ashamed of being Mexican, their language and culture, and psychologically, of themselves. Of even greater importance, the teachers were making the young *mexicanos* hate *americanos*—"white" Americans. I learned of this anger and hatred from barrio Chicanos in junior high school.

Also, beginning with my joint appointment in Chicano Studies and Latin American Studies at UC Riverside, California, in 1972, I learned from Chicano students in my university classes that historically this pattern of making *mexicano* children ashamed of their identity and hating Anglos was repeated long before the 1940s in countless places where large concentrations of Americans of Mexican ancestry have lived. Much Barrio poetry and theater of the 1960s published in anthologies such as *Voices of Aztlán*: *Chicano Literature of Today*, edited by Dorothy E. Harth and Lewis M. Badwin (NY: New American Library, 1974), and fictional novels such as *Pocho* by Antonio Villarreal (1959; NY: Anchor, 1970 ed.) and *Chicano* by Richard Vásquez (NY: Doubleday, 1970) deal with images of Chicanos and Mexican culture based on elements of our population in the U.S. that have been stereotyped.

Consequently, it no longer surprises me that today some people find it hard to believe when I tell them that the Texas teachers of my childhood and adolescence were wonderful, enlightened women. Each taught a different subject, and she knew it excellently. Being a person whose aim in life turned out to be to make all realms of knowledge my domain, I am nevertheless skeptical about multiple subject teaching credentials in the public schools. As one who has read internationally—novels, poetry, plays, historical and social sciences scholarly works—I am also skeptical about specialization. Given today's emphasis on testing and teaching to the test, my feeling is that education today discourages knowledge, creativity, and imagination.

I was fortunate to attend Palm Elementary School in Austin, Texas. From the third grade, an international program remains vivid in my memory. I remember standing on stage, facing an auditorium that was filled with teachers and children from the first to the sixth grade. Long before race and ethnicity became important subjects of study, the objective of the school program was to learn about cultures and nations of the world.

I was one of about twenty students selected to give a short, rehearsed talk. We all marched up to the stage one at a time, and, with a curtain behind us, we stood in line at the front of the stage, looking out on the audience, each of us holding the flag of a different nation. Individually, each of us began by telling the audience which country's flag we were holding and saying something about the country, the people, and its industries. I was assigned the flag of Czechoslovakia.

Except for Miss Herrera, our elementary school teachers had German, Irish and English last names. They were wonderful women, I repeat, and not a one ever made me feel ashamed of speaking Spanish or of being Mexican. Had they made me ashamed of my language, I might never have learned French and Italian.

I spoke only Spanish when I started school in first grade. Other Mexican children already spoke English and Spanish, and I am confident that their doing so helped me

a great deal. In my case, one morning it seems, I woke up and I could speak English and Spanish. I do not remember learning English, but I remember that in first grade—at Bickler Elementary School—the teacher had us reading Jack and Jill books and nursery rhymes, aloud. I remember the excellence of my teachers. I was insatiably curious and eager to learn.

My childhood education was truly joyful. My father, a man with a superb third-grade education at a village school in Mexico, was my first great teacher. When I was eight years old he began to teach me how to read and write Spanish from the Spanish language newspaper *La Prensa de San Antonio*. He would bring me books in both languages. Without fluency in reading and writing Spanish, I might never have studied in 1960 and 1961, for two years in Mexico at UNAM, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. In fourth grade, I found Saturdays and Sundays unbearably long because I was in love with a teacher in her twenties.

In those days, from elementary to high school, each teacher was a specialist in her subject (I had no male teachers until high school). At the beginning of class periods, before making assignments, teachers used to go over homework for the next day. In elementary school, I remember vividly, teachers were always helpful when we were doing our homework. We could go up to the teacher for individual help, if our homework presented difficulties. I remember completing homework in class very often. Teachers used to collect homework and they used to take it home to correct. The next day they would return our homework, corrected and graded. We also had study periods when we could do our homework.

Educational reform would benefit greatly from teachers like mine. Having a different, excellent teacher for each subject made for education of the highest quality. Infinitely curious, I loved the separate class in fourth grade on spelling and penmanship. In English classes beginning in third grade, I loved doing *correct* grammar exercises, identifying parts of speech and diagramming sentences. We were cautioned about overusing contractions and we were taught about auxiliary verbs. Word problems and fractions in mathematics were challenging and enjoyable; and learning about Alaska and Canada in social studies class opened our eyes to geography and people from other parts of the world and their cultures. In fourth grade, we also had a fascinating class that opened up the world of science. Art, from the very beginning in first grade, was my favorite subject. From first grade on, I loved the smells of classrooms, of books, chalk, glue, desks; and at the pencil sharpener, the mingled smells of pencil wood shavings, lead and machine oil. I remember buying my first fountain pen. The hissing sound of steam radiators in wintertime stays with me. In spring I would gaze out of classroom windows and daydream. I was alive with all of my child's senses.

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As a novelist I have written fictionally of some of these experiences. From first grade on, I was an all A student. Teachers praised me. In elementary school, I learned that each of the subjects we were being taught had its own systematic methods and orderliness. I never cease to look back with awe and wonder at how each teacher was in command of her discipline. I cannot sufficiently emphasize that *learning was joyfully systematic and incremental*. I was a student with an insatiable appetite for joyful learning that later influenced my university teaching. I knew as a professor that young people performed better when they loved what they were learning.

On a personal note, I was fascinated by girls and women. Until under-graduate university days, after serving in the military, when I had started dating young women of German ancestry, with much self-consciousness, I thought all people of German ancestry hated Mexicans. Military service in the 1950s opened my eyes. In the 1960s, when I was in my middle twenties, I was a dropout graduate student. Living in Chicago and in New York City in those years, I received letters from my father, who now and then would ask if people where I was living hated Mexicans like they did in Texas during his young years. It surprised both of us that they did not.

In 1960s Chicago, however, I experienced a little discrimination from poor people with blue-blue eyes from the American South, and in 1967, in New York from a Jewish automobile insurance agent (who apologized for company policy), because to the former I appeared to be Puerto Rican, and to the latter, because of my last name I was to be treated like a Puerto Rican insurable risk. (One of my unpublished short stories is called "Those Blue-blue Eyes.")

I also have childhood memories from the 1940s regarding people of African ancestry. We Mexicans could sit anywhere in regular movie theatres in Austin, Texas. However, in one movie theater, the Ritz, there was an upstairs section for "colored people," as they were called at the time. Many years later, after becoming a professor, I learned that in other parts of Texas, and in places like Pasadena, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino in California, Mexicans were also segregated in swimming pools, movie theatres, and schools. But the first clear message about "white" racism towards blacks came to me in 1954, shortly after the news about Brown vs. Board of Education, the Supreme Court decision that ended segregated education legally.

Stationed in Japan during military service in 1954, I was part of a company of good old "white boys" from the American South. We were eighteen- and nineteen-year-old boys wanting to be men. One of them asked me shortly after the news came on the radio if I would want my sister to sit next to "niggers" and "colored guys" in school. To them I was not black. I was white like them, just of a darker complexion because I was Mexican. To me it was a surprise to learn then that some people had no preconceptions of

Mexicans. That was when military service opened my eyes about how others' perceptions influence one's self-perception.

Many years later, my affirmative action appointment, in Chicano Studies at UC Riverside in 1972 opened my eyes further. What I learned of affirmative action, on the basis of personal experience, during the years after my appointment made for a long story worthy of fiction. Much of my experience found its way into my novel *Voice-Haunted Journey* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 1990) and into other fictional writings, published and unpublished. My first publication as a pioneer Chicano scholar, "*I Am Joaquín* as Poem and Film: Two Modes of Chicano Expression" (*Journal of Popular Culture*, 13: 3, Spring 1980), explored the connections between Chicano and Mexican thought and the influence of the Mexican Revolution on both.

In my own experience and recollection, we Americans up to the 1950s used to identify ourselves according to national origin, except for African Americans. I remember that during military service in the 1950s we young men would ask one another: what is your nationality? Curious in a favorable sense about our differences, we responded that we were of German, Italian, Polish, Jewish, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Jewish, or Irish nationality. But African Americans were always *black*, *Negro*, or "colored."

The historical experience of Americans of African ancestry and the consciousness of color within their community have been dramatically captured by Kathe Sandler's 1993 documentary film, *A Question of Color*. I had known of Mexican color consciousness from my own upbringing, but I later discovered that consciousness of color is to be found among other groups as well, among Vietnamese Americans, for example. Sandler's film makes pointedly clear the different treatment people of African ancestry have received since the fifteenth century. Spaniards called Africans *negros*, the Spanish word for *black*. During slavery times in our country, English-speaking Americans of rural and uneducated backgrounds and even educated Americans from the South had difficulty pronouncing the Spanish word. I conjecture that they came up with *nigrah*, and that in American southern states this term later developed into its pejorative derivative, *nigger*.

I have found it instructive to examine as a historical process the evolution of identity terms for people of African ancestry. From the Spanish introduction of slaves to their colonies in the fifteenth century a rigid race and class system developed in Mexico and Latin America, with countless terms such as *mulato* and *coyote* for "race mixtures" deemed unfortunate.

In the U.S., across the colonial period and down to the present, the English term *negro* was followed by *colored people* (and sometimes *mulatto* and *quadroon*), back to *negro*, followed by *Negro* capitalized, and then by *Afro-American* and *Black American* at the time of the Civil Rights Movement, and finally, after 1988, the term coined by Jesse

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Jackson became *African American*. Identity was no longer racially based. At about the same time, Chicanos and people from other Latin American countries became *Hispanics* and *Latinos* in the U.S. The shift in self identity became cultural. In the case of U.S. Hispanics, the term was part of a commercial and political strategy.

I suggest that *colored people* is a term that recognizes the European slave masters' abuse of female slaves. In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass commented tellingly on the changing composition of the multitudes of slaves being born in the South, whose fathers, like his own, were slave masters. It is no wonder that they looked very different from the slaves that were brought from Africa. Their complexions and their features were different from the original African slaves. Some were "light-skinned" slaves, and in literature the theme of *passing* and its psychological consequences became pervasive. Somewhere, I once read that slaves with European ancestry married one another in order to preserve their "whiteness." In Mexico, the re-publication of *La población negra de México: Estudio Etnohistórico* (México: FCE, 1946, rpt. 1972) by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán created a controversy about Mexico's African ancestry (to my knowledge "The Black Population of Mexico" has not been translated into English). The bibliographies in books and online on slavery and race mixture in the U.S. and in Latin America are extensive.

In the U.S., the capitalization of the term *Negro* at the time of the Harlem Renaissance initiates a shift in the African American intellectual and cultural sensibility, towards favorable acceptance of the term imposed from without. Capitalized, as in W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, first published in 1903 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), *Negro* marks a conscious effort to instill pride in the African ancestry of descendants of slaves. It seems logical to me that the term *colored* made African Americans conscious of their European ancestries. The NAACP—the National Association of Colored People—was founded in 1910. Originally published in 1962, the French *Les poètes négres des États-Unis* by Jean Wagner, translated into English as *Black Poets of the United States: From Lawrence Dunbar to Langston Hughes* (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1973), is an exhaustive treatment of early African American poetry in general, and of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance in particular. The Harlem Renaissance produced a great many literary works that dealt with the themes of "race mixture" and "passing."

Years later, during the 1960s, educated African Americans launched the Civil Rights Movement. Other activist blacks launched the Black Power movement that set the example for the social movements of Chicano, Asian and Native Americans. During this decade and the next, spokesmen for these movements promoted *racial* identities, emphatically. Paradoxically, they picked terms that race thinkers had previously imposed on our groups—*black, brown, yellow,* and *red*—and inverted their value. And today the

pejorative term *colored people* has been replaced by the preferred positive term, *people of color*. Today, one finds in a work by Dominican writer Julia Alvarez a publication with the inverted positive term "*A White Woman of Color"* (in *Half and Half: Writers on Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural*, edited by Claudine Chiawei O'Hearn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998). A panel at a multi-ethnic conference raised the question not too long ago: are Asian Americans the new whites?

Discussions of race may or may not take into account the psychological significance of inverting negative perceptions into positive ones. The African American endorsement of a black racial identity was a defiant one, a psychologically complex response to race prejudice, denial of civil rights, social and educational inequality, and more. "Black is beautiful," they began to proclaim in the 1960s. They did not choose to be called a separate race. If that were the case, they were left with no choice but to take pride in their blackness. One wonders how many Americans have an acceptable acquaintance with the enormous contribution of enlightened, educated African Americans and by other diverse men and women to U.S. intellectual, cultural, and social life, and to literature and the arts.

Contribution by members of other cultural groups are equally impressive—East Indian, Lebanese, Greek, Italian, Mexican, and others. Think of the countless Nobel Prizes in Literature, too numerous to mention, to persons of many nations, whose works were not included in the *Norton Anthology of Western Literature*, until sometime in the 1990s, when it was renamed *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces.* The name changes from *Western* to *World*, plus the addition of *Masterpieces*, are very significant. Think only of two Pulitzer Prizes, one awarded in 1988 to African American Toni Morrison for her superb novel *Beloved* (1988), and another, awarded in 2000, to East Indian American Jhumpa Lahiri for the remarkable stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

In discussions of race and ethnicity in the U.S., identity terms raise questions about what they mean and circumscribe, and about what they leave out. Members within given groups disagree among themselves. *No spokesman of a group speaks for the entire group*. For example, as a collective term *African American* promotes unity, self-worth, and pride in *culture and ancestry* rather than in *race*. However, because of its associations with *race*, the term minimizes the *ancestral diversity* of the group and varieties of the African American experience. A Polish scholar, Ewa Luczak, has published an outstanding book on five African American expatriate writers—*How Their Living Outside America Affected Five African American Authors* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.). Her book also examines varieties of the African American experience and conflict within the group in the U.S. during the turbulent 1960s.

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Identity terms also raise questions and minimize the diverse multiple ancestries of other American groups and their particular cultural histories: Asian-American, Hispanic or Latino, Chicano, and Jewish American. For example, Asian Americans include people of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hawaiian and other ancestries. Young Koreans who know the story of how the Japanese enforced prostitution of young Korean comfort women and girls for Japanese soldiers resent the Japanese. In 1993 the Japanese government admitted using Korean girls for the sexual gratification of Japanese soldiers and apologized. Recently, on March 1, 2007, according to the local newspaper, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denied the forced sexual slavery. The actual story is told by George Hicks in *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997 ed.). Equally diverse, *U.S. Latinos* come from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Chile, El Salvador, Argentina, and from other countries as well. In addition to the indigenous ancestors of some Latinos and Hispanics, other of their ancestors came from the Mediterranean, where since ancient times diverse peoples have mingled their genes and chromosomes.

The most recent phenomenon in the U.S. is that there are Americans whose parents are Armenian and Mexican, Mexican and Irish, Japanese or Chinese and German, African American and Korean, Jewish and African American, Columbian and Swedish, Vietnamese and Japanese, Vietnamese and Polish. Why do people with Asian or African ancestry tend to classify themselves as Asian American or African American, respectively, even if they have European ancestors? For example, President Barack Obama identifies himself as *black* on the 2010 Census. For some people the *one-drop rule* appears to continue to prevail. In some cases the choice is not voluntary.

Nowadays, some young Americans of different European origins express dismay that they can claim no individual identifiable ancestry. In their own perceptions they are simply "white." They call themselves "mongrels," and that is not the case—despite what reputable historians such as Daniel Boorstin (*The Americans*, 3 vols.) and Arthur M. Schlesinger (*The Disuniting of America*, 1991) may say—because like a great many Americans these Americans too are people of multiple *European* ancestries, not of multiple *races*. It is sad when they feel left out or feel guilty for their ancestors' "white people's" racism. One young American author, Janet Fitch, has resolved this dilemma for many people of European ancestry. The twelve-year-old narrator of her novel, *White Oleander* (1999), has blonde hair and her name Astrid is taken from Norse legends. The novel expresses a favorable view of ancestry in many passages. For example, in the following passage, Astrid's mother says: "'We received our coloring from Norsemen,' she said. 'Hairy savages who hacked their gods to pieces and hung the flesh from trees. We

are the ones who sacked Rome. Fear only feeble old age and death in bed. Don't forget who you are.'"

When considering race and ethnicity in the U.S., other questions arise. What is a Jew? What is a Jewish American? There is some agreement among Jews and considerable disagreement. The argument that Jewish identity is not one of nationality is persuasive. My nationality is American, a Jewish person might say, who was born or naturalized in this country. But in the U.S. and all the countries of the Americas, are we not all *Americans*? Insisting that religion defines a Jew enjoys wide acceptance by practicing Jews, but what of Jews who do not observe Jewish religion? And what does it mean that children with Jewish mothers are Jewish, even if the fathers are not? According to Jewish tradition, the children of Jewish fathers and a non-Jewish mother are not Jews—why not? Do they not have Jewish ancestry?

People can change their nationalities and their religions, but they cannot change their genes and chromosomes—we cannot change our *ancestries, but ancestries can be combined*. Some Jews are Ashkenazim, others Sephardim, some are a combination of the two, and others identify themselves on the basis of birthplace and national origin; their citizenship may be Polish, Russian, German, Italian, Argentine, or Mexican. Other Latin American nations have Jews who are citizens of those nations by birth. To some Jews it does not matter that some of their ancestors were Jewish people. Jews, like many people in the arts, are citizens of the world.

Our genes and chromosomes cross national borders when our ancestors move. What does it mean to say, as Charles Chapman demonstrates in the *History of Spain* (founded on the multi-volume *Historia de España y de la Civilización Española* by Rafael Altamirano. New York: The Free Press, 1918), that some people from Mediterranean Spain (or Italy) have Jewish ancestry, as well as Arabic, Visigothic, Phoenician, Roman, and Greek ancestries? Consequently, Latinos, Hispanics and Mexicans are people of *multiple ancestries*. Carlos Fuentes, the Mexican novelist, says in *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1959) that "Mexico is a thousand countries with a single name." The main character of the novel is Artemio Cruz, offspring of a *mulata* slave and a *criollo* father. Artemio has green eyes.

Classifications of Americans according to national, religious or cultural origins are useful. Racial categories, however, are unreliable, based on invented differences that are merely cultural and *biological*, but not *racial*. There is only one race: the *human race*! What I am suggesting is that we need to clarify our thinking about racial and racist ideas that we use, unexamined, out of custom.

Cries of alarm nowadays about the disuniting of America, about ethnic studies in our high schools and colleges, hostile remarks about illegal immigration, the backlash

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against affirmative action, the move from the war on poverty to war on the poor, the pervasiveness of violence and hatred—these are symptoms of a nation passing through a mean and frustrating period in history. Americans are angry because they are helpless. They can do nothing about the billions of dollars wasted by government officials and politicians, the multi-million dollar bankruptcies that gobble up our tax money, the magnitude of corruption and greed. Americans are helpless against the unequal application of the law, blatant corporate gouging, or Big Business' disregard for unborn generations of Americans. Instead, helpless Americans shrug their shoulders about the blatantly scandalous conduct of presumably respectable Americans, and wage war on fellow citizens who are more helpless and more vulnerable than they are.

We were reminded recently, on Tuesday, January 25, 2011, by President Barack Obama's uplifting State of the Union address, that the country belongs to all of us. There was a time in our history when Americans of every background longed deeply to belong. Unfortunately, some citizens of our country were denied the human, civil and legal rights to which citizenship and the Constitution entitled them.

It is important for the opponents of Hispanic and Ethnic Studies classes to recognize that systematic exclusion, denial of human rights, injustice and racial intolerance engendered the Civil Rights Movements of which Americans are today beneficiaries. Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* and the character of Bigger Thomas address this longing of black people to belong and the denial of human rights. Wright's novel provides a telling portrayal of black stereotypes in the U.S. in the 1940s. This knowledge that we Americans have gained from scholarship and from literature and the arts produced by people whose ancestors were previously denied rights guaranteed by the Constitution to all citizens must be recognized.

The recent intolerance and hatred of the immigrants today expressed by some Americans in Arizona, in Texas and elsewhere shows that some Americans forget that even their European ancestors were also despised by people who believed in a *superior white race* from which their ancestors were excluded. At the beginning of the twentieth century American race-thinkers drew in the minds of Americans *a color line* between blacks and whites. American historians, Oscar Handlin in *The American People in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954, rpt. 1967), and John Higham in *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, rpt. 1963., 1972), have pointed out that American *nativists* (a polite word for *racists* or white supremacists), like Theodore Lotthrop Stoddard, Madison Grant, and many others, gave scientific credentials to race prejudice. Stoddard, Grant and others extended the *color line* to European people from eastern and Mediterranean Europe, according to Handlin and Higham. In his Introduction to Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White*

Race Supremacy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), Madison Grant divided up Europeans into three white race categories: first, the supreme white race, with purity of blood, the *Nordics* from northern Europe; then the inferior whites, *Alpines* and *Mediterraneans* whose blood, Grant argued with admirable historical knowledge and scientific evidence, had been contaminated historically by race mixture with non-whites. It is historically true that the Europeans had mingled their genes and chromosomes with Asiatic people.

That is a fascinating chapter of American immigration and social history, when Europeans of so-called "impure blood" were classified as members of inferior "colored" races. To curtail the emigration of Jews, Hungarians, Poles, Greeks, Italians, Armenians and other Europeans, American nativists with impressive academic credentials mounted a campaign against them in scientific journals and books, raising a cry of alarm about "the rising tide of color" that threatened to contaminate the blood of the great white race in America. As John Higham points out, the proponents of white race supremacy were eminently successful in 1924 in "closing the gates" of immigration and in establishing quotas for people from other countries who wanted to emigrate.

One of the great contributions of scholarly works on race and ethnicity in the U.S. has been the rewriting of history and the reinterpretation of the past. Two excellent examples will suffice. Roger Daniels has suggested in his book, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and The Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: U of CA Press, 1978) that Hitler and the Nazis adopted U.S. nativist concepts against Jews and other "inferior" peoples. Daniels has written extensively about the internment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry. A second author, on behalf of Mexicans, Américo Paredes in his 1957 book *With His Pistol in his Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: UT Press, 1958), demonstrated that Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb had stereotyped preconceptions about Mexicans and Texas Rangers' attitudes towards Mexicans, and that these made their way into Texas history books. Daniels and Paredes demonstrate how racist ideas made their way into American minds by being developed in American books, scientific journals, newspapers, and other written works.

In historical, literary and social sciences scholarship, and in arts and letters, the achievements of African Americans, Chicanos, and of other Americans of diverse ancestries are clearly demonstrable. Now, however, too much is at stake. Preferred identities and achievements against adversity are responses to exclusion, injustice, inequality, racial discrimination, and denial of rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to all citizens of the U.S. Consider how being locked into racial categories influences the way we perceive and regard a great American writer like Toni Morrison. For example, Toni

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Morrison is a great American writer. She is a great woman writer. To African Americans she is a great African American woman writer, a vivid reflection of African American's great creative potential and achievements. Because of our nation's shameful past, mitigated by America's recognition of her art, she is a great African American writer.

Looking back to 1963, we see that we passed through a hostile period in our history, as the film *Mississippi Burning* illustrates. The doctrine of white supremacy is clearly expressed by characters that represent the race thinking of the Ku Klux Klan. How many Americans know that during WWI Madison Grant, a major proponent of white race supremacy, extended to Germans his favorable conception of the great white race? After WWI however, when the U.S. had been at war with Germany, Grant rewrote his tract on white race supremacy, and deleted all praise for German people. The war had turned Germans into "huns." According to John Higham, in the later 1918 edition of his 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race*, Grant wrote that the pure German blood had been contaminated by Asiatic blood. One cannot deny the German's Asiatic ancestry. When one looks at some German people the Asiatic ancestry is evident in the shape of the eyes, in the complexion and in the absence of body hair.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, because of race thinking, Americans of German, Jewish, Italian, Irish, and Polish ancestry—today classified as *white*—experienced race discrimination, in addition to people of African, Mexican, Chinese and Japanese ancestry. In fairness to Americans, within the very social sciences professions in which the process of giving scientific credentials to invented racial differences was taking place, a revolt against racism developed.

Unfortunately, perceptions and misconceptions of race and ethnicity persist; we learn them from books, from newspapers, the news, movies, talk shows, and more. Sensationalized media coverage keeps race notions present in people's minds. Fortunately, false notions and misconceptions of race can be unlearned. For this reason, it should be of great concern to all of us that across the nation Americans of every background and social class are discussing and raising questions about race. The need to express grievances or to lament past injustices and inherited guilt should be understandable.

In recent years *the racism of the past inevitably touched the innocent "white" descendants of those who used to be beneficiaries of race differences and inequalities.* Racism that victimizes any human being victimizes every one of us. Regrettably, when a hostile climate of race consciousness exists we can see racism even where it does not exist.

The date 1954 marked a significant year in American history. As I have said, in that year the U.S. Supreme Court, to the credit of this nation, ruled that separate but equal education was unconstitutional in the United States, and by extension, so was segregation. Overnight, from one day to the next or even years later, court rulings and new legis-

lation do not change attitudes and perceptions about race that were inherited from ancestors and the social life of the past. Unfortunately, *good old boys* are still around.

Since the turbulent years of the late 1950s to the 1970s, many young and decent Americans learned, unhappily, about social conditions in this country that they never imagined existed. On television sets in American homes across the nation black people leapt into living rooms, pursued by police, German shepherd dogs, and firemen with fire hoses. Poets and novelists, dramatists and filmmakers have explored and given artistic expression to many varieties of the American experience that are distinct to and shared by members of the population whose cultural groups had been and continue to be underrepresented in many areas of American life. They were once called "minority groups."

In academia, social scientists, ethnic studies professors, historians and literary critics have created new areas of intellectual inquiry. Outside and inside of academia, during more than fifty years, an immensely valuable and enlightening body of creative works and scholarly literature by and about African, Chicano [Latinos, Hispanics], Asian, and Native Americans, and by and about Americans of European and Middle Eastern ancestry, has taken impressive hold on the national consciousness. New knowledge challenges old misconceptions and unreliable classifications of race and ethnicity. Sympathetic partisans of so-called "racial" groups and, admirable intentions notwithstanding, the excess and proliferation of what one might call "race talk" unfortunately perpetuates grass roots misperceptions and false notions about race. Too many well-meaning people write about race issues, harmfully, despite good intentions,. First, many Americans speak about regrettable personal experiences, without a knowledge of the past. Secondly, when we write or talk about *race*, when we speak of "White America" and "Black America" and "people of color," *paradoxically we continue to give credence to classifications and categories of race that are unreliable, false, inaccurate.*

There is a danger of too much race talk. We are locked into classifications and categories of race that have been imposed on us; inverting their value and using them as if they were valid, we perpetuate unreliable categories of human beings. Americans forget the nomenclature that in our past history divided citizens into groups and expressed contempt for them. How can one speak of *race differences in America* without being reminded of *terms* such as: *mick, spick, wop, kike, polack, hun, kraut, chink, jap,* and *gook,* in addition to *meskin, greaser, nigger* and other terms?

The social sciences nomenclature of race and ethnicity was initially meant to be useful in classifying knowledge about human beings from non-Western parts of the world. Social sciences knowledge and scientific information became unreliable and misleading when it was used to promote notions of racial superiority and inferiority. Terms like *race, primitive people, Western* and *non-Western people* became loaded.

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In the U.S., for example, one might ask: What is the meaning of *race mixture*? *Mixed marriages, bi-racial* marriages, *multi-ethnic* and *multi-racial* children are terms that accept the conceptual basis of race. How many races can there be? To what race does a person with one parent of German and Irish ancestry and the other parent of Japanese ancestry belong? To what race does the child of Native American, African and Spanish ancestries belong if the latter ancestry includes Arabic, Visigothic (Germanic), Greek, Roman and Jewish genes and chromosomes? Why is a blond, blue-eyed, fair-skinned person "black," who has a preponderance of Irish and Scottish, English and German, a touch of Jewish ancestry, and a distant African ancestor? Why?

I am sympathetic to people who are asking why we cannot stop focusing on race. Why we cannot have united people in the United States. The people who should be unifying us are dividing us. In a climate of unprecedented anger and hatred, our present President Barack Obama (like Bill Clinton before him) has not been allowed to be president. We are divided into rich and poor, Republicans and Democrats and Independents, those that have and those that have not, working class people and the wealthy. Banks and the automobile industry, the gasoline and cable companies, pharmaceutical companies and HMOs, the war on the poor, hostile drivers on the freeway, cell phones, and insurance companies—place us in the most precarious conditions of national life. A united country is something that we never have been. Perhaps the time of WWII was an exception, except for African Americans.

Today, however, international universities are trying, and some like UC Riverside in the U.S. are succeeding to recognize the importance of diversity among our student and U.S. populations. In Spain, Holland, Germany, Latin America, and in other countries in Europe too, like the University of Warsaw and its Institute of English (and American) Studies, impressive strides are being made. In matters of *race and ethnicity* in the U.S., we can work to enlarge understanding, and we can take comfort in the knowledge that because race prejudice is learned, it can be unlearned.

History has taught us that in truth the true American patriots are African Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans, and other American allies who criticize the betrayal of our nation's ideals of liberty, justice, and equality. It is important therefore to understand that the complex of attitudes, beliefs, and values to which under-represented groups subscribe is the end product of denials, historically, of civil and legal rights, human rights, and social equality.

At American colleges, universities and high schools, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian American and Ethnic Studies classes, scholarship, literature and the arts, and campus clubs have been brought into existence, propelled by the most natural human response to exclusion, a sense of not being permitted to belong in the larger society.

Theirs was and is the very same human longing to belong that in the past led immigrants to seek the comfort of communities like those they left behind. Social scientists call those communities *ethnic enclaves*: the shtetl, Chinatown, Little Tokyo, little Hungary, little Havana, the barrio, Germantown, Harlem, and Greektown, among others. These are the places in America—in all the Americas!—where ancestral cultures, language, and traditions clash and fuse with those of the adopted countries and enrich and enhance the national repositories of our combined legacies and cultural inheritance. We can see that the U.S. embraces many varieties of our languages, culture, intellectual history, arts and letters, cuisine, and above all, our multiple ancestries.

The social protest movements have not *been directed against American ideals of justice, fair play, equality of education and opportunity, or against the American dream*. This too, must be remembered. Fair-minded people believe in ideals that have been repeatedly betrayed in the past. No one can argue that some of our American ideals are to be lamented or that justice is not colorblind. The social movements have been directed at the betrayals of American ideals. The protests have *not* been against colorblind justice, but against those who enforce, legislate and implement laws, *against those who are not colorblind.*

As I hope to show with my most recent anthology of short stories by young Americans of diverse backgrounds, *American Identities: California Short Stories of Multiple Ancestries* (New York: Xlibris, 2008), it is comforting to know that our schools, colleges and universities bring good young people—students of diverse immigrant backgrounds—into proximity with each other. Of good heart, they are discovering each other. Young people are vulnerable, and when they see this about each other they tend to form a camaraderie that helps them to look beyond race, even when, in the larger world, the media still dwells on it. In my heart I believe most sincerely that *the concept of multiple ancestries* is more fair and accurate than the countless misconceptions and unreliable classifications of race. There are no races in the world at large. There is only one human race. Genes and chromosomes are *biological*, not racial realities.

In 2011 we are still speaking of race, and regrettably we shall continue to do so, because we are locked into a complex process, historically, of which the younger generations of Americans of diverse *multiple ancestries*—"multi-racial" and "multi-ethnic" people—are the end product. Too many people need a shared group identity. We must respect that need.

Again, the experience of African Americans is dramatically instructive. Toni Morrison for example, winner of a Pulitzer Prize, is an American writer. She brings honor to all people, to the international world of arts and letters, to our entire nation, to all Americans, even as she shows where our country has failed some of its citizens in the past. But Toni Morrison is black, an African American, a woman, a writer.

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African Americans share in the glow of the honor she brings to the world. Ideally, some insist, we should see her as a great writer. Ideally, yes. I concur. But our history has denied such an ideal recognition, as well as other ideals. African Americans have a natural, a most understandable right to claim her as one of their own, because consciousness of exclusion in the past persists and also in the conscience of those who know the African American past. This must be understood.

Finally, in the United States, African Americans *are not a race*. They are a people of *multiple ancestries*. Only Americans of African ancestry, many of them descendants of slaves, have been denied the right to claim their ancestors from Ireland, England, France, Eastern Europe, Spain, Scotland, Korea, China, and elsewhere. Like a majority of Americans today, African Americans, like Latinos and others, are *people of multiple ancestries*.

Long before the convergence in the Americas of people from Europe, Asia, and Africa, peoples of similar ancestries had converged in the Mediterranean, and they mingled their genes and chromosomes. People with the same genes and chromosomes have been divided by national boundaries, by cultural traditions and customs inherited from distant ancestors, and by varieties of languages and religious beliefs.

White America and *Black America* are terms that create divisive abstractions. Other terms also name abstractions: *urban America, blue collar America,* and *rural America*. Recent terms that create abstractions are the ubiquitous *American white male*, the ethnocentric *European colonizer*, and the *tea party people*. Cruelty, violence, and killing, and other evil propensities that one can name are to be found in all peoples and countries of the world in other historical periods.

So long as politicians of ill will and their ilk succeed in dividing us, so long as people continue to express contempt for others, so long as politicians wage war on the poor and on artists who exhibit a social conscience, so long as we discuss issues in terms of *race*, then people will continue to suffer, and in the political and social transactions, as in those of the heart, it will always be helpless children and vulnerable young people who will suffer most. Greed permits too many people to live comfortably with complete lack of concern for human health, for the unborn generations, and for the state of the world after they are gone.

To end on a positive note, our national culture—*race and ethnicity in the U.S.*—has been greatly enriched, despite adversity, during the past fifty years and more, beginning with the important 1954 Supreme Court decision that brought honor to all American citizens with a healthy conscience. The year 1954 ushered in a period of American history in arts and letters, and in scholarship, that permits us today to see the diversity of Americans as a people of *multiple ancestries*.

Irmina Wawrzyczek

American Historiography in the Making: Three Eighteenth-Century Narratives of Colonial Virginia

The history of writing history is as exciting to the practitioners of the trade as the study and knowledge of the past itself. It has become the subject of particular interest among American historians and historical theorists after Hayden White electrified their traditionally positivist world by comparing the status of historiography to that of literature as, he argued, the works of both make use of verbal structures in the form of a narrative prose discourse (White *Metahistory*, "The Question of Narrative"; Somekawa and Smith; Cohen; Domańska 82-100). Among early Americanists, the debates about the relationship between history and literature excite the interest of those involved in Atlantic history: they acknowledge the practical necessity of cross-disciplinary dialogue to enrich their methodologies and refine the skills of textual analysis (Slauter; Games; Waterman; Gould; Maddock Dillon). Distinguished literary scholars and historians of early modern Britain in the English-speaking academic world have also responded to the rapprochement between history and literary theory by exploring the common roots of *ars historica* and *ars poetica*, the boundaries between history and fiction, and the convergence of the two genres (Kelly and Harris Sacks). Their colleagues studying the Spanish American colonies followed suit by exploring, for instance, the historiographical epistemologies and concepts in the colonial histories produced in eighteenth-century Spain and in her American empire (Cañizares-Esguerra). In this broader intellectual context, the present study analyzes three well-known historical narratives of eighteenth-century Virginia in order to demonstrate how "history" and "story" meet, interact, and sometimes compete in them. The ultimate goal is to search for the development of colonial historiography as a distinct mode of writing and for the emergence of the historian's professional identity.

The examined texts include *History and the Present State of Virginia, In Four Parts* by Robert Beverley (1705), *The Present State of Virginia* by Hugh Jones (1724), and *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia* by William Stith (1747)—a promising selection for a number of reasons. First, originally published in the first half of the eighteenth century, about 25 years apart, they may offer some evidence of change

in the type of narrative they employ. Second, they were all written by Virginians. Two of them were natives of the colony: Robert Beverley Jr., a wealthy landowner and burgess from Jamestown, and William Stith, a Church of England clergyman and master of the grammar-school of William and Mary College. The third one, Hugh Jones, was a creolized Virginian residing in the Chesapeake area for sixty-four years as a professor of mathematics at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg and then as rector of various parishes in Virginia and Maryland. Thus, their narratives are insiders' stories combining historical sources with personal and family experience, a quality unlikely to be achieved by an arm-chair historian working from England. Thirdly, all three authors, self-appointed spokesmen and apologists for Virginia, were educated in England (Jones held the master's degree from Jesus College, of Oxford University, and Stith studied theology at Queen's College of the same institution), where they had a chance to get at least some understanding and first-hand experience of the prevailing metropolitan intellectual and literary fashions of their times. Finally, all three histories were texts of trans-Atlantic circulation, as they were printed in London (the first editions of Beverley and Jones, and the second edition of Stith) for the English reading public and subsequently "travelled" to Virginia to be available on the colonial book market. Beverley's *History* was republished in French at Paris in 1707, and in the same year an edition was issued at Amsterdam.

The basic method used here is close reading in search of compositional, narrative and rhetorical strategies employed by the authors. With the help of this essentially literary analytical tool, I intend to demonstrate how historiographic writing was beginning to crystallize at the intersection of certain early eighteenth-century genres of both popular and scholarly writing, and to indicate the presence and the convergences of these generic conventions in the three texts under scrutiny.

The three narratives were evidently intended for publication and circulation, yet among different audiences. Beverley wrote and first published his *History* when on a two-year visit to England and dedicated it specifically "To the Right Honourable Robert Harley, Speaker of the H. of Commons, and One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State" (ii) responsible for "the Plantations," with the intention to win his support for the colony in the shape of a wiser imperial policy and the appointment of better governors. Yet in the preface, he also shows awareness of a larger reading public by making references to "the gentle Reader" whom he wants to "settle his Credit with" (vii). Jones also completed his work in England, where he spent four years before returning permanently to Virginia. His primary addressees were "pious and learned bishops; to whose consideration the following sheets are in the most submissive manner offered" (47), but he also offered his book "with the greatest submission" to the general reader, hoping for his "kind acceptance" (48). His target readers were those in England, as he observed that

"few people in England (even many concerned in publick affair of this kind) have correct notions of the true state of the Plantations" (45). Stith addresses "the Reader" directly on several occasions in the main text, saying for instance: "I here present the Reader with the first Part of my History of our own country" (iii), or "I hope therefore, the courteous Reader will be satisfied with this short Caution (112-3), yet the readers he seems to have in mind were Virginians, to whom he offers a "History of *our own country*" (iii, emphasis added). Thus, these were works not only intended for a narrow group of intellectuals and for the government officials but for general reading and for "tolerable Entertainment" (Beverley xi). It is only logical to assume that attracting wider readership required from the authors at least some adherence to the prevailing modes of discourse and artistic expression in piecing together factual evidence at their disposal about Virginia's past and present.

The three texts differ considerably in the actual amount of Virginia's history in each of them, history understood as a narrative about the past built around a thesis on the basis of evidence, or at least as a narrative giving information about the past in chronological order. In Beverley, only "Book I" entitled "The History of the First Settlement of Virginia, and the Government thereof, to the present time" qualifies as a historiographic text in the modern sense and covers the most important events from the first expedition of Sir Walter Raleigh to the area of future Virginia almost up to the year 1705. Yet Beverley's writing style changes in the course of his account of the colony's past according to the period he describes. When relating more distant times on the basis of printed and surviving manuscript documents, he uses relatively dry and factual language, free from flowery additions. Yet as he passes to the times he knew better from the stories of older fellow-Virginians and later from his own experience, he notoriously inserts personal opinions and biting comments, especially on the Virginia governors and their policies. One such malicious fragment concerns Lord Culpepper, the governor of the colony in 1680-1683, who happened to persecute and imprison Beverley's father for instigating tobacco plant-cutting riots when Beverley Jr. was at school in England, and is marked by heavy sarcasm:

> This Noble Lord was skilful in all the Ways of getting Money, and never let slip any Opportunity of doing it. To this End he seem'd to lament the unhappy State of the Country, in relation to their Coin. He was tenderly concern'd that all their Cash should be drain'd away by the Neighbouring Colonies, which had not set so low an Estimate upon it as Virginia; and therefore he proposed the Raising of it. (I/82-83)

The final six pages of (I/98-104), devoted to governor Francis Nicholson, whom Beverley truly despised and under whose governorship he lost his property case, resemble

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a sharp political pamphlet in its own right; that is, a small essay dealing with topical controversies, a form of political writing flourishing in England under Queen Anne. Beverley consistently attacks Nicholson's character, personal integrity, political actions and manner of performing his duties. He condemns his political decisions as "opposite to all Reason" (98), dismisses his religiousness as a mere "pompous Shew of Zeal for the Church" (98), and his language as "most abusive... against those that presume to oppose his Arbitrary Proceedings" (100). In his opinion, Nicholson "takes away all Freedom of Debate, and makes the Council of no other Use, than to palliate his Arbitrary Practices" (101) and operates "by his own absolute Will and Pleasure." To give his tirade factual support, he enumerates examples of Nicholson's jealousy, fits of temper, abuse of power and misjudged decisions. The moral bias, reductiveness and abundant irony in the description of the governor strongly suggest the deployment of the character sketch genre known in European historical writing since the sixteenth century, prominent in the work of seventeenth-century English historians and continued well into the eighteenth century (Watson Brownley).

While the historical part of the book constitutes a relatively coherent chronological narrative of Virginia's past, despite the author's tendency to switch to the political pamphlet mode at times to air his personal grievances, "Book II" devoted to "The Natural Productions and Conveniencies of the Country, suited to Trade and Improvement" breaks with the story completely and becomes a combination of travel account and natural history. As in many natural histories published in early modern England, chronology disappears completely from Beverley's narrative. He now describes the natural phenomena of Virginia as he knew them in the moment of writing (Bushnell 179-180). Beverley abandons the grammatical past tense for the present and offers a long catalogue of plant and animal descriptions, following the pattern used by numerous sixteenth-and seventeenth-century commentators on American flora and fauna: assessment of the fertility of the soil, of its mineral deposits, and the emphasis on the abundance and diversity of local plant and animal life, often with a comment on the practical use of various species for human comfort, pleasure and health (Armstrong 85; chap. 4 and 5 *passim*). Yet because Beverley was not a European traveler to Virginia but its native inhabitant, he transforms creatively the travel narrative format by inserting frequent personal comments, observations and information about the colonists' experiments with various plants that go beyond standard botanical and zoological descriptions. For instance, he devotes a whole page to explaining why the colonial experiments with growing grapevines failed (II/19).

Beverley experiments with another travel account convention beginning to form in the eighteenth-century, which was "a generic blending of factual information and literary

art" to make the account instructive and entertaining at the same time (Batten 5-6). In order to break the somewhat monotonous flow of factual fauna and flora descriptions, he often includes anecdotes related to the discussed species. Thus, when writing about the variety and beauty of flowers in Virginia, he reports a naughty prank he played to embarrass a serious gentleman by handing him a flower that "resembled the Pudenda of a Man and Woman lovingly join'd in one" (II/25). In the section devoted to the local fish, he entertains the reader with an amusing anecdote about getting a big fish first caught by a hawk, which dropped it when attacked by an eagle (II/36). All the anecdotal insertions are autobiographical, as they relate Beverley's own adventures and experiences. While this was probably still acceptable in English travel writing at the beginning of the century, a new generic convention adopted a few decades later treated the writer's talking about himself as "conceited egotism" to be avoided in favor of impersonal detachment (Batten 38-41).

Beverley's narrative indebtedness to popular travel literature, a genre firmly established in the centuries of geographical discoveries, exploration and colonization preceding the publication of his *History***,** becomes even more evident in "Book III", devoted to the Virginia Indians. Some motifs found in his description of the Indians correspond to those most frequently present in the accounts of exotic peoples by European travel authors since the sixteenth century: skin color and other aspects of human physical appearance, clothing, sexual and procreative behavior, religion and the forms of worship (Cole 64-67). While several descriptive passages on various aspects of the Indian culture are freely borrowed from earlier such accounts, most often from John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia*, Beverley's own first-hand experience of the Indians in his native Virginia enriched the narrative with other extensively covered aspects of their culture described in a manner resembling today's anthropological fieldwork and its methods of participant observation (the Indian house of religious worship, III/28-30) and ethnographic interviewing (conversation with an old Indian about his notion of God, III/32-33).

Elements of contemporary writing genres in Hugh Jones' narrative are somewhat less discernible. First of all, as suggested by the title of the work—*The Present State of Virginia From Whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina*—he did not intend to write another history of the colony. He makes his purpose clear in the "Introduction." Having acknowledged the availability of several books upon the history of Virginia, he observes that "none descends to the present state and circumstance of this colony"; therefore he "composed this [work] as a supplement to those other books; treating herein for the most part of such heads, as are altogether omitted, or but slightly accounted for, or described by others" (47). For this purpose**,** he adopted the overall

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framework of the travel account, organizing the book around the standard topics of such texts: the native inhabitants, the natural environment, the plant and animal world, etc. Yet he frequently departs from that generic convention. Firstly, such a departure is signaled by the presence of historiographic fragments dealing with various events and processes in the distant past of the colony. One chapter in particular, the four-page long "Of the English Settlements in Virginia," resembles a chronologically organized historical narrative, albeit sketchy, selective, incomplete and at times incoherent. Not only does Jones stop at the moment of the Restoration, ignoring the subsequent 40 years of Virginia history, but also switches quite abruptly in the final paragraphs to the presentation of the religious mosaic and tolerance in neighboring Maryland. Other bits of historical information are dispersed throughout the remaining chapters devoted to various aspects of life in Virginia in Jones's times. For instance, in the middle of the chapter on the American Indians, one finds three paragraphs on the mountain expedition organized in 1716 by governor Spotswood to discover a passage through the Appalachians (60). Similarly, in the chapter about the contemporary economic engagements of Virginians, Jones inserts a short passage about the history of tobacco legislation in Virginia (88-89). It is only by extrapolation that the reader can reconstruct a certain chronology of the randomly evoked past developments.

Some historical episodes appear in a few one- or two-paragraph narrative passages serving as illustrations of the author's current argument. Three instances of such mini-narratives pertaining to the history of Anglo-Indian relations in Virginia are found in the chapter on the Indians: one about the escape of a Catawba Indian chief from Fort Christanna in 1716 (Jones 57), another about the arrival of a group of tributary Indians who intend to leave their children at the fort to be educated in the English way (59), and a third reporting a pseudo-theological dispute between Virginia Governor Spotswood and the chief of the Tuscaroras about God and land ownership (61). The last one in particular resembles a form used in European historiography long before Jones, that of the historical anecdote, characterized by its brevity, description of individual human behavior and independence of spirit, and reported snatches of conversation (Patterson 165).

In his extensive introduction to the 1956 edition of Jones' *The Present State of Virginia*, Richard Morton observed that scattered throughout it "are concise thumbnail sketches of the people from slaves to 'gentlemen of distinction'" (10). Three remarkable ones involve the Indians (57-58), the black slaves in the colony (75-76) and Virginia planters (80-81). They seem to be modelled on Theophrastan type characters, brief generalizations on groups without depicting particular individuals. Written in a self-conscious literary style, they contain a dose of humor and irony, and show considerable reductiveness typical of the genre, as in the fragments characterizing Virginia planters:

> for the most part they are much civilized, and wear the best cloaths (*sic*) according to their station; nay, sometimes too good for their circumstances, being for the generality comely handsom (*sic*) persons, of good features and fine complexions (if they take care) of good manners and address. The climate makes them bright, and of excellent sense, and sharp in trade, an ideot, or deformed native being almost a miracle.…
> They are more inclinable to read men by business and conversation, than to dive into books, and are for the most part only desirous of learning what is absolutely necessary, in the shortest and best method. (80-81)

Like Beverley before him, Jones could have been influenced by two related traditions. One was the collections of characters greatly popular in seventeenth-century England and well into the eighteenth century, when he worked on his book. Another very likely source of inspiration were the early eighteenth-century essayists—Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, along with Samuel Johnson—who popularized the expanded character sketches as a journalistic genre in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, and whose collected papers appeared in numerous editions throughout the century (Ross 52-54).

The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia by William Stith (1747), the third and the latest piece of eighteenth-century historiography of colonial Virginia, must be appreciated as a leap towards a coherent and homogeneous modern historical narrative. It constitutes a single sparsely paragraphed text without division into parts or chapters. To help the reader follow the timeline of his narrative, Stith provides crucial dates and names of colonial governors in the margins, in the manner of today's college textbooks. While it is the longest of the three histories under consideration (331 pages in the Williamsburg edition and a documentary Appendix of an additional 34 pages), it covers the shortest span of time—only about 45 years between the first colonial experiments of Humphrey Gilbert in 1578 and Walter Raleigh in 1584 to the dissolution of the Virginia Company and making Virginia a royal colony in 1624. As a result, the book is full of minute details, delightful perhaps to a modern professional historian of early America but evidently not to Stith's subscribers, who found it unreadable and did not sponsor the preparation of the intended second part.

Stith maintains chronology by the systematic use of temporal conjunctions, either in the form of precise dates (11th of October 1492; 11th of June 1578), or other phrases—"Two Years after," "The same year 1603," "The following Year," "The beginning of the next Year," "Soon after," etc., consistently placing them at the beginning of relevant paragraphs, where they cannot be overlooked. This was an improvement on Beverley, who used dates (mostly years—"Anno 1663") more sparingly and did not care about maintaining a smooth flow of the narrative, chopping it into numbered paragraphs, often only one or two sentences long. Jones, it seems, was least concerned with maintaining

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chronology. While he included a few early dates (1584—the first landing of Englishmen on the Roanoke Island; 1620—the formation of the colonial Assembly, 1626 (*sic*)—the dissolution of the Virginia Company), he preferred less precise phrases, such as "in the late queen's time" (Jones 62); unspecified formulations: "one thousand three hundred people have gone over *in one year* to settle there [in Va.]" (64, emphasis added); or timeless generalizations: "In this happy constitution, the colony of Virginia has prosperously encreased gradually and wonderfully, to its present most flourishing condition" (64).

Despite his remarkable achievement in maintaining a coherent flow of dynamic, chronologically ordered narrative, Stith still makes frequent use of static and moralizing character sketches of specific historical individuals, typically presenting their subjects as models of their kind rather than as realistic human beings. Apart from brief ones, like that of king James I (vii), of Powhatan (154-155), and of Sir Walter Raleigh (155-156), he also interrupts his narrative with a lengthy biographical passage on Captain John Smith (108-112), the final part of which demonstrates Stith's mastery of the convention:

> …and I shall finish his [Smith's] Character, with the Testimonies of some of his Soldiers and Fellow-Adventurers.… That he was ever fruitful in Expeditions, to provide for the People under his Command, whom he would never suffer to want anything, he either had, or could procure: That he rather chose to lead, than send his Soldiers into Danger; and upon all hazardous or fatiguing Expeditions, always shared every thing equally with his Company, and never desired any of them, to do or undergo any thing, that he was not ready, to do or undergo himself: that he hated Baseness, Sloth, Pride, and Indignity, more than any Danger: That he would suffer Want, rather than borrow; and starve, sooner than not pay: That he loved Action, more than Words; and hated Falshood and Covetousness, worse than Death…. (111-112)

Even if Stith himself thought of his story within a story about Smith as a character sketch, it contains sufficient evidence justifying its reading as an example of generic cross-fertilization between the older travel account and the new fictional "novel" observed in eighteenth-century popular literature. John Smith's life story is real, yet at the same time fits the model of the eighteenth-century fictional hero-traveller embodying the modern ethos of movement, change and conquest (Richetti 60-64). His exotic travels, adventures, and bizarre turns of fortune as a vagabond-soldier in Mediterranean Europe, Morocco, Turkey, Siberia, and America provide a perfect plot line for the travel story. Smith himself was a real-life *picaro*: orphaned at thirteen, he soon escaped the custody of his guardians and, driven by his "roving and romantic Fancy," lived the life of restless travel abounding in romantic and military adventures (Nowicki 23). Ultimately, as in a picaresque novel, his life of "a Soldier of Fortune" had a noble purpose as "his Adventures gave Life and Subsistency to the Colony [of Virginia]," where he arrived as the

servant of the Virginia Company and where "by the mere Force of his Virtue and Courage, he awed the *Indian* Kings, and made them submit, and bring Presents" (Stith 112). By recognizing the novelistic potential of Smith's biography and incorporating it into his otherwise disciplined chronological account of Virginia's difficult beginnings, Stith showed that, by the mid-eighteenth century, history writers did not distance themselves from popular entertaining genres and that historiography continued to borrow from literature as much as in previous decades.

If, however, a study of the evolution of early American history writing is to be valid and complete, looking at the narrative and the imaginative side of the considered texts has to be supplemented by probing into their empirical side, into the demands of the discipline's methodology and practices reflected in the types of evidence used by the authors, their citations, quotations, and references. The declared commitment of the studied authors to the truth and credibility of their narratives as a reflection of their professional identity is also a part of this historiographic "infrastructure."

Textual evidence concerning the development of the authors' awareness of their empirical base is plentiful, the best direct statements on the point predictably found in the authorial introductions. Beverley justifies his endeavor by stating that "[n]othing of that kind has yet appear'd" and that among the existing publications concerning Virginia "there's none of 'em either true, or so much as well invented." He is especially censorious about travel books that, in his opinion, are "stuff'd with Poetical Stories" and their authors—travelers—are "most suspected of Insincerity" (Beverley vi-viii). He himself was careful not to mention anything he could not "make good by very Authentique Testimony" (viii), and not to insert anything he could not justify by his "own Knowledge, or by credible Information" (x). Yet he hardly refers to any specific documents except John Smith's *Generall Historie,* making it difficult to verify the quality of his sources.

A modern historian does nor begin a single project without first learning what other historians have said about the topic and how they said it. Hugh Jones anticipates this convention by performing a very general review of contemporary works on Virginia in the introduction to his work: "There are several books upon this subject [history of Virginia], but none descends to the present state and circumstances of this colony, nor proposes what methods may seem most conducive to the promotion of its best interests in all respects" (47). A comment he subsequently makes on his narrative style testifies to his conviction that the main purpose of writing history is reporting truth, and that truth requires plain language: "I have industriously avoided the ornamental dress of rhetorical flourishes, esteeming the unfit for the naked truth of historical relations, and improper for the purpose of general propositions" (48).

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Jones most often acknowledges his sources when writing about Virginia during his lifetime. These are essentially ethnographic sources: his own observations introduced by phrases such as "I have seen," "I observed," "I know" (*passim*), and oral reports obtained from other people. At one point he evokes "the worthy Mr. Charles Griffin; from whom [he has] been informed of most of the Indian customs and principles" (59); elsewhere he mentions "the traders" and "Mr. Andrews, missionary to the northern Indians" (62) as his informants. Yet whenever he writes about a more distant past of the colony, his historical method leaves much to be desired. He freely copies information from the available historical narratives of early Virginia without making references to any such texts. Nevertheless, he lines himself up with the best known historians of the colony before him—Captain John Smith, John Clayton, and Robert Beverley—and states that his work "may be an abridgment and appendix to them all" (102). As a clergyman-historian, he treats the Bible and the Old Testament story of Noah's three sons therein as the ultimate source in explaining the racial mosaic of the people in Virginia (49-53).

Stith surpassed his predecessors in understanding the importance of the sources to a historian with professional aspirations. In "The Preface" he distances himself from his "Brother Writers" whose works on the history of Virginia brought about his "Vexation and Disappointment" (iii). He declares his strong commitment to printed documents and assures the reader that "there is not one Article, scarce a Word, in my Relation, which is not founded on the express Testimony, and the incontestible Authority, of our Records in the Capitol, and the [Virginia] Company's Journal" (v). The main text contains numerous lengthy extracts from archival texts as well as the author's occasional complaints about lack of access to important documents and about the unreliability of some extant ones. In his archivist's zeal, he attached an appendix to the main volume of the *History* containing a collection of the charters and letters patent of the colony. He laboriously transcribed them from the "much mangled and defaced" copies at the Clerk's Office of the Virginia House of Burgesses.

The small sample of texts included in the present analysis is insufficient to support big generalizations about the development of historiographic writing in eighteenth-century British colonial America. Yet even this limited analytical exercise demonstrates that historical writing did not extricate itself from fictive forms of the period and that in colonial Virginia it intermingled in many ways with protonovelistic, novelistic and journalistic forms of the time. These narrative forms were the primary carrier of historical content. How successful the generic eclecticism was in bringing amateur colonial historians closer to distinctive standards of modern professional history writing depended very much on the educational background, writing skills, intellectual ability, imagination and personal agendas of individual writers. At the same time, the historical narratives

were transformed by the growing epistemological awareness of their authors, increasingly preoccupied with chronological presentation, causal explanation of events and processes, the interpretation of their significance, and the need to search for new types of reliable evidence. In the eighteenth-century historical narratives of colonial Virginia, the old struggle between the rational claims on truth and the desire for the sheer pleasure of storytelling persisted.

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Emerson's Far Eastern Fascinations

Ralph Waldo Emerson is most of all seen as an optimistic philosopher, the father of American individualism, as designed in his essay "Self-Reliance," and perhaps of American identity in general. However, there are dark territories in his philosophy, as he had to face doubt and scepticism, especially in his later essays. His choice of an enthusiastic mood, whether conscious or unconscious, seems to have a therapeutic dimension. Emerson may be seen as writing against crisis, and persuading himself out of doubt. However, doubt or scepticism seems to be not the opposite of Emerson's assertive ideas but a direct consequence of them, especially of his understanding of individualism. His conception of man expands so much that it starts to encompass not only God but also the world, which perhaps would be acceptable to a twentieth-century postmodern philosopher, but which seems to get out of hand against the background of the mid-nineteenth-century thought. Thus, philosophy becomes to Emerson both a possible remedy and a source of his metaphysical problems. To some extent his interest in Hinduism and Buddhism provides an answer to his questions, but as Emerson has been formed by Western culture, he ends up rejecting the consolation epitomized by the Far East as insufficient.

Emerson read what was in his time available of Hindu thought, that is mostly the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Carpenter, "Immortality" 235),[1] and he is known to have had some acquaintance with Buddhist ideas, though only as late as in 1846 (Whicher 151), that is after having written the first and second series of his *Essays*, but before writing *The Conduct of Life*. However, already at the age of eighteen he was, as Frederick I. Carpenter puts it, an "orientalist" (*Handbook* 211), having at least some acquaintance with Far Eastern philosophies.[2] On the one hand, a direct inspiration can be easily seen in Emerson's poems and essays, where he adopts some philosophical ideas or cultural and religious emblems (like the exact Hindu terms, or names of gods and characters from what might be called the Hindu mythology). But what is even more striking, Emerson's own philosophical concepts, possibly preceding his study of the Far East, show a great deal of

[1] The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a part of the *Mahabharata* epic, framed as a war scene, but in fact consisting almost entirely of an instruction of the god Krishna to the archer Arjuna, presenting to him the main philosophical tenets of Hinduism.

[2] References to Hinduism and Buddhism appear interchangeably in the present essay as the distinction between both philosophies is not necessary for its purposes; they both constitute a part of Emerson's Oriental interests and influences.

similarity between his opinions and those common to Hinduism and Buddhism. Such coincidence, or a meeting of independent but congruent systems, might have been what attracted him so much to Eastern culture. He found in it a reverberation of his own intuitions, a remarkable coincidence, according to his principle of truth being generally accessible, "in the air," and to be announced by "the most impressionable brain" first, but by all "a few minutes later" ("Fate," *EL* 965). The affinity led to his deeper study of Hindu texts, which became an important source of further inspiration, especially for his late writings. Yet, even in the earlier essays he spoke with admiration of the "devout and contemplative East" and the "oriental genius, its divine impulses" ("The Divinity School Address," *EL* 78-79).

The most evident example of a direct inspiration could be Emerson's poems "Hamatreya" (1846)[3] and "Brahma" (1857). Brahma is the name of one of the three main Hindu deities, who along with Vishnu and Shiva constitute the so-called *Trimurti*, three aspects of a more abstract God. As Hinduism is not exactly a polytheistic religion in the sense that the term is usually employed, all gods are only a sort of "subdivisions" of the main spiritual entity, which is the *Brahman* (to be discussed in detail further on, as it has immense consequences for Emerson's understanding of the nature of the world). The title of the poem "Brahma" immediately sets a Far Eastern context for it, but also points to the poem's subject: the unity of everything, including the material and the spiritual, which is as much part of Emerson's reasoning as of the basis of Hinduism. The first stanza of the poem, spoken by Brahma:

> If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain,
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep, and pass, and turn again. (*P* 205)

is almost a direct quotation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, where Krishna teaches the archer Arjuna that "[h]e who thinks that this [i.e. the self, or an individual being—J.F.] slays and he who thinks that this is slain; both of them fail to perceive the truth; this one neither slays nor is slain" (Radhakrishnan 107). Death is only a misperception, since everything that exists is a part of God (whether He is called Brahma or Krishna, who in fact is an *avatar* or incarnation of Vishnu, Hinduism still involves one abstract essence of divinity). And Krishna says of himself: "Never was there a time when I was not, nor thou, nor

[3] "Hamatreya" is a poem about men deluding themselves that they can own the earth, whereas they depend on it; Emerson is thought to have been inspired by the religious text of the *Vishnu Purana* and the character of Maitreya (O'Keefe 15).

these lords of men [the enemy warriors on the battlefield where the whole instruction takes place—J. F.], nor will there ever be a time hereafter when we shall cease to be" (Radhakrishnan 103).

This understanding of the perpetuity of spiritual life reverberates in Emerson's essay "Illusions," where in the opening poem he speaks of the eternal existence as an everlasting flux or waving. The words "When thou dost return / On the wave's circulation" (*EL* 1113) can be taken as a version of the Hindu *Samsara* or the cycle of reincarnation, which is often likened to the waves of the ocean. The poem may seem quite dark and full of resignation; however, its ending, when read in the light of Hinduism, proffers an absolutely new quality of strength:

> Then first shalt thou know,
> That in the wild turmoil,
> Horsed on the Proteus,
> Thou ridest to power,
> And to endurance. (*EL* 1114)

The transience of all things, symbolized by Proteus, the Greek sea-god known for his ability to change shape and avoid uniformity, becomes man's source of "power" and "endurance," and grants him some sort of immortality as he can forever return to existence in a changed form.

The essay "Illusions" as a whole refers to Hindu thought. As Carpenter notes, the title "Illusions" is one possible translation into English of the Sanskrit term *Maya* (*Handbook* 212), which is also appearance, or play of the *Brahman*, the immaterial essence of reality, disguising itself as the material world. The fact that everything we immediately experience is *Maya* does not mean that physical reality does not exist; rather, through transcending its level, one can understand that it is only a veil, a manifestation of the *Brahman*. Here Hinduism is quite close to Platonic idealism, with the material world being a reflection of the spiritual one (although in Hinduism the material would be only one, low dimension of the ideal). Both systems are of interest to Emerson and what he describes in "Illusions" is exactly the Platonic experience of entering a cave that by its shapes and shadows offers an illusion of reality. Emerson uses Plato's didactic metaphor, and says: "The child walks amid heaps of illusions, which he does not like to have disturbed" ("Illusions," *EL* 1116). Such is the condition of human beings misled by the character of *Maya*. The playful dimension of this spectacle, usually stressed by Hinduism, is also acknowledged by Emerson, when he speaks of life as a "masquerade" (*EL* 1117).

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The fact that the essence of reality is spiritual does not lead one to detachment from the physical life, quite the contrary. As the *Bhagavad-Gita* says, the human being exists through action, and it is the only way he/she can live. However, attaining a higher spiritual level is conditioned by a particular approach to one's activity. Krishna's advice is basically to do as one thinks one should, but without making one's happiness depend on the results: "Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then get ready for battle. Thus thou shall not incur sin" (Radhakrishnan 114). Inactivity and pure intellectualism would not be advised by either Hinduism or Buddhism, because, to put it in Platonic terms, remaining in the realm of thoughts would mean being "twice removed" from reality: *Maya* is a mere veil of *Brahman* and human thinking is a reflection of *Maya*. Emerson in the essay "Experience" expresses a similar intuition that too much thinking takes one away from reality: "Do not craze yourself with thinking, but go about your business anywhere. Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy.... To fill the hour, —that is happiness; to fill the hour, and leave no crevice for a repentance or an approval" (*EL* 478), and, as a consequence, "The only ballast I know is a respect to the present hour" (479). This goes very well along the Buddhist principle of not concerning oneself with intellectual concepts as they are only constructs of the human mind, but of trying instead to experience the eternal now.[4] Also Emerson's giving priority to intuition over tuition, the faculty of the poet he describes in "Nature," seems to fit in the Eastern conception that one's self is not the mind but something much broader or deeper, and a spiritual "third eye" is judged to represent a higher level of perception than simple physical seeing. Such belief in the power of intuition might be one of the reasons why Emerson's writings do not take the shape of a coherent philosophical system, but stay at the level of reflection about his understanding of the world. He never wants to build an abstract ideology; writing is for him only a means of approaching or dealing with the real, in the same way that he believed the death of his son Waldo would make him feel the real.[5]

In a way, Emerson intends his writing to be a form of meditation, a technique of being here and now and experiencing one's unity with the world. "I become a transparent eye-

[4] There is a famous parable of the Buddha, about a man who, chased by a tiger, runs away and falls into a precipice, down in which another tiger is waiting. While falling down he manages to grab a root of a wild vine protruding from the rock and to hang on it between the two tigers. Suddenly, he sees two mice eating away the plant he is holding; he also notices a strawberry, eats it and delights in its sweetness (Reps and Senzaki 38-39). The story explains very well the philosophy of living always in the present moment, and experiencing the eternal now in the world full of actual or potential suffering.

[5] When in the essay "Experience" Emerson writes about his son Waldo's death, he hopes that at least suffering connected to that tragedy will bring him a sense of the real, of the tangible world entering his mind and fusing with his abstract notion of it. Instead, he discovers that "An innavigable sea washes with silent waves between us and the things we aim at and converse with.... In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate, - no more. I cannot get it nearer to me" (*EL* 473).

ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part of particle of God" ("Nature," *EL* 10)—this fragment of the essay "Nature" is a description of a mystical experience, but a very particular one, quite close to the assumptions of Far Eastern religions. The "transparent eye-ball" passage brings to mind the idea of the "third eye," which allows the meditating person to experience another kind of seeing thanks to his/her unification with God. Understood differently, Emerson's passage has its equivalent in the following verses from the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "The man who is united with the Divine and knows the truth thinks 'I do nothing at all' for in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, walking… he holds that only the senses are occupied with the objects of the senses" (Radhakrishnan 177). Emerson's "I am nothing" is the real goal of all meditation, like in Buddhism providing an insight into the *Shunyata*, the nothingness or emptiness which is behind all appearance; the "Universal Being" he speaks of is as much the Judeo-Christian God as it is the Hindu *Brahman*.

The aim of such a meditation is not an escape from the world into one's mind and a life dependent on projections—in fact, Hinduism is the very opposite of (and a possible remedy to) Emerson's major fear, solipsism. In the Far Eastern view, the universe is not a projection of the "I," moreover, the "I" does not have an "independent" or "separate" status; it is an extension of the world, just as a wave is a manifestation of the sea. Both solipsism and the Hindu belief stem from the same root, that is the assumption of the unity of me and not-me, so there is a danger that the boundary between the two might be quite permeable. However, if solipsism claims that the world does not or might not exist, in Hinduism the truly nonexistent entity is the "I." It all depends on one's interpretation or the direction of one's thoughts—and just as Emerson admits that thinking is both the most important of human activities and the greatest trap, so the *Bhagavad-Gita* says: "for the Self[6] alone is the friend of the self and the Self alone is the enemy of the self" (Radhakrishnan 189).[7]

To some extent, the way man's thoughts will go depends on him, his will and action. Man "knows himself to be a party to his present estate", says Emerson ("Fate," *EL* 948), which is an aspect of his idea of self-reliance. He must have found a fascinating correspondence between his understanding of individualism and the idea of self-realization and spiritual growth present in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Krishna tells Arjuna:

[6] In the translation by Radhakrishnan the "Self" is written with capital "S," suggesting that it refers to the universal Self, the *Atman*. However, a different reading is possible, where this word would refer simply to the human, individual self.

[7] The meaning of this verse is even clearer in the religious rendition of Prabhupada: "The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well" (277).

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> But the man whose delight is in the Self alone, who is content with the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, for him there exists no work that needs to be done. Similarly, in this world he has no interest whatever to gain by the actions that he has not done. He does not depend on all these beings for any interest of his. (Radhakrishnan 138)

Self-realization means absolute freedom and independence, a kind of solitude stemming from one's inner strength. This is very close to the Emersonian self-reliance as a necessary basis of genuine human existence. Even his idea of reading presented in "The American Scholar," where books are seen as dangerous and useful only as the first impulse for their reader, finds its equivalent in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "As is the use of a pond in a place flooded with water everywhere, so is that of all the Vedas for the Brāhmin who understands" (Radhakrishnan 119). The self-realized or self-reliant individual is the "reservoir of water" who does not need the well of the sacred writings (the *Vedas*)—in such an approach to reading there can be found a reverberation of Emerson's passage about the "luminous" books, i.e. pages that start to glow while being read, thus obscuring their meaning to the reader who does not need them anyway. The works of other authors are supposed, according to Emerson, to give the reader an impulse and leave him/her in a way blinded with their luminescence. If in the process of reading the pages start to shine, the reader is able only to take an initial inspiration from books instead of closely following their content ("American Scholar," *EL* 59).

At the same time, both the Emersonian and the Indian concepts of self-reliance share an important injunction of self-realization as the starting point for going back to practical life. For Emerson "isolation must precede true society" ("Self-Reliance," *EE* 45), yet one does eventually return to be a part of the social mechanism. Wieslaw Gromczyński claims that

> ecstasy… is not for him a value in itself and Emerson does not aim at its prolongation, and even less at entering nirvana through it…. Intuitional understanding, ecstatic experience is needed according to Emerson to grasp the unconditional truths, and after that one returns to everyday life illuminated by the absolute knowledge. (55; trans. J.F.)

Also Hinduism and Buddhism (perhaps Buddhism even stronger) advocate the process of "descending" after one's "ascension." In Hinduism, one is advised to become a yogi and retreat from ordinary life only after having worked in a profession and after having had a family. In terms of Mahayana Buddhism, a person who in the course of the self-perfecting process goes away from the world in search of enlightenment becomes

a *Pratyeka-buddha*—a "private" Buddha, or "Buddha for himself." However, a higher spiritual level is attained by the one who can become a *Sammasam-buddha*, a "complete" one or *Bodhisattva*, that is a Buddha who after experiencing his oneness with the Eternal Being goes back to life to serve humanity.

The problem of unity is probably the strongest link between Emerson and the Indian religions, as the conception of the Oversoul is central to Emerson's philosophy. For him it is a common source of all men and of what he calls nature, that is the whole world. Hence the Emersonian democratic conception of genius as the one who first announces the truth that is "in the air" ("Fate," *EL* 965), i.e. shared by all men. The Buddhist compassion resulting from the feeling of organic unity with all mankind is a consequence of the same way of thinking about men as limbs of one spiritual body. Emerson writes about man: "Where he is, there is nature" ("Self-Reliance," *EL* 267), stressing the inseparability of the human being and his surroundings, as having one source. This source is called in Sanskrit the *Brahman*, which is a universal spiritual entity, identical with human *Atman* or soul, and comprising all gods. The world is, as it were, an extension, a visible manifestation of the *Brahman*. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna says: "I am the origin of all; from Me all (the whole creation) proceeds. Knowing this, the wise worship Me, endowed with meditation" (Radhakrishnan 258); "The yogin who established in oneness, worships Me abiding in all beings lives in Me, howsoever he may be active" (Radhakrishnan 204).[8]

The unity of God or the Oversoul and the world manifests itself to Emerson in the here and now, and it is something that can be directly experienced by way of reflection, when "the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own, shines through it" ("Nature," *EL* 25). "The intellect sees that every atom carries the whole of Nature," he writes in "Illusions" (*EL* 1120), and this unity finds its expression in the Hindu formula "*tat tvam asi*," meaning "you are it": there is no distinction between the "I" and the "not-I." Emerson expresses the same in the poem "Brahma," where his Brahma says that he is everything and that it is impossible to abandon him, as he inheres in the very act of leaving: "They reckon ill who leave me out; / When me they fly, I am the wings" (*P* 205).

Why then, if Emerson found a system which corresponded so closely to his own philosophical intuitions, was he not satisfied with its solutions and had to struggle with doubt in his later essays? Why was not the explanation that the essence of everything is

[8] For the Emerson reader again the religious translation of Prabhupada would be even more telling: "Such a yogi, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances" (301).

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spiritual, and the material world is only a *Maya*, sufficient to him? The main reason was probably that he belonged to the Western, Judeo-Christian cultural and philosophical circle, founded on what could be called "ethical materialism," that is an attitude aiming at active changing of the world we come to, and not solving its problems by the means of self-perfecting. When Franz Rosenzweig in his *Star of Redemption* argued against philosophers who immerse themselves in idealism, he judged their attitude as immoral, as expressive of a kind of contempt for the material world. In the West, disdaining material reality is not only unreasonable but also poses a serious ethical problem, as it seems to be a form of escapism. Stephen E. Whicher, when writing about Emerson's learning from Far Eastern cultures, judges the idea of the *Brahman* as "grand… but also inhuman," setting from a strictly Western point of view the standards of "human" and "inhuman" philosophies (151). However, the sort of stoical detachment from happiness and unhappiness in the Western context may induce horror, while at the same time from the Eastern perspective can be treated as the highest level of enlightenment. Still, Emerson remains within the framework of the West, and at the end of "Illusions" he refuses not to take the world seriously, even if he realizes that it might be only an ideological, that is subjective, choice (how close to William James's *Will to Believe*![9]):

> I prefer to be owned as sound and solvent, and my word as good as my bond, and to be what cannot be skipped, or dissipated, or undermined, to all the éclat in the universe. This reality is the foundation of friendship, religion, poetry, and art. At the top or at the bottom of all illusions, I set the cheat which still leads us to work and live for appearances, in spite of our conviction, in all sane hours, that it is what we really are that avails with friends, with strangers, and with fate or fortune. (*EL* 1122)

His choice is to believe the world's masquerade to be the basis of everything we think is valuable in life, which, within the framework of Western philosophy, can be seen as a form of heroism, as hope against all odds. Emerson's intentional optimism is a tool that helps him to survive in this world, and not a sign of his naivety. To use a religious metaphor, Emerson is like the Buddha in that they both face a choice between living with faith in man's immortality and power on the one hand, or accepting the dark side of reality on the other. However, Emerson, unlike the Buddha, voluntarily chooses not to "awaken," but to remain in the palace as the prince Siddhartha, without going out to the outer world of suffering, and using his philosophy as a remedy against doubt.

[9] William James, one of numerous disciples of Emerson, defends in this lecture the choice of one's beliefs even if unsupported by objective proofs.

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The Confession of an Uncontrived Sinner: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

1. The Entomological Prelude

Before the story begins we ought to introduce its hidden protagonist(s). There are two candidates, close relatives, competing for this title. One is called *xestobium rufovillosum*, the other *anobium pertinax*.[1] Both species produce ticking or clicking sounds which occur when the beetles bump their heads or jaws against the sides of tunnels of old furniture and wood they are boring into. Their Polish names bear interesting onomatopoeic traits. Thus, *tykotek pstry* (*xestobium rufovillosum*) derives from the verb *tykać* which denotes the ticking of a clock. *Anobium pertinax*, on the other hand, stands for *kołatek uparty*. The verb *kołatać* denotes, and at the same time imitates, tapping and rattling. It can be furthermore associated with a sound produced by a door-knocker—it therefore announces the presence of somebody at the door of our house, possibly a stranger (an uninvited intruder, rather than a longed-for visitor?), whom we may admit with a sense of apprehension or even anxiety, and who always will be approached with a dose of Derridean *hostipitalité*, i.e. an inseparable mixture of *hospitalité* (hospitality) and *hostilité* (hostility) (*Acts of Religion*, qtd. in Idziak 56). (It seems worth recalling here the famous knocking episode in Macbeth, which not only serves as a comic interruption following the bloody scene of Duncan's murder, but is also a serious confirmation that the porter at Macbeth's castle indeed opens the gate of hell when he admits Macduff and Lennox

[1] The importance of the deathwatch for the rationalization of the plot of Poe's Gothic was first pointed out by John E. Reilly. He argues for the occurrence of the so-called lesser death-watch, which is not a beetle but a smaller pscoid insect, in Poe's narrative. My interpretation takes up the general idea of Reilly's argument, rather than paying attention to the particular entomological distinctions, but for the sake of precision I invoke here his line of reasoning. Reilly writes: "It is the narrator, giving us a glimpse of himself alone in his own bedchamber, who has hearkened to the death-watches. Herein lies the source of the sound that the narrator believes to have been the heartbeat of the old man. Death-watches are insects that produce rapping sounds, sounds that superstition has held to presage the death of someone in the house where they are heard. There are two common varieties of the insect. The 'greater' death-watch, or *Xestobium rufovillosum*, is a wood boring beetle of the family *Anobiidae*.… The other insect, the 'lesser' death-watch, or *Liposcelis divinatorius*, is a louse-like psocid that thrives upon mold. It is commonly called *Atropos divinatoria*, but has also been called *Pediculus pulsatorius* and simply book louse. Much smaller than the beetle, the lesser death-watch emits a faint ticking sound believed to be produced by means of stridulatory organs. On the basis of the sound described by Poe's narrator, the insect in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is the lesser rather than the greater death-watch" (3).

a moment after the king has been slaughtered (II, ii, 64- II, iii, 41). That fact that, according to the stage directions, the knocking is heard *within* may suggest that it is not those who wait *outside*, still unaware of what has just happened, but rather death which now lurks *inside*, waiting most impatiently to be let out in order to plunder at large the outside world.) Last but not least, especially in the context of some acute but undefined anxiety associated with the fear of the unknown, the Polish verb *kołatać* may also be connected with the unhealthy, hasty thumping of the heart which signals nervous irritation or can be a symptom of a severe heart condition. The popular saying: *dusza się w nim ledwo kołacze*, which literally means: "his soul is barely ticking," denotes a man on the verge of death and goes hand in hand with the aforementioned suggestions.

All through Europe, boring beetles have a fatal reputation for forecasting an approaching death. In fact, the sound is a signal meant to attract the attention of the females: the louder the beat, the stronger and therefore more attractive the unseen contender. However, the ominous superstition is reflected in many countries and languages. In German and Spanish, for instance, both species are called, respectively, *Totenuhren* and *relojes de muerte*. The English name reflects the belief that they were often heard by people "on watch" when an ill person was on the verge of death. Hence the ominous tag: the deathwatch.

In Polish literature, the deathwatch features, quite appropriately, in the famous Romantic drama by Adam Mickiewicz, based on the Polish-Lithuanian folk tradition of summoning the souls of dead people, celebrated at the time of the Christian feast of All Saints. It drew the attention of Jan Kott, who analyzed this episode in one of his essays, written at the time when he was recovering from a heart-attack; no doubt the critic's inner hearing was then sharply focused on the beat of his heart as he felt the presence of approaching death (181). The noise described in the poem is a persistent, quick and regular sound, which resembles the sullen ticking of an old watch hidden under a pillow. Most importantly, however, like the knocking heard *within* Macbeth's castle (and no doubt echoed in his troubled mind), it calls in doubt the clear-cut distinction between the "outside phenomena" and "inside sensations." We can likewise say that death is both a part of life and the most radical opposite of life, something that is the most intimate, the most dependable companion of each living creature and at the same time its absolute, totally inconceivable Other. The "ticking" of a deathwatch beetle, mixed with the uneasy heartbeat of an agitated, frightened or ill person, is also both "within" and "outside," both factual and fanciful, realistic and whimsical, trustworthy and unbelievable, an observable natural phenomenon and a figment of imagination. Herein (or should we rather say: out there?) lies the key to Mickiewicz's and Poe's literary-entomological riddles:

Tak tak, tak tak, tata, tata!
A dalibógże, kołata,
Jak zegarek pod poduszką.
Co to jest? tata, tek, ta tek! (Mickiewicz 67)

The onomatopoeic lines "say" nothing and carry no symbolic meaning as long as they represent the mere sound of nature (a beetle) or technology (a watch), but as soon as this sound becomes associated with a supernatural message, it becomes a voice charged with significance and enveloped in mystery (whose unseen hand could be so close as to plant the invisible watch under the pillow?). The question: *Co to jest?* ["What is it?"] is in fact an apostrophe to the unknown, unseen presence which demands an answer. In the end, the mechanical clatter changes into an articulate appeal from a tormented soul, begging for remembrance and prayer: *Proszę o trojȩ paciorek* ["I beg for three *Pater nosters*"] (91). It is no longer a sound produced by a beetle of ill-omen or a mysterious watch, but the impossible, unthinkable utterance of a dead person. In the real world, where reason is the highest authority, such a transformation would be deemed scandalously absurd; in the realm of literary fiction it relies on the use of prosopopeia, a rhetorical figure of counterfeit voice. The ticking of a deathwatch resonates in dead wood as if logs could talk; likewise the figure of prosopopeia gives voice, i.e. life, to the mute, to absent and inanimate beings, absent or dead people; moreover, it can put on the mask of a life on the very essence of non-being, that is on death itself.

The drumming of *xestobium rufovillosum* and/or *anobium pertinax*, so much like the ticking of a watch hidden under the pillow, or the beating of a troubled heart, which grows ever louder and faster as death bends carefully over the patient's bed and overshadows his sight, will also set the pace of our interpretative endeavor. The following analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic narrative "The Tell-Tale Heart," first published in 1843, is therefore going to wrap itself around just this one, monotonous and ominous sound, the mating call of deathwatch beetles and the fanciful transformations it may undergo in fiction thanks to the use of a literary prosopopeia.

2. Beyond Reason and Language

"True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad?" (97)—the memorable opening of Poe's short story has certainly retained its provocative appeal. To begin with, the exclamation sharpens the contrast between the nature of literary fiction and the narrator's obvious craving for veracity,

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which he, most unwisely, seems to privilege over deception and illusion. Or does he? Despite all the appeals to matter-of-factedness, precision, accuracy or exactness, in short: the *truth* of the story, this narrative is, after all, a perfect instance of a stunning manipulation. From the start, the protagonist of Poe's story is perfectly aware of the fact that he will be diagnosed, or even worse "classified" as an unreliable narrator. Since he knows it in advance, he does not propose or deny anything, but instead confronts us with a challenge encapsulated in the almost jubilant, proud acknowledgement of a nervous disposition ("very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am"), followed by the provocative rebuke: "but why *will* you say that I am mad?" The question is at the same time an invitation for medical scrutiny, as it immediately casts the reader in the role of an analyst, and a preventive dismissal of the easily foreseeable, logically motivated verdict. On the other hand, it helps us pursue the problem of critical analysis to its logical limitation: projecting as it does, in a manner that anticipates the Foucauldian critique of reason, the internal restrictions of rational discourse. In a mental asylum, says Foucault, madness is muted insofar as it does not acknowledge its own guilt and does not take the form of a confession. The question remains, however, as to whether Poe's narrator is indeed confessing his crime?

The opening sentence of Foucault's seminal study is a quotation from Blaise Pascal: "Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness" (xi). It perfectly fits the predicament of Poe's patient/narrator whose chief aim is what Foucault decries as "reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime or disease" (xii). The impossibility of the madman's endeavor in Poe's story consists in his belief that he can persuade the sane, while at the same time his frighteningly logical discourse derives precisely "from the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non- reason" (Foucault xii). It forgets that as soon as madness and non-madness, reason and non-reason come into existence, i.e. as soon as they enter social discourse, they immediately cease to exist "for each other, in relation to each other, in the exchange which separates them" (Foucault xii). What follows is the impossibility of communication.

> As for common language there is no such thing; or, rather, there is no such thing any longer; the constitution of madness as a mental disease, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, posits the separation as already effected, and thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between reason and madness was made. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason about madness, has been established only on the basis of such silence. (Foucault xii)

"The Tell-Tale Heart" confirms the impenetrability of this sound-proof barrier by merely reversing Foucault's premise: the entire story is a monologue of madness about reason. Nevertheless, it contains no spurious, broken, stammering words. It does not narrate a crime of passion which would simplify our response and set a clear boundary between reason and un-reason (which is reckless, sudden, wild and thoughtless); on the contrary, the focus falls on postponing the actual murder, on calculation, cunning and premeditation. The reason for this well-prepared misdeed is the murderer's fear of the victim's "evil eye." The precise nature of this penetrating sight remains unclear; we only know that the old man's eye resembled that of a vulture: "a pale blue eye with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever" (98). What never fails to grasp the reader's attention is how the narrator's compulsive repetitions focus on precisely these features of character which would stand in sharp contrast with any form of nervous compulsion: "You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight... I went to work!" (98). Wisdom, of course, is the opposite of folly, caution must be juxtaposed with rashness, and, last but not least, foresight would make up for the madman's *apparent* short-sightedness (the reader is invited to employ here *at once* all the contradictory meanings of the word "apparent," like: noticeable, evident, seeming and deceptive) and/or his *actual* lack of the forethought. Here once again "The Tell-Tale Heart" agrees with Foucault's findings: "At the secret heart of madness, at the core of so many errors, so many absurdities, so many words without consequence, we discover, finally, the hidden perfection of a language" (89).

3. The Voice of Another

Most literary fictions rely on the textual constructs which, despite the actual experience of silent letters on the page, effectively appeal to the recipients' imagination and willy-nilly activate his sense of hearing. The notions of "poetic image" and "counterfeit voice" merge in the time-honored idea of poetry, denoting all forms of fictional narratives, as a "speaking picture." This notion pertains to two important literary tropes, that of ekphrasis: the verbal equivalent of a visual object, and prosopopeia: the figure of imagined voice given to a lifeless object (e.g. a piece of wood), a mute creature (an insect) or an absent/dead person (the victim of a crime). Both these tropes are strongly connected with each other. A striking parallel can be drawn, for instance, between Poe's tale and its ekphrastic twin, Robert Browning's dramatic monologue "My Last Duchess,"

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first published in 1842, one year before Poe wrote his "Tell-Tale Heart." The two texts present some form of murderous obsession which nevertheless hides itself under the mask of good sense. Browning's persona, as we all remember, is first and foremost a great connoisseur of the arts and a generous patron of artists (whom he would rather call artisans) who depict in sculpture and paintings *his* dominion over time and space. At the same time, however, the Duke of Ferrara is a slave of passions which force him to order the killing of his wife. When he realizes that the Duchess is too independent in her joys, too much in love with life itself, he replaces a living person with an ideal image. Together with the visitor who enjoys the privilege of viewing the picture carefully safeguarded in the Duke's private apartments, the area excluded from the public space downstairs and therefore closed for "the company below," the reader is encouraged to engage his/her imagination and "look with his ears," recovering from the blank words on the page the vivid portrait of a beautiful woman. But what is most important in Browning's dramatic monologue remains unsaid. The casual, conversational tone of the speaker is a splendid mask which hides murderous ambition, covetousness and envy. The revelation of the crime comes about suddenly and is most unexpected:

> This grew; I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
> As if alive. (67)

Most importantly, this crucial passage of Browning's poem points to the insufferable weight of suppressed passions which are released by the gaze of a woman who, even after her death "looks as if she were alive" (in the double sense of somebody who *appears* to be alive and whose accusatory *glance* still has the power to disturb the guilty conscience of the murderer). To be sure, the Duchesses's portrait says a lot, especially to the man who had her killed in order to prevail over the intolerable anarchy of her insolent joy and roving looks. Fixed in a frame, her gaze has become sharp and insightful, penetrating the inmost recesses of the murderer's soul.

The analogy seems indeed outstanding (not to say: eye-catching), for Poe's murder is equally concerned with his victim's piercing gaze, although in his case it haunts him before, not after the deed. This is the reason why he keeps visiting the old man's room for seven successive nights. Each time he must withdraw, for he is convinced that he ought to see the evil eye before he can commit the crime. It is only on the eighth night that he may finally carry out his plan. The evil eye forces him to murder the man who is reduced to an anonymous shade enveloped around a black hole, the gate of hell. The victim has no name, no body and no face:

> It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray, as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot. (101)

Jean-Luc Marion, a contemporary French continuator of Martin Heidegger's philosophical reflections, claims that the apple of the eye is the only and minimal spot on the body of another where I can see nothing (not even the color of the iris that surrounds the black hole) except for the invisible gaze which the other lays on me like a heavy weight—"when it falls on me it must be endured" (283). "The other is a burden," repeats Marion after Levinas (283), most adequately in the context of Poe's outstanding narrative whose focal point is marked precisely by the ray of light which disappears in the impenetrable depth of "the damned spot." There is only one difference between the two accounts that must be dutifully recorded, for if in Marion's analysis the Other stands for divine transcendence which requires moral responsibility for the life of our neighbor (very much like for Levinas); for Poe it is a contemptuous, diabolical sneer from the depths of hell, an urge to kill.

A moment after he has spotted the hateful eye, the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" reminds us that he is also endowed with an exceptionally acute sense of hearing which had an equal share in pushing him ahead:

> And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a *low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I knew *that* sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage. (101, emphasis added)

This is not the first time he has heard that noise. It has accompanied him ever since the old man stirred for the first time that fatal night, disturbed by the faint clatter at the door. Even before that the murderer has been acquainted with the ominous portent of his own deed, the ticking of a deathwatch which sounded exactly the same as the beating of the old man's heart:

> I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out, 'Who's there?'
> I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening;

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just as I have done night after night hearkening to the death watches in the wall. (99, emphasis added)

The following account is not only an in-depth psychological analysis of a panic-stricken mind but also an indispensable addition to the Kierkegaardian divagations on the concept of dread. It describes the unbearable anxiety which cannot be dismissed with any kind of rational explanation. Worth noticing is also the fact that Poe reverses the traditional pattern of Gothic suspense, provided for instance in Anne Radcliffe's novels, where the reader usually shares the point of view of an oppressed heroine who cannot identify the exact nature of the threatening presence that waits at the door of her bed-chamber or lingers unrecognized in the darkest corners of the room. Someone or something walks out of sight, hangs around, patiently waits for an opportune moment. In the case of Poe's story, on the other hand, we are invited to follow the villain's motions and, however bizarre it may sound, to share his dread. The narrator states very clearly that the fear of the old man merely repeats and reflects his own emotions which pushed him towards the fatal deed:

> Presently, I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—'It is nothing but the wind in the chimney, it is only a mouse crossing the floor,' or, 'It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.' Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*, because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him and enveloped the victim. (100)

Paradoxically enough, we can say that the old man is killed by his own fear, as indeed, his anxiety echoes and teases that of his murderer. In the end, it is not the unbearable *gaze* of another which is the immediate reason for attack, but the *sound* which resonates both within both men and outside—perhaps in worm-ridden wooden floors or furniture of "that old house" which will soon become a scene of crime:

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder, every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous; so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! (101-102)

No doubt Poe's story can be read as a masterpiece analysis of various vocal phenomena: the agitated heartbeat of the victim who dies out of fear and the pulsation of blood in the ears of a murderer who kills out of fear; the ominous sound of the deathwatch which may have provoked the incident and provides a perfect equivalent for these two dreadful melodies in the outside world; and, last but not least, the voice of a narrator, who in the crucial moment leading to the revelation of the crime listens simultaneously to all these sounds: overlapping each other, imitating one another, contending between themselves.

It all begins with the sound of a doorbell announcing the arrival of police officers, who have arrived because the shrieks at night have alarmed the neighbors. The following two paragraphs are worth quoting in full, for they perfectly render the game of the heard and the unheard, real and imaginary, inner and outer noises. The repetition of the phrases which occurred earlier in the narrative contributes to the polyphonic character of this passage, where the voice (or voices?) coming from the inside of the narrator's body and radiating through a space which is exterior to that body interlace with their echoes outside him:

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears; but still they sat, and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale; but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was *a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for

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breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly, more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. O God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder*! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew*!—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder*! (103-104)

Firstly and most importantly, one is reminded of a similar tension described in Browning's dramatic monologue. Secondly, Poe's narrator gives us here an account of the condition theorized by Stephen O'Connor in his seminal study: *Dumbstruck. A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*: "A voice… establishes me as an inside capable of recognizing and being recognized by an outside.… If I hear my thoughts as a voice then I divide myself between the one who speaks, from the inside out, and the one who hears the one who speaks, from the outside in" (6). This, I wish to suggest, is the warrant of Poe's psychological investigation.

4. What the Deathwatch Said

What remains to be clarified is the role of the deathwatch in our story. Insects, as we know only too well, lack the skill of articulating speech, but both Mickiewicz's greater deathwatch and Poe's (possibly) lesser deathwatch are anxious to pass on an important message to the reader. "The Tell-Tale Heart" ends with the apparently absurd conclusion that could have occurred in the madman's mind (so indeed the narrator was right, as we indeed finally arrive at the conclusion that his version cannot be trusted!). Tormented by the ticking sound which comes from under the floor, he exclaims: "'Villains!' I shrieked, 'dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!'" (104). This is the most embarrassing moment of the story for a couple of reasons. First, it brings into sharp focus something that has been an important, but hitherto unacknowledged aspect of the story, namely the recognition of the fact

that both speaking and hearing are games of dissimulation. Paradoxically enough, the narrator of Poe's story associates deceit with reason. When he boasts about how carefully he prepared the murder, he says: "You should have seen how *wisely* I proceeded—with… what *dissimulation*, I went to work!" (98, emphasis added). His narrative blurs the difference between facts and fiction, fancy and reality, his true face and mask. This is, indeed, one of the most outstanding examples of unreliable narration, not because the narrator is inaccurate, cannot or does not want to reveal all truth, but because he is so *ostentatiously* determined to pass for someone he is not: he plays a friendly lodger, a good neighbor, an enemy of an evil eye, and, last but not least, a reasonable man. He is a perfect actor, carefully employing his voice in the service of various roles. He thus reveals the most alarming quality of prosopopeia, whose function is to put a face on a faceless reality, but whose Greek name derives from the word *prosopon* which denotes a theatrical mask.

Secondly, and still more importantly, even if we suspected from the start that the tale would gradually reveal the logic of unreason, we are still surprised by the way it translates the inarticulate background noises into the key pronouncement of the story. In other words, we should say that the mistake of Poe's narrator does not consist in confusing the mating call of a boring beetle (or a book louse, for that matter) with the beating of his victim's heart. It is rather a matter of giving a *human* voice to the inarticulate, instinctive, unspeakable drives and forces which, like the mechanical noise of the deathwatch, constitute the principal soundtrack of this amazing narrative, something that "wells up" from the bosom of a tormented soul, but must remain speechless, like the wooden floor, insects that feed on wood (or on books, if we accept Reilly's hypothesis), and dead bodies concealed underneath the floorboards. Contrary to popular opinion, we shall say then that "The Tell-Tale Heart" is not a story of a man driven mad by the persistent knocking of innocent beetles, but another version of Gregor Samsa'a fantastic metamorphosis recorded by Franz Kafka: thus, instead of a bizarre Kafkaesque narrative about a man who overnight became a beetle we get an anecdote about a beetle disguised as a man and endowed with the power of human speech. In brief: tongue-in-cheek, Poe challenges our naïve trust in literature, confronting his readers with one more version of what Shakespeare's Macbeth would call "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (V, v, 25-27).

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Tadeusz Pióro

"The death of literature as we know it": Reading Frank O'Hara

When Frank O'Hara's *Collected Poems* were published in 1971, reviewers had mixed feelings. The book contains 510 poems, of which only 286 had appeared in print during O'Hara's lifetime. Although he was notoriously careless with his manuscripts—stuffing them into drawers and forgetting they existed, or sending them to friends without keeping a copy for himself—the publication of everything that the editor had unearthed was taken by some reviewers as a potential disservice to O'Hara's posthumous reputation. There are a number of slight poems in the volume, and some others are just plain bad, so it seemed reasonable to assume O'Hara would not have wished to see them in print. Helen Vendler sums up the matter prudently in her review of the *Collected* in *Parnassus*: "for the record, we need this new edition; for the sake of fame and poetry, we need a massively reduced version, showing O'Hara at his best" (qtd. in Perloff 6). Indeed, an ample selection was soon made available, while the search for his unpublished work continued. This resulted in the publication of 214 newly discovered poems (*Poems Retrieved*) in 1977, and ever since, critics have been at work trying to establish some sort of order and hierarchy in O'Hara's impressively large oeuvre.

Forty five years have passed since O'Hara's death, and it is fair to say that the poems critics focus on, or even refer to in passing, are greatly outnumbered by those that never get mentioned. His canon has been more or less firmly established, though for how long is anyone's guess. It is curious that at least one of these "canonical" poems, generally agreed to be major, has elicited relatively few sustained critical examinations—I am thinking specifically of "Biotherm." At the same time, it polarized critical opinion like no other poem by O'Hara, with the possible exception of "Second Avenue." When the reception of his work was in its early stages, and separating the wheat from the chaff appeared as the most urgent task, Anthony Libby and Richard Howard castigated "Second Avenue" for its structural shortcomings (Libby 135-137, Howard 114-116), while Marjorie Perloff allowed it some measure of success; Charles Molesworth found "Biotherm" to be "an aleatory set of transcriptions, the recording of many merely different things" which "seldom compels an energized response" (213); whereas Perloff praised it as exhilarating, in spite of similar reservations. She also calls it O'Hara's "last great poem and one of the important poems of the sixties" (Perloff 178). Five years later,

in 1982, Mutlu Konuk Blasing claimed that "Biotherm" "can serve as a focal point for a study of [O'Hara's] entire career, which in a sense is a countdown for this final explosion" (307). More recent readings do not do away with valorizations, but these are of a quite different kind, as I shall try to show. Still, the fact remains that these initially controversial poems, despite their present canonicity within the O'Hara corpus, are very resistant to the kind of close reading that aims at a comprehensive, totalizing interpretation. The reasons for this resistance, and the ways in which readers have attempted to overcome it, will be my main concern in this paper.

Before taking up these questions, however, I would like to take a closer look at "Biotherm," which was written between September 1961 and January of the following year. Soon after he started work on the poem, O'Hara wrote to Donald Allen, who later edited his posthumously published books, to say that what had started as an occasional "birthday poem" for Bill Berkson was developing into something much larger, as had been the case with the "Ode to Michael Goldberg ('s Birth and Other Births)," a long autobiographical work from 1958 in which Goldberg plays a cameo role. "I don't know anything about what it is or will be but am enjoying trying to keep going and seem to have something. Some days I feel very happy about it, because I seem to have been able to keep it 'open' and so there are lots of possibilities, air and such" (qtd. in Perloff 173). Berkson was O'Hara's closest friend at that time, and although they were not lovers, their intimacy in every other sphere of life went far enough for a kind of private language to exist in their conversation—nothing radical or extraordinary, just set phrases or quotations, dependent for their effect, usually intended to be comic, on the various discursive contexts of their shared experiences. This finds its way into the poem, which is in part a conversation between O'Hara and Berkson, or perhaps a record of conversations they actually had. From time to time O'Hara switches to a lyrical mode, describing his feelings for Berkson, and these two strands of the poem differ greatly from everything else in it and therefore are fairly easy to identify.

"Everything else" is, I admit, a vague term, but the materials are so heterogeneous that calling them anything but interruptions of the conversational/confessional passages would result in even more egregious simplification. Yet if we rest content to call them interruptions, we impose on the poem an order it manifestly does not have. In other words, we might just as well take the conversational/confessional passages as interruptions in the flow of, well, everything else. Take, for instance, the following passage:

> you were there I was here you were here I was there where are you I miss you
> (that was an example of the 'sonnet' 'form') (this is another)
> when you went I stayed and then I went and we were both lost and then I died

oh god what joy
you're here
sob and at the
most recent summit
conference they
are eating string
beans butter
smootch slurp
pass me the filth
and a coke pal
oh thank you

down at the box-office of Town Hall I was thinking of you in your no hat
music often reminds me of something, that way, like reforming. (*CP* 442)

O'Hara mocks not just his own direct presentation of emotions ("what joy / you're here / sob") but the tradition of lyric poetry in general, subsumed by the category of "sonnet form." The reference to a "summit conference" and the ingestive onomatopoeia stand in no determinable relation to the theme of lyricism, although this theme is clearly related to other confessional passages in the poem. Geoff Ward points to the connections between the summit feasting and the images of filth and "expressions of disgust" that reappear throughout the poem, but such connections do not account for why these particular instances of filth and disgust are located between the reflections on lyricism and a reminiscence introducing the motif of reform (21).

In an earlier "occasional" poem, "John Button Birthday," O'Hara interrupts the flow of reflections on friendship and affection with references to the scene and process of writing, once when he announces "[a]nd now that I've finished dinner I can continue," and again with '[n]ow I have taken down the underwear / I washed last night from the various light fixtures / and can proceed" (*CP* 267). His comment on these cracks in the poem's surface also takes the form of an interruption: "[a]nd now / not that I'm interrupting again, I mean your now, / you are 82 and I am 03" (*CP* 268). These intrusions of the quotidian into a celebratory text emphasize its literariness, even though by conventional standards they are radically anti-literary. In "Biotherm" such a distinction cannot hold, because of the poem's refusal to privilege its lyrical parts at the expense of the others. There is no intrinsic reason for which we could take the conversations with Berkson, or the author's expressions of his feelings, for the poem's substance, presented against the backdrop of so much white noise. Such a leveling does more than eliminate depth, or

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make depth and surface one and the same. It removes the poem from the sphere of interpretability, which is also the sphere of the literary. This does not mean it makes interpretation impossible or pointless, but indicates that the poem is meant to frustrate readers' efforts at achieving hermeneutic fullness.

O'Hara's ambitions in this regard can be traced back to his poetic manifesto, "Personism," written in 1959. It is generally taken for a crucial point of reference by O'Hara scholars, but rarely do they pay serious attention to the passage in which he contextualizes the writing method he has just explained.

> In all modesty, I confess that [Personism] may be the death of literature as we know it. While I have certain regrets, I am still glad I got there before Alain Robbe-Grillet did. Poetry being quicker and surer than prose, it is only just that poetry finish literature off. For a time people thought that Artaud was going to accomplish this, but actually, for all their magnificence, his polemical writings are not more outside literature than Bear Mountain is outside New York State. (*CP* 499)

Perhaps the hyperbolic and jocular cast of these remarks discourages taking them in earnest, but the only joke here is that made at the expense of Robbe-Grillet, while the comments about Artaud and the hoped-for consequences of Personism are intended to be serious. Artaud, O'Hara suggests, botched the job of killing literature, because he did not abandon its trappings even as he called for its destruction.[1] Therefore, they are not "outside literature," or more precisely – outside literature "as we know it." Is "Biotherm?" Let's consider another passage from the poem.

> ENDGAME WAITING FOR GODOT WATT HAPPY DAYS which means I love you
> what is that hat doing on that table in my room where I am asleep
> 'thank you for the dark and the shoulders'
> 'oh thank you'
>
> okay I'll meet you at the weather station at 5
> we'll take a helicopter into the 'eye of the storm
> we'll be so happy in the center of things at last

[1] Mutlu Konuk Blasing takes the expression "outside literature" as an instance of what Derrida terms the "fatal complicity" of destructive discourse, "which must inhabit the structures it would destroy. O'Hara is trapped along with Artaud, and there is a basic affinity between them" (312). I don't think this is applicable to "Personism," because O'Hara concerns himself with what is deemed sufficiently literary to be called literature, and thus with a historically-specific set of discriminations, and not with an ontological definition and the paradox Derrida derives from it.

now the wind rushes up nothing happens and departs
L'EUROPA LETTERATURA CINEMATOGRAFICA ARTISTICA 9 – 10

your back the street solidity fragility erosion
why did this Jewish hurricane have to come
and ruin our Yom Kippur

favorites: vichyssoise, capers, bandannas, fudge-nut-ice, collapsibility,
the bar of the Winslow, 5:30 and 12:30, leather sweaters, tunafish,
cinzano and soda, Marjorie Rambeau in *Inspiration*
whatdoyoumeanandhowdoyoumeanit (*CP* 444-5)

The passage is framed by references to love and meaning: "which means I love you" and "whatdoyoumeanandhowdoyoumeanit," and it is easy to imagine that the latter is Berkson's reply to O'Hara's confession of love. The juxtaposition of solidity, fragility and erosion with "your back the street" suggests that stability may be achieved only if the object or subject in question is removed from all of the contexts within which it normally exists and functions. This is true of Berkson as a person, of O'Hara's relationship with him, and, most importantly, of their poetic representations. At the same time, happiness requires being in a helicopter "in the 'eye' of the storm," "in the center of things at last." So if we ask, as most readers of this poem do, why O'Hara refers to so many activities, so many events, so many objects and so many people, all either real or imaginary, we might begin to answer these questions by dissociating happiness from stability. As in the experiential sphere we can't expect to understand everything that is going on around us, so the chaos of reference in "Biotherm" has to be seen as an irreducible given, an axiomatic ground of representation.

One of the victims of this way of "keeping the poem happy" is causality. Do the titles of a novel and three plays by Samuel Beckett mean "I love you" because the last one in the series is *Happy Days*, or are there other, quite private reasons for this pseudo-explanation? If such reasons exist, in all likelihood we'll never find out what they are, so the answer must be *Happy Days*: the title of the play, no matter what it's actually about, allows O'Hara to connect the titular happiness with his love for Berkson. He lists the other titles simply to make the line sound better, fuller, more convincing. In other words, reading Beckett will not explain anything about "Biotherm"—his presence in the poem is associational in the most literal sense, lacking what readers in the early sixties would expect of literary allusions, having learned how to make use of them in interpreting Pound or Eliot. "The death of literature as we know it" also means the death of reading

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as we know it, and most immediately of the kind of reading many Modernist works make necessary.

The catalogue of "favorites" strengthens the metonymic tendency apparent in the list of Beckett's works. The inclusion of "collapsibility" prevents it from being utterly banal, even if the word itself has no determinate reference within a set of things to wear or eat and drink, and the places and times of day particularly well suited to these activities ("Marjorie Rambeau in *Inspiration*" might be there solely on account of her name). "Collapsibility" may be seen as a caprice, meaningful only as such. It is not as easy to dismiss the "Jewish hurricane" which ruined "our Yom Kippur." This seems to be a reference to something that actually happened, most likely a hyperbolic one. But since the reference is completely obscure, are we at liberty to ignore it? Marjorie Perloff has in mind the numerous instances of such referential obscurity when she asks of "Biotherm:" "[h]ow much openness can a poem bear?" (174). Her reading of the poem indicates that the only way to enjoy it is to focus on its flow and flux, finding meaning wherever possible, but without insisting that everything be meaningful or comprehensible.

As far as my own pleasure of reading "Biotherm" is concerned, this is certainly the best way to proceed. But what if a reader's pleasure requires a full understanding of everything in the text? This question goes beyond "Biotherm," extending to Language poetry and its frequent refusal to be meaningful in any recognized sense. Perhaps readers who take no pleasure in this kind of writing and feel in some way excluded from it might revise their approach by foregrounding O'Hara's stated purpose of "finishing literature off" and his positioning of his "Personist" poems "outside literature as we know it"—but this is merely speculative, so let us return to the pleasures of "Biotherm." In a recent article, Geoff Ward suggests that the openness of this poem can be taken for a critique of O'Hara's earlier work which, by comparison, is very tightly controlled:

> The risk undertaken by 'Biotherm' is one of moving on to a poetry of signs whose openness to fleeting micro-data is so emphatic that it begins to critique the earlier poetry. This critique potentially discloses a level of authorial guidance in the choices available to readers of the 'I do this, I do that' poems that might make their apparent openness relative, a property of stage-machinery now starting audibly to creak. It is a risky move, and one that allies O'Hara to modernism, not in any comfortable, library-bound sense, but in the sense that what is avant-garde destroys by superseding its predecessors, including the author's own work. (24)

What Ward implies here is paradoxical: while the putative "authorial guidance" in poems heretofore seen as "open" enables comprehensive readings of them, relinquishing

such guidance and granting readers complete interpretative liberty can make the poem impenetrable and therefore—closed. But for this to be the case, our approach to the poem must be primarily interpretative, and that is precisely what O'Hara opposed in his poetic theory and practice. Ward sees "Biotherm" as a risky project because of the poem's retroactively destructive potential, but is that not the whole point of all the great Modernist projects of bringing about "the death of literature as we know it"? To put it plainly, no risk, no fun. O'Hara's alliance with Modernism can be narrowed down to exclude such figures as Eliot or Stevens, while foregrounding Stein and her "Stanzas in Meditation," or the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, or even some of Ronald Firbank's fantasias. We can argue about the relative success of these works as attempts on the life of "literature as we know it," but their revolutionary intent is beyond question.

This brings us to the role of authorial intentions in the interpretative apparatus needed to analyze, but also to contextualize such resistant works as "Biotherm" or "Second Avenue." When James Joyce said that *Ulysses* contains enough riddles to keep scholars guessing for a century, he was not accused of arrogance or cruelty: the boast was taken for an instance of the great writer's impish sense of humor. O'Hara's comments on "Second Avenue" have prompted one critic, Andrea Brady, to call his attitude towards readers sadistic, and to present her own interpretation of the poem as carried out despite the author's discouragement: the act of reading is also, in her case, a form of defiance, perhaps even self-defense. Brady claims that "Second Avenue" "seeks to outwit hermeneutic analysis":

> O'Hara doesn't want to allow readers to make anything of his poem: it is to unfold immediately and without repercussions…. O'Hara prevents the reader from intervening in the making of the text's meaning. This differentiates his intentions (if not his text) from the emphasis on the reader as participant producer in such later developments as Language poetry, but also raises the question of what the reader is actually meant to do with this text. It situates the reader very specifically. (62-63)

Although Brady goes on to show that, in spite of this, "hermeneutic analysis" of "Second Avenue" is possible, cutting through the poem's obscurity is no less important for her than questioning the ethics of O'Hara's intended refusal to grant the reader the possibility to interpret—or, to take this a step further than Brady, his denial that the reader is a reader, and not merely a spectator. This "abridgment of readers' rights," to use a term from a different discourse, is ultimately self-defeating and illusory, as Brady convincingly points out, but that does not really change the reader's situation or the resentment she might feel at having been forced into it. And so Brady detects in the poet's "expectation

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of [the reader's] failure" a "sadistic relation to critics and readers," a "violent delight in humiliating the reader with his or her own insufficiency," a delight apparent in many other texts besides "Second Avenue" (she does not say which ones, but I think that readers can easily come up with their own lists—the chances these would include "Biotherm" are very good indeed).

Brady's reference to Language poetry and its programmatic inclusion of the reader in the process of creating meaning is particularly interesting because of the importance of poems such as "Biotherm" or John Ashbery's "Europe" for the theory and practice of poets like Charles Bernstein or Barrett Watten. The question I'd like to ask in concluding concerns the pragmatics of the distinction she makes between text and authorial intention. If we set an inscrutable Language poem against "Biotherm" or "Second Avenue," how will our awareness of the Language poet's generous receptiveness to readers' interpretations help us in making sense of the poem in question? Will such an awareness be more useful in the reading process than the belief that O'Hara wants to humiliate us with our insufficiency? Of course, everything depends on the reader. My own feeling is: no risk, no fun.

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Agnieszka Kotwasińska

The Road to the Losers' Club: Hunter S. Thompson and the Canon of American Literature

Even though Hunter S. Thompson turned his back on traditional fiction and conventional journalism quite early in his career, he never entirely relinquished his deep-seated literary ambitions. Douglas Brinkley, a distinguished historian who is an editor of Thompson's letters as well as his literary executor, notes that Thompson "wanted to be part of the canon of American literature; he didn't want to be fringed off as some hillbilly buffoon or as the Doonesbury cartoon or the guy that frat guys liked because he drank so much booze" (Wenner and Seymour 344). Thompson "wanted to be taken as a serious American writer whose named (*sic*) was uttered in the same breath as Mark Twain or Ambrose Bierce or H.L. Mencken—an equal to Jack Kerouac or William Burroughs or Norman Mailer or Tom Wolfe" (344). As of today, Thompson's ambitions are yet to be realized. Arguably, his works by definition elude easy classification, and, as such, create a dilemma for postwar criticism which has been enmeshed in a rather narrow New Critical understanding of what can and what cannot be considered an exemplar of literary excellence. Because of limited space, this study cannot dwell on all theoretical systems which have emerged in the last seventy years and which may be applied to Thompson's body of work in order to trace the reception of his most popular gonzo texts—*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (1972) and *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* (1973). This study's main aim is to identify the tensions created by applying theoretical perspectives to Thompson's works, the possible recovery of his texts, and their potential for the subversion of the canon. Because most theoretical systems still rely heavily on a New Critical division of texts into artistically and socially motivated, it is only sensible to start by evaluating the actual impact of New Criticism on postwar literary theory.

Theories associated with New Criticism are marked by a lack of interest in sociopolitical forces that shape reality. Instead, fiction is to be experienced through its formal features and in connection to older literary traditions which it is following or with which it is trying to break. If these distinctions were applied to Hunter S. Thompson's works, a rather striking dichotomy might be discerned in his texts. On the one hand, he is very

much focused on the external forces that structure his perception of reality, and even his self-discoveries and self-inspections point toward much greater and almost tangible powers at work. This enduring interest in the social and the political basically excludes Thompson from the community of genuine men of letters as defined by New Criticism. On the other hand, even though almost everything seems to stem from politics in Thompson's world, he never ceases to speak to his past masters as well. Thus, there is no denying the extent of the Bloomian anxiety of influence that Thompson carried over his shoulder throughout his life.

Already at the start of his career, he would type Hemingway's and Fitzgerald's novels in order to grasp the flow and composition of their prose. All his life, he would meticulously collect carbon copies of his letters, take solemn Hemingway-like portraits of himself and travel to exotic locales trying to carve out a piece of raw experience that he could later put into his quasi-autobiographical writing. He would write to fellow authors asking for advice or for their agents' telephone numbers, and as far as his behavior was concerned, he would attempt to live up to a certain ideal of a lone macho writer through consuming copious amounts of Wild Turkey and drugs, sleeping around and instigating bar fights and run-ins with the law. Apart from these typical macho trappings, his very writing was an attempt to catch up with those giant men who had come before him. Years after the publication of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, he would brag with unabashed self-confidence that "[i]t's as good as *The Great Gatsby* and better than *The Sun Also Rises*" (McKeen 97). As a matter of fact, both books—Thompson's descent into the very core of American darkness and Fitzgerald's journey into East Egg's dilettante lifestyle—are linked by their narrators' shared need to uncover the truth behind the blinding glitter. Just as Nick Carraway silently observes the collapse of Gatsby's fantasies and Daisy's affectations, Raoul Duke enters the chaos of Las Vegas to bear witness to its decadence and to record its numbing madness. Neither is able to turn away and leave the crumbling gilded reality before it is too late. Interestingly, despite a plethora of discrepancies both texts point to the very same predilection for excess in the American people. In Fitzgerald's case, this obsessive quest for self-indulgence is exemplified by lavish parties and bitter-sweet indifference to human life; whereas in Thompson's book it is the eagerness of wild-eyed Corn Belt tourists to have their likeness projected on a two-hundred-foot-tall screen on a busy street in Las Vegas.

It seems that the greatest advantages of Thompson's writing—the factuality of the narrative and the enticing promise of its candor—are at the same time its main drawbacks. In line with New Criticism, unmediated facts belong to the domain occupied either by journalists or by the likes of William Dean Howells, who cling to the mimetic

representation of life with all its baseness, boredom, and impropriety. And just as fiction is considered a higher form of writing, the novelist is held in higher esteem than a mere hack. This may at least partly account for the fact that other New Journalists fared much better than Hunter S. Thompson, did precisely because they wrote acclaimed novels and plays apart from their journalistic texts. Mailer and Capote started out as successful novelists, while Wolfe and Didion strengthened their position through novels published after their New Journalistic coming-out. In stark contrast, Thompson was essentially a failed writer whose short stories and two novels had been repeatedly rejected by publishers and editors until the day he simply stopped trying to write the next Great American Novel. Of the two completed novels one, *The Rum Diary*, was finally published in 1998, while an excerpt of the other, *Prince Jellyfish*, was included in *Songs of the Doomed*: *More Notes on the Death of the American Dream* (1990). In all likelihood, the publication of *The Rum Diary* was prompted by Thompson's growing inability to procure noteworthy nonfiction material in the late 90s. A smooth, controlled, first-person narrative is reminiscent of Thompson's masters: Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Neither the form, however, nor the themes tackled in *The Rum Diary* could transform this novel into something more than it already was—a decently chronicled and a tad lackluster tale of young men and women's doomed entry into adulthood set against an exotic backdrop. By and large, Thompson's only published novel turned out to be too mediocre to change the popular view of his works. He remained a journalist in the eyes of the critics, and as such he could never be approached with the same gravity and respect as full-scale writers.

Even though it was reporting rather then belles-lettres that defined Thompson's writing, facts and fiction did collide frantically in his works. For this reason, his two gonzo books *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* as well as some shorter pieces, such as "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved", cannot be easily classified as articles or reportages in any conventional journalistic sense. The fact that Thompson effortlessly blends the steady stream of factual information with hallucinations, theatrics and clear-cut fabulation cannot be validated even by New Journalistic experiments with language and content. Ironically, in the letters to his editor, Jim Silberman, Thompson did confess that the narcotic feel of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was a pure fabrication.[1] He did not write the book while intoxicated with unbelievable quantities of ether, mescaline, cocaine, acid, various pills and

[1] Thompson made it perfectly clear that the truth should not be revealed: "All I ask you is that you keep your opinions on my drug-diet for that weekend to yourself. As I noted, the nature (& specifics) of the piece had already fooled the editors of Rolling Stones. They're absolutely convinced, on the basis of what they've read, that I spent my expense money on drugs and went out to Las Vegas to a ranking freakout. Probably we should leave it this way; it makes it all the more astounding, that I could emerge from that heinous experience with a story. So let's just keep or personal conclusions to ourselves...." See Thompson to Jim Silberman, 15 June, 1971, in *Fear and Loathing in America: The Brutal Odyssey of an Outlaw Journalist*, 406.

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Wild Turkey. On the contrary, he structured the book quite lucidly to make it look like an unedited and immediate record of authentic incidents. This is why, at the end of the day, his Las Vegas book is both a novel *and* a reportage, a product of the author's vivid imagination, but anchored in actual, if somewhat distorted, experiences.

It should come as no surprise that Thompson followed in his masters' footsteps and explored the same themes. His writing is literally soaked in American myths and symbols, such as a solitary journey into the wilderness in *Hell's Angels*, a white whale chase after Thompson's ultimate nemesis—Richard Milhous Nixon—in *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, the buddy road-trip meant to test one's manhood through blood rituals, and the never-ending search for the American Dream in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Interestingly, it is in Las Vegas, at the Circus-Circus casino that the two explorers—Raoul Duke and his Samoan lawyer, Dr. Gonzo—find the "main nerve" of the American Dream (*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* 48). The images caught by the duo during their ill-conceived visit to the phantasmagoric casino under the combined influence of ether, acid, and mescaline are not simply an unfortunate, if entirely predictable, upshot of a massive drug overdose. The drugs may enhance and ultimately exacerbate the irrationality and unreality of the unfolding insanity, but they do not generate it. The incomprehensible reality in the form of a grotesque gambling house is already there. And it is precisely among sloppily drunk patrons, gamblers high on adrenaline, among apes, wolverines, bears, and Nazis that the central myth of the whole nation has found the most fertile soil to thrive. Still, literary criticism based on the myth-and-symbol school might not be enough to save Thompson's texts from oblivion. Major theorists of the movement such as Henry Nash Smith, Richard Chase, Leslie Fiedler or Leo Marx never moved much far from New Criticism. In fact, irony and ambiguity extolled by the New Critics were simply replaced by an underlying network of symbols, myths, and themes that formed a remarkably coherent but at the same time sadly abridged version of American literature.

Numerous breaks with the New Critical definition of literature have been attempted, but as Russell J. Reising points out in *Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature*, a number of post-war theories broke with New Criticism only superficially while retaining its classic distinction between truly important artistic texts and socio-political pieces of little importance. For this reason, Thompson's works are still perceived as belonging to the latter group and hence their value, if recognized at all, is seen as inherently less significant than that of the former group. Still, it is possible to encounter within these post-war theoretical methodologies glimpses of the recognition which might be accorded to Thompson's texts. Space limitations considered, this study will briefly outline only a few potential points of entry that could be further developed.

It seems sensible to begin with reader-response theories and to apply Jauss's notion of the horizon of expectations to Thompson's writing. Although his books and articles initially surprised the readers and stretched their horizon of expectations, the shock element was simply not shocking enough in the long run. New Journalism as such lasted only a few years and even nowadays, though immensely popular among readers, literary journalism subsists in an academic limbo which neither the journalistic nor literary studies want to handle. But for a number of years during the late 60s and early 70s the hype generated by Wolfe, Mailer, or Thompson worked well on their audiences. The image of a brave young journalist who rode with the most notorious biker gang in the U.S. for almost a year and got savagely beaten by them was an inherent part of the marketing campaign which accompanied the publication of *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* in the late 60s. The magazine and TV interviews that followed, even the blurb itself, accentuated this thrilling and sexy experience and this fervent enthusiasm quickly caught on. Similarly, after the publication of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as a two-part *Rolling Stone* article, the author's relentless drug use became legendary almost overnight. Now a man who rode with the Angels admitted freely and cheerfully to smoking, inhaling, swallowing, and injecting into his body massive amounts of controlled substances. A year later, the same man would join the press bus to cover the 1972 presidential election, a bold and startling move for someone who had spend the previous five years partying with Sonny Barger, Allen Ginsberg, the Merry Pranksters, and Oscar Zeta Acosta. Ultimately, however, the atmosphere of danger and the anti-establishment themes that ran through Thompson's works were not nearly enough to grant him a place among the masters.

Still, the reception and reader-response theories suffer from a number of oversights. Firstly, Jauss's theory of the expanding horizon seems not broad enough to account for a much larger picture in which New Journalism is just one of the many instances of the interaction between literature and journalism, both before and after the emergence of New Journalism. What is more, Jaussian criticism does not leave much room for an in-depth examination of non-literary forces that have shaped the reception of New Journalism and its subsequent scholarship. Secondly, theorists such as Jauss, Iser, and Fish tend to put too much faith in the consistency of readers, whereas the choices and interpretations put forward by them cannot be easily compressed to fit one particular interpretative path. Lastly, as Jane Tompkins rightly notes in "Criticism and Feeling," the rationality associated with reaching the consensus by a given group of readers often masks literary critics' inability to deal effectively with the emotional dimension of the texts as well as of their own selves (169-178).

Ironically, reader-response theories, though admittedly a big step forward from a New Critical detachment and disregard of readers' intuition, leave little, if any, room for the

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free expression of feelings. Hence, texts which literally flood readers with an unmediated flow of emotions are recognized by the critical establishment as possessing lesser value than rational texts. Thompson's gush of Fear and Loathing which he experienced while covering the '72 presidential election is a case in point. Not only is he partial to one of the candidates, but also reveals his own deeply personal frustrations and failings: "I feel The Fear coming on, and the only cure for that is to chew up a fat black wad of blood-opium about the size of a young meatball and then call a cab for a fast run down to that strip of X-movie houses on 14th Street… peel back the the (*sic*) brain, let the opium take hold, and get locked into serious pornography" (53). Obviously, fragments such as this did little to endear him to conservative critics who cut their teeth on Wimsatt and Beardsley's admonitions against affective and intentional fallacies.

The fact that emotionality in texts as well as in critical theory is suppressed can be read as a lingering attachment to the New Critical thought according to which intellect, wit, and rationality are associated with highbrow literature, while emotions, intuition, and empathy belong to the fickle domain of popular prose. For this reason, Thompson's in-your-face attitude, which he does not even attempt to tone down, sets his writing apart from the fellow New Journalists and other literary journalists whose writing is much more polished and restrained. Because Thompson does not keep his distance from the stories, he is reporting and he frequently puts action in motion, he removes himself even further from the safe distinctions between an author and a narrator, a witness and a participant. How exasperating and maddening it must be to dissect the man behind *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, when the author is both the main hero of the story and the reporter covering the very same event, a fiction writer recreating and reshuffling real and imagined scenes and an unreliable narrator by the name of Raoul Duke who by no means corresponds smoothly to the real Hunter S. Thompson. Because the roles are not strictly outlined and dispensed among the actors and the book is so rapidly paced, different levels of narration shift discreetly throughout the book. As a result, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* comes across as a particularly difficult book in terms of its possible classification and categorization.

An alternative pathway for Thompson's texts to enter the contemporary canon is of course to knock at the poststructuralist door. Apparently awkward and ambiguous wording, vulgarity, jargon, and slang cease to be a barrier and language itself becomes the locus of attention, a site at which form and meaning collapse into one inseparable whole. This is why even non-valid and ill-formed narratives can be rescued from ridicule and obscurity through a comprehensive analysis that utilizes poststructuralist theories. Mixing different rhetorical modes (for instance, narration and argumentation) does not necessarily invalidate a given text and works such as nonfiction novel or literary journalism

can occupy the same position in the critical grid as realistic fiction or metafiction. The problem, however, arises when the emphasis placed on linguistics effectively cancels out the political aspects of a given work. Thompson's *gonzo journalism*, which he stumbled upon in 1970 while covering the Kentucky Derby, poses precisely such a dilemma. On the one hand, Thompson's linguistic pyrotechnics is what makes his texts so memorable and intense. The frequent use of ellipses, capitalization of significant nouns, rhetorical questions used to engage readers in the narrator's mental processes, profusion of verbal abuse and curses inserted solely for the sheer fun of it, and formal experiments with fake editor's notes, transcripts, third person narrative, and interviews—all this is meant to test the boundaries of contemporary writing and to break as many rules of literary appropriateness as possible. Through direct unpolished language Thompson manages to vent his dissatisfaction and frustration with reality. His language is not only a tool but also a means of exploring the pitiful existence of "220 million used car salesmen" (*Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail* 389). On the other hand, experimentation with narrative structure, non-standard writing and unadorned frankness may once again shift the critical eye from the social and onto the cultural. In other words, Thompson may turn into a rebellious writer whose chief mission is to disrupt the literary *status quo* and mock literary giants through an ostentatious break with the literary *and* journalistic decorum. Seen in this light his place within the literary culture is that of a joker, dissenter, and literary *enfant terrible*. Standing at the crossroads of journalism and literature allows him to cross certain boundaries freely and without regrets. Still, positioning Thompson as a cultural rebel, an unruly performer, seems to stand in sharp contrast to his life-long interest in politics and the true face of American society. Sidestepping his involvement in national and local politics in order to interpret his texts as elaborate tests of the margins of reportage, autobiography and narrative would run counter to the objectives he set out to achieve in his works in the first place.

Of course, most critical theories, including those associated with poststructuralism and postmodernism, tend to highlight only selected aspects of interpretation while overlooking other points of entry. Even Marxist theories as espoused by Fredric Jameson in *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* would have Thompson's works analyzed as strictly political texts but without considering the relation between the diversity of forms employed in them and the historical moment of their creation. Moreover, the emphasis placed on the political unconscious, which seemingly undergirds each and every text, is in itself highly problematic, as Edward Said suggests in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. In fact what vests Said most is a marked tendency to separate "imagination... from thought, culture from power, history from form, texts from everything that is *hors texte*," or conversely, a penchant for familiar, grandiose proclamations that

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after all everything is political, but without explicitly stating what "everything" and "political" mean (169).

Perhaps the inclusion of history and culture into the interpretative mode may be the answer. For instance, the New Historical analysis welcomes Thompson's texts which function as a valuable first-hand record of the culture and politics of the late 60s and early 70s. After all, New Historicism functions as a backdoor through which many previously unknown or underappreciated texts may, if not enter, than at least warily approach the canon. The many benefits of New Historicism and cultural studies are clear, yet the fact that each and every piece of broadly understood art or writing may be considered an object worth studying in a way cancels the need for maintaining a canon. If ads, talk shows, stickers, murals, and toys are discussed and analyzed on an equal footing with sculpture, poetry, and art-house cinema, then the artistic canons become relics of the now defunct division into highbrow and lowbrow art. Obviously, canons are still revered and will not disappear any time soon as the need to classify, catalogue, and prioritize objects around us is as strong as ever.

One argument in favor of maintaining a strong literary canon is that it provides a benchmark for a proper evaluation of the new material. Of course, the opponents may ask why should a postmodern text be judged through a juxtaposition with literary standards set in the mid-nineteenth century or earlier? Yet, for purely pragmatic reasons, the vast majority of readers and critics alike have to accept the fact that the canon of American literature does exist and is preserved, propagated, and disseminated in schools and higher learning institutions, as well as in popular culture around the globe. As of today, no arrangement has been worked out in which the canon would not assume the central position either as the ultimate arbiter of taste or the contemptible enemy of multiculturalism. The vast majority of scholars want to either preserve the canon in its current form or expand it as far as possible, but only a handful would do away with it altogether. The question that remains is whether it is possible to effectively widen, transform, or bend the canon so as to include Hunter S. Thompson's works.

The difficulty of deciding upon Thompson's place within American literature makes the inclusion of his works in the canon so problematic. The three most common methods of challenging and penetrating the canon do not apply easily to Thompson's body of work. Following the first and least intrusive method would be to prove that comparable pieces of literary journalism have already been included in the canon in earlier decades. Unfortunately, not even Thompson's favorite writers—Hemingway, Conrad, Donleavy, Fitzgerald, or Faulkner—could be brought to testify in his favor as their own semi-autobiographical or para-journalistic writing followed quite different paths. Conversely, it is possible to establish that even though Thompson's texts lack direct predecessors, they are nonetheless engaged in an

endless dialogue with past masterpieces through recurring themes, mythic structures, and of course, the anxiety of influence. This interpretative path, however, as already examined, yields too few usable arguments for the inclusion of Thompson's works into the canon. The attempts to compress a new work's interpretative spectrum in order to fit canonical moulds leave out too many promising pathways that may lead to new interpretations.

The second method is probably the hardest to accomplish, as it calls for re-inscribing Thompson's works in terms of literature, not journalism, and situating him as a novelist rather than a reporter. But after all, it is this peculiar merger of fiction and fact that is precisely what distinguishes Thompson from other literary journalists and were the second half of that equation to be erased, the result would be much plainer and uninvolving than the starting mixture. What is left is the last method—a creation of an alternative canon, a canon of literary journalism which could challenge the official literary canon. Two issues come to mind, however. Firstly, Thompson is associated with the New Journalism phenomenon rather than with contemporary literary journalism and his works rarely appear in modern anthologies. Secondly, the existence of alternative canons does not necessarily mean that they pose any real threat to the central canon. The proliferation of subcanons, countercanons, and alternative canons creates the impression of a specialist literary boutique where every reader can find his or her ultimate canon while naively believing that all the lists of canonized works are equally important. In reality, there is only one basic canon of American literature which may vary slightly in the anthologies or in different academic courses and which is circulated and disseminated through specific cultural channels, such as best-selling lists at prominent literary magazines or journals, curricula for the first-year students, prestigious re-editions, movie and theater adaptations, etc. All the other canons are mere supplements added only when the readers have already been acquainted with the classics. In a way, New Journalism makes sense only in relation to a larger literary heritage. More than that, the appeal of Thompson's books stems from the fact that readers are able to identify his violations and crimes against the unyielding division of texts into literature and journalism. Perhaps it is against this underlying grid of criteria that works such as *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* perform fully by upsetting and disrupting the established way of approaching texts.

Although in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*, Jane Tompkins suggests that those texts which do not echo the dominant ideology and principles of the cultural elites soon lose their attraction and are abandoned in the deepest vaults of libraries, Gerald Graff argues in *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* that the majority of subversive works are assimilated into the dominant cultural modes and are hence rendered harmless (2). Following Tompkins's analysis first, it may be posited that because Thompson's writing runs counter to the established literary modes and

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themes, his works were ultimately dismissed as somewhat entertaining but, all things considered, insignificant examples of a social and historical phenomenon of the counterculture. The fact that he managed to secure only a handful of strong literary connections and he consciously kept away from publishing centers and literary establishments further reduced his chances of getting ahead in the literary world. Interestingly, while analyzing American best-selling novels of 1960-1975, Richard Ohmann concluded that the most popular works pertained to the personal trouble of the Professional-Managerial class. Psychological distress, mental illness, or emotional struggle saturated novels such as Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, whereas social and political forces were glossed over or hidden from view. By contrast, the cancer that Thompson describes in *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* affects the whole nation and it is a public, not private disease. Actually, in a country where every citizen manifests the symptoms of the illness, the President is the sickest person of all. Beside such an obvious divergence from the personal illness scenario, the heroes of Thompson's books, who are struggling with the nationwide pandemic of Fear and Loathing, do not really belong to the Professional-Managerial class. Bitterly disappointed drug addicts, high-strung political junkies, and volatile journalists roaming the country in search of some loosely defined myths certainly do not resemble egocentric intellectuals that populate the best-selling novels of Roth, Bellow, Updike, Barth, Mailer, Styron, or Vonnegut. Individuals described by Thompson (as well as his own mirror reflection present in all his works) examine the outside world rather than their inner selves. Their personal problems, addictions, and frustrations are just a way of coping with the unbearable weight of socio-political ramifications of the American life. Their paranoia does not originate from any specific childhood traumas, PTSD, neuroses or estrangement from others, but from the conscious decision of the American people first to elect radically conservative officials and then to let them send young men to a dubious war, incarcerate hippies and dropouts, criminalize drugs, allow the National Guard to shoot protesting students, and permit the cops to assault reporters.

Graff points out that subversion in literature is quite readily assimilated by popular culture and works that handle much darker themes, which cannot be easily translated into a more politically correct vision, have to be assimilated through other channels. In truth, Thompson's works were only partly absorbed directly and were aided by other media channels that appeared alongside them—Doonesbury comic strip, two feature movies based on his writing and several documentaries about him (including Academy Award winner Alex Gibney's *Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson*) and well-documented friendships with celebrities (John Belushi, Jack Nicholson, John Cusack, Johnny Depp, Marilyn Manson to name just a few rebellious stars). As a matter of fact, the surest way of explaining to someone unacquainted with American literary

history who Hunter S. Thompson was is to mention Terry Gilliam's movie. After all, everyone knows who Johnny Depp is.

But art does not necessarily have to be co-opted in order to lose its political or social importance. Its socio-political aspects might be simply muted through a number of processes, some of which have been already outlined in the present study. In addition, most theoretical systems either concentrate on the universal, everlasting, and purely aesthetic features of a text or, conversely, highlight only its group-specific, political, and social aspects. Even today the questions whether aesthetic concerns matter more than the material, political, and social aspects of artworks or whether this relation should be reversed underpin most canon debates. Accordingly, it might be useful to consider here Theodor Adorno's concept of art which defines art as deeply engaged in the world, but at the same time alienated from its plights as it is unable to prompt any significant changes (Kolbas 86). It is through its utopian non-threatening components that art unmasks its own helplessness at creating mere illusions rather than prompting significant social changes. As a consequence, art suffers from "social guilt" as it is unable to transcend its own aesthetic concerns in order to transform the socio-political reality. But this "social guilt of art" is where the truly radical potential of art can be found (Kolbas 89-90).

This particular interpretation of art rejects the two most popular and widespread critical perspectives—that which rests on the artistic dimension of texts and that which concentrates on their socio-political foundations. As already mentioned, both of these perspectives offer little, if any, recognition of value to Thompson's work. From an aesthetic standpoint, his works are either not literary enough or not refined enough to be analyzed as serious literature. From a socio-political position, his texts are too pessimistic, their edge has been already dulled by popular culture, and they do not contain any reasonable conclusions. Notwithstanding Thompson's enormous posthumous popularity, he will not enter the canon as long as strict divisions exist between the literary and non-literary, between fiction and non-fiction, between the artistic and the political. For the time being the social guilt of Thompson's writing may be, in fact, its biggest advantage as Thompson's inability to exact changes through his texts proves that the aesthetic and the political cannot be easily disengaged and treated as two separate or even mutually exclusive aspects of literature. Most attempts to split them drastically reduce the scope of analysis or exclude texts which do not adhere to this customary division of narratives. Paradoxically, Thompson's overall failure to breach the canon might be his greatest accomplishment. Although his major works continue to be left out, their very presence reminds the critical communities of a large number of non-canonical texts which constitute a steadily growing threat to the official canon.

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It is, however, crucial not to fall into the trap of adopting a form of reversed elitism which seems to find comfort and confirmation of one's value in being an outcast, and in being excluded rather than included. The mere fact that certain works are labeled "subversive" or "alternative" does not automatically mean that they possess more transformative, political or social power than the texts which were welcomed in the canon. In truth, literature has no power to transform the reality. And the recurring professional and personal failures of Thompson's narrators reflect this tragic powerlessness in a vivid, somewhat haunting way. Drugged and bewildered Raoul Duke in Las Vegas, Thompson the Penniless and Desperate Journalist in *Hell's Angels*, Thompson the Prodigal Son coming back to the Old South for the Kentucky Derby, Thompson the Frustrated Believer doggedly following politicians through the primaries, Thompson the Embarrassed Consumer chasing Jean-Claude Killy and Thompson's other incarnations from the late 60s and 70s all fail to create a cohesive narrative of their experiences and they all fail to construct any workable agenda for the future. Their shared helplessness is most poignantly revealed at the very end of *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*. After a grueling year spent on the press bus and after a nervous breakdown following the disastrous election, Thompson begins yet another quest, this time for answers, but since none are available he simply walks "several blocks down La Cienega Boulevard to the Losers' Club" (480), which perhaps can sum up his position both in American society and in the canon of American literature.

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Aneta Dybska

Gentrification and Lesbian Subcultures in Sarah Schulman's *Girls, Visions and Everything*

A 2010 press release accompanying the launching of a 40-second film *Discovered* (*Odkryta*), promoting Łódź as a candidate for the European Capital of Culture 2016, draws attention to the city's uniqueness and magical yet unsettling appeal. Directed by Borys Lankosz, "Discovered" incorporates the film noir aesthetic to map the city's cultural potential and creative energies onto Księży Młyn, the city's historical textile industry district. Home to the thriving Polish textile industry since the early nineteenth century, Łódź entered the twenty-first century as a major player in the revitalization of its once vibrant urban spaces, including the conversion of dilapidated factory buildings in Księży Młyn into modern living spaces. As recently as May 2010, an Australian company, Opal Property Developments, put up for sale stylish lofts in a gated community on the former site of the Karol Scheibler factory complex.

Shot against the backdrop of nineteenth-century industrial architecture of workers' homes (*famuły*), *Discovered* stages an urban drama of a man in a trench-coat and a felt hat, possibly a private eye, with a camera and flashlight, pursuing a woman, a femme fatale type, along the dimly-lit alleyways of nighttime Księży Młyn. Playing on the traditional sexual attraction in the film noir classics, Lankosz foregrounds Łódź's urban mystery in line with the city officials' plans to attract artists into the postindustrial, disinvested, city-owned area but, equally, to transform it into an incubator of creativity, thus forging a new economy of cultural production. As Lankosz admits in an interview, his inspirations take root in the experience of the American metropolis:

> [Łódź] reminds me of New York where the artists set the trends in the urban space. They get to some places first, they get the feel of those places, they are inspired by them.… Take for example the Meatpacking District in New York. Until recently this was a butchers' neighborhood, and today it has become a hip place. The artists came first and attracted money to the area through fashion designers, clubs, etc. A similar process has been taking place in Łódź—it seems that the city has already been discovered and taken over by artists, and in a like fashion new investment should follow

to make Łódź more attractive for the rest of Europe. ("Pięć Pytań do Borysa Lankosza"; trans. A.D.)

Artists play a crucial role in the revitalization of postindustrial urban landscapes. Some, encouraged by a municipal government, have triggered a real estate boom in working-class and poor neighborhoods affected by the post-WWII economic decline and the shrinking pool of manufacturing jobs. Others have launched a new culture based on consumption that subsequently drew in the "creative class"—a term penned by Richard Florida to describe scientists, engineers, bohemians, gay people, designers, architects, university professors, writers, opinion makers, high-tech and financial specialists, and business managers—the urbane middle class characterized by the creative potential to stimulate urban economies under conditions of low entry barriers, social diversity and tolerance that attract a wide array of people (Florida 35-42). Paradoxically, when in full swing, gentrification involves the socio-spatial remapping of old neighborhoods by means of rent increases, appreciated land value, and real estate taxation.

Given that, it is hard to accept Lankosz's enthusiastic and unproblematized rendition of urban revitalization through culture whereby the artistic avant-gardes portend an economic revival in areas affected by deindustrialization and disinvestment as well as their own commodification by the culture industries. While the Meatpacking District today may indeed be the latest addition to the list of Manhattan's gentrified neighborhoods following Soho, Tribeca, and East Village, I distance myself from the otherwise captivating discourse of artists as "pioneers" on the new urban "frontier"[1] that Lankosz seems to be taken by in the context of the American metropolis. Since the early 1980s, urban studies scholars, sociologists, grassroots organizations and fiction writers have pointed to the equivocal nature of what Sharon Zukin called the production of "landscapes of power." For the reinscription of the historically immigrant neighborhoods with symbols of a new culture of consumption (art galleries, nightclubs, upscale restaurants and shops) and a new urban lifestyle (loft living, historic preservation of decaying housing stock) has been shown to displace not only working-class ethnic residents and small businesses but also low-income avant-garde artists, students, social outcasts (drug dealers, poor tenants and the homeless) and sexual minorities. With regard to the latter, Lawrence Knopp points out that "the various sexual codings associated with cities are sites of *multiple* struggles and contradictions, and as such are instrumental in producing, reproducing and transforming both social relations of various kinds (including sexual relations), and space itself" (110).

[1] For the discussion of the reemergence of the frontier myth in the context of gentrification, see Smith.

This paper sets out to discuss the remapping of the vernacular landscapes of desire in the context of Sarah Schulman's novel *Girls, Visions and Everything* (1986). I look at her fiction as an attempt at archiving the 1980s lesbian artistic subculture in New York's East Village, which, despite its invisibility or quasi-underground character, not only contested the sexual regimes of heteronormativity in its shows and performances, but, more importantly, did so against the backdrop of the neighborhood's socio-spatial transformation effected by the new economies of consumption and gentrification. Recognizing those processes as an inseparable aspect of the growth of American cities for the last few decades, I approach Schulman's fiction as highlighting the instability of sexual identities as well as making a literary claim to the East Village as a space of subcultural subversion.

Historically, sexual minorities have been instrumental in the processes of gentrification, with the Castro District gay community in 1970s San Francisco and the Park Slope lesbian community in 1980s Brooklyn being exemplary cases. The critical role of gay men as agents in the urban renaissance, as Manuel Castells observes in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983), was a corollary of their struggle for political power and assertion of an "out-of-the closet" gay identity, only gradually leading to a large-scale renovation and preservation of the area's historic housing and real estate boom. The emergence of Park Slope in the 1980s, as Tamar Rothenberg notes, was more of a word-of-mouth phenomenon—lesbians, many of them lesbian-feminists, were drawn into the area by affordable housing and the neighborhood's reputation as "artsy-lefty" — "very leftover sixties, very laid back, like the [Greenwich] Village without the [high] rent" (159, 160).

The appearance of early gentrifiers in declining neighborhoods, be it the Castro District or the Park Slope, spearheaded the transformation of those places into trendy consumption venues and attractive real estate for the "creative class." In a broader perspective, such continually gentrifying areas become part and parcel of the cities' symbolic economy, for, as Zukin explains, "building a city depends on how people combine the traditional economic factors of land, labor and capital" as well as "how they manipulate the symbolic languages of exclusion and entitlement. The look and the feel of cities reflect decisions about what—and who—should be visible and what should not, concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power" ("Whose Culture?" 133).

The aesthetics of older ethnic communities transformed by bohemians into spaces of social tolerance and artistic freedom becomes a valued asset for big business brands. From the artists' point of view, those key players in the cities' symbolic economy produce "spaces colonized by commerce or the state"—"sterile, stripped of meaning" and divested of authenticity (Ley 2534-2535). More importantly, though, economic improvement in the gentrified area lowers the affordability of housing—a major factor in the displacement of bohemians from areas they initially revived with their cultural capi-

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tal and creativity. This transient and volatile status of the artists, alongside the original inhabitants and small businesses, prompts questions about "the right to the city." Introduced by Henri Lefebvre and elaborated on by David Harvey, this concept holds that inhabitants of the cities have a right to participate directly in decisions concerning the production of urban space to protect it against commodification, rampant privatization and valorization of land (Purcell 102-103). This is "a collective rather than an individual right... some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made and to do so in a fundamental and radical way" (Harvey). Such was the case with the political struggle over the Lower East Side in the early 1980s, when local community groups successfully challenged the municipal plans to establish The Artist Homeownership Program (AHOP), which set out to allocate millions of public dollars to the rehabilitation of city-owned impoverished tenements into lofts for middle-class artists (Deutsche and Ryan 101). The residents' groups claimed the place for themselves, saying that "the land belongs to the poor, literally in every way, legally, morally. It belongs to the people. Because they were the people who struggled when nobody else wanted the Lower East Side" (Watson qtd. in Deutsche and Ryan 97). In the end, the program was abandoned.

The history of the Lower East Side can serve as a cautionary tale about the volatile nature of spatial reinscription by artists, new cultural economies, local governments and real estate speculation. Reading Christopher Mele's meticulously researched history *The Selling of the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate and Resistance in New York City* (2000), one cannot resist the observation that beginning from the 1930s this part of Manhattan has been a site of continuous struggle, faced with periods of urban renewal, disinvestment and abandonment as well as discovery by subsequent generations of avant-garde artists and underground subcultures. In the 1950s this multi-ethnic, immigrant, working-class neighborhood became a magnet for urban bohemians such as the beatniks and the Tenth Street Movement (artists such as Willem de Kooning, Larry Rivers, and Franz Kline). When the northern sections of the Lower East Side gained nationwide recognition as a trendy destination for the hippies in the 1960s, the area was renamed "East Village." In the 1970s and 1980s the territory between 14th and Houston Streets and 4th Avenue and the East River became the site of underground subcultures of aesthetic rebellion, e.g. the punk scene (Mele 213-7). The symbolic coding of the East Village as a mecca for artists and social outlaws, combined with the place's economic affordability, made it a place of aesthetic, if not political, subversiveness:

> within the New York gay scene of 1980s and early 1990s, non-conformity associated with the East Village served as cultural antipode to the West Village's reputation as

> post-Stonewall, white, middle-class and accommodating to the mainstream 'straight' world. Reactions to the onslaught of HIV/AIDS and the mobilization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists against government inaction to the health crisis contributed to the rise of a younger, more radical, inclusive, and vocal queer culture, much of it centered in East Village bars, clubs, coffee shops, and other meeting spaces[.] (Mele 287)

This apt yet passing reference to East Village sexual dissidents in Mele's otherwise well-researched and compelling study can be seen as indicative of the multiple, often invisible, layering of urban spaces as well as the paucity of official historical/cultural records (recent queer studies scholarship has been trying to fill that void) on the existence of non-normative sexualities.[2] It is precisely in this context that I set out to read Sarah Schulman's 1986 novel *Girls, Visions and Everything* as a fictional account of urban transformation depicting the love life and artistic "underground" endeavors of the East Village lesbian bohemia in the 1980s. A well-known author of numerous books of lesbian fiction set in 1980s and 1990s New York, including *The Story of Sophie Horowitz* (1984), *After Delores* (1988), *People in Trouble* (1990), and *Rat Bohemia* (1995), Schulman has consistently dealt with the lives and struggles of the gay-lesbian community (e.g. the AIDS crisis), against the changing geography of the city. If we were to apply Judith Halberstam's recent insights on queer subcultures, we might say that Schulman's characters engage in activities which, unlike adolescent and class-specific subcultures, do not emerge in opposition to the parent culture, nor do they offer a temporary deviation from social norms. With non-normative sexuality as an impulse behind their formation, queer subcultures "form in relation to place as much as in relation to a genre of cultural expression, and ultimately they oppose the hegemony of dominant culture but also the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian culture" (Halberstam 161). When extended onto Schulman's East Village lesbian bohemia, the notion of subculture reveals *Girls'*s preoccupation with the 1980s East Village becoming a site of middle-class "delectation," a term applied by Zukin to the symbolic economy of cities ("Whose Culture?" 134). More importantly, such a perspective unfolds the book's potential as an archive of lesbian subcultural activity. For, as Halberstam cogently explains,

> the notion of an archive has to extend beyond the image of a place to collect material or hold documents, and it has to become a floating signifier for the kinds of lives im-

[2] Peter Brooker makes a similar observation with regard to Janet L. Abu-Lughod's *From Urban Village to East Village: The Battle for New York's Lower East Side*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.

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> plied by the paper remnants of shows, clubs, events and meetings. The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory and a complex record of queer activity. In order for the archive to function it requires users, interpreters, and cultural historians to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making. (169-170)

A record and a creative approximation of the avant-garde lifestyle, Schulman's fiction constructs the collective memory of the East Village as a place central to the forging of collective lesbian identities. The realism of *Girls* is underscored in the 1999 re-issue of the novel, the cover of which features a map of the East Village (Brooker 146). As well as archiving the lesbian community of the past, the novel inspired its readers; they "used it [the book] as a way to imagine their lives, to situate themselves, to model their own cultural aesthetics" (Schulman, "Preface" x).

Next to punks and underground music followers who had a well-established club scene (Mele 217), the lesbian community in the East Village frequented their own clubs and performance spaces. Yet with the onslaught of gentrification and real estate speculation, those spaces of lesbian networking and oppositional art/politics were faced with co-option by the new culture industries or, worse, a struggle for survival on territory that was marked by tension, conflict, and violent change. Highlighting the malleability of artistic and sexual contestation, Schulman takes up the question of the collective right to the city. The passage below suggests how the East Village residents perceive the intrusions made by the arts industry onto the territory that they identify as their own:

> 'The arty types were all over America sucking its blood,' said Jack Kerouac to Carlo Marx in Denver. From Lila's East Village vantage point, she could see that he was right. At least as pertained to the ART SCENE which was oozing its slime all over Second Avenue. The upscale New Yorkers who cabbed it down to the fancy spaces to see performers on tour from Europe, ate afterwards in restaurants where Lila couldn't even get a job. It was an invading homogenous monster composed of a lot of boring people thinking they were leading wacky lives. (*Girls* 43)

This explicit "monstrosity" of the emerging landscape of "reflexive" consumption,[3] leads us to consider *Girls* as an archive of the East Village lesbian artistic life and struggle against urban growth. As a member of the subculture she is recording, Schulman

[3] Sharon Zukin defines "reflexive" consumption as "based on higher education and a related expansion of consumers of both high culture and trendy style" (*Landscapes of Power* 188).

occupies a complex position Halberstam might define as "marked by this lack of distinction between the archivist and the cultural worker" (162).

As Schulman argued in 1999, East Village lesbian artists, although supported and appreciated by engaged audiences, were pushed to the margins of the new cultural discourse and their existence was largely passed over. As sexual dissidents, they received scant critical attention or institutional recognition from the culture industry and the dominant culture (*Stage Struck* 69-70). When situated in this context, Schulman's fiction may be read as a direct response to such oblivion, stemming from a need to assert "agency as cultural subversives" —a subjectivity that "is mediated and performed by the fictions by which they [lesbian artists] image themselves and /or are imaged" (Chisholm 201). Schulman's *Girls* opens such a creative space of subversion where lesbian identities and desires are forged in the highly competitive sexual geography of the East Village.

Girls's characters are a group of aspiring lesbian writers, performers, stage designers and dancers bound as much by common art projects as by bonds of friendship and intimacy. They support themselves with meager income from part-time office, factory or restaurant jobs which allow them to pursue the bohemian low-cost lifestyle. Their economic status is similar to that of lower-class Eastern Europeans, Puerto Ricans, and African Americans, who traditionally settled on the Lower East Side. They are predominantly racially white: some are ethnically marked as Jewish or Italian and have always lived in the neighborhood; others are racially transparent and have recently moved in. The intersecting realms of romance and flirtation, economic survival and artistic production foreground the geography of 1980s East Village as the locus of collective (white) lesbian identity. This identity plays itself out spatially at dyke clubs, bars, and performance venues, many of which were real places, such as The Pyramid Club (known as The Kitsch-Inn), PS 122, or 8BC. These are sites of both artistic experimentation and socialization, where the avant-garde producers meet with their lesbian audiences. The women put on new shows every weekend that run for a few nights only; using garbage collected in the streets, they prepare their own stage designs and costumes; they stage twenty-four-hour performances involving experimental dancing, improvization, absurd scripts, as well as the aesthetics of kitsch, all of which are calculated to frustrate audience expectations. They stage a lesbian version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and organize The Worst Performance Festival, with its intentionally disquieting breach of theatrical conventions. Rather than appease their audiences, they produce, in the words of Isabel, "something absolutely no one could ever identify with" (66); mostly, however, the lesbian women constitute their own audience.

Schulman's protagonists, Lila Futuransky and her girlfriend Emily Harrison also engage in "*subversive spatial acts*" (Bell and Valentine 17; original italics) by mapping

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lesbian desire onto the grid of the city at the street level: walking the streets at night, conversing on tenement stoops and in the back alleys, experiencing intimacy on the rooftops, and holding hands in the streets or kissing goodbye, and infrequently facing queer bashing by "the weekend throng" from the recent up-scale establishments (*Girls* 93).

The changing uses of public space as well as the protagonists' relation to the space portend a new landscape of consumption. Unlike the lesbian theatre that is produced and consumed by a small group of subcultural participants living in the East Village, an off-Broadway show offers a stereotyped version of the East Village "exotica." Staged by transient cultural outsiders, both actors and playwrights, the pricey performances sell voyeuristic pleasure and entertainment for the New Jersey audiences:

> All were pretending that they were dramatically interpreting the reality of New York street life.... [T]he lesbian characters kissed each other and hit each other. The gay male characters made jokes about the sizes of each other's penises. The Black characters ran around with afropicks in their pockets... saying 'motha-fucka' a lot and grabbing their own crotches. All of this provided an appropriately colorful background for the white heterosexual characters to expose their deeply complex emotional lives. (18)

The show's condescending depictions of racial and sexual diversity, this "fake social realism" of off-Broadway theatre, as one of characters, the aspiring artist Isabel Schwartz, mockingly calls it, are a far cry from the lived experience of Schulman's character. The show's mixture of homophobia and racism, ridiculing New York's urban vernacular, stands in contrast to the "authenticity" of lesbian theatre and its impermeability to commodification. Herself a "drama dyke," Isabel was "slinging burgers and saving her quarters until she had enough to put on a show. Her tales of average lesbians and the little things they knew and cared about. Then it was back to the burgers" (17). Likewise, Lila, Emily, and other lesbian performance artists gain control over their own uncompromising "fictions," a fact that allows them to address their collective experience as social and sexual outcasts:

> whenever she was in a roomful of lesbians, Lila fluctuated between two points of view. First, she would have a sentimental rush of feeling, overwhelmed by the beauty and the courage of all these women who had gone through fire and ice just to find each other. Every meeting place, tradition or ritual was built with nothing but their own determination, which kept everything vaguely together. But, a split second later, Lila looked more distantly and the scene would be transformed into a room full of victims. This one had her child taken away, that one got locked up by her parents, that one's girlfriend got queerbashed in front of her and there wasn't a thing she could do

about it.... [A]fter almost fifteen years of hard core propaganda and heavy publicity, nobody, outside of lesbians, had bought the line that they were strong, determined survivors. To everyone else they were invisible or pitiful and most straight people were plain glad they weren't queer. (59)

United by the impulse to resist sexual oppression and survive by sharing the hardship of social abjects, Schulman's "determined survivors" reproduce daily their subcultural identities in the safe spaces of club, bars, performance—spaces that until recently hardly anyone has claimed or competed for.

If the new cultural economy spearheads reinvestment in aging and dilapidated housing stock, it also carries an imminent threat of the lesbian community's erasure and displacement from "powerful institutions [that] have a preeminent capacity to impose their view on the landscape—weakening, reshaping, and displacing the view from the vernacular" (Zukin, *Landscapes of Power* 16). Such forces affect the lesbian subculture's precariousness, weakening its claim to the right to the city—that is, in line with Lefebvre and Harvey, the decision-making power in the production of urban space. The fear of displacement that accompanies Schulman's characters is grounded in the gradual changes they register at the street level: the Puerto Rican tenants helplessly watch their buildings collapse, the Italian grocer who has been in the neighborhood for decades faces a close-down due to soaring rents that "only an art gallery could afford" (30), and streets and parks begin to double as performance spaces for dancers and musicians. All these are symptoms of the neighborhood's liminality, that is its economic and social restructuring and the disappearance of the vernacular landmarks. The passage below is a powerful fictional illustration of the transition:

Lila turned down Sixth Street to Avenue B. Once she got past all those stupid art galleries, it was still a nice block. With the creepy, crawling invasion of gentrification into the neighborhood, it was becoming harder and harder to find a quiet street. Things were so bad that even Avenue A was unlivable. The Good Humor man had been replaced by tofutti-selling teenaged boys in teased Mohawks. Polish and Puerto Rican mom and pop soda fountains featuring Breyer's ice cream, vanilla or chocolate, bowed to the pressure of imported ices. Tanned Europeans in skimpy t-shirts sold one dollar and fifty cent scoops-du-jour. But, over by Avenue B there was still life on Sixth Street. Lila passed an old Irish bar with a pool table, a few bodegas and the combination Jesse Jackson for President campaign headquarters and thrift shop, until she got to the former vacant lot on the corner. For years it was full of garbage and served as a shooting gallery for junkies[.] (19)

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Interspersed with what remains of the old neighborhood, Schulman's East Village inevitably undergoes a spatial reinscription by real estate speculation, a theme that is brought up in exchanges between the residents. The market appreciation of the tenement where Lila rents an apartment, from $60,000 to $700,000 over a span of two years, shows the irrationality of the speculation, when compared with the decrepit living conditions: "there is mice, roaches, a leaky roof, the windows don't fit the frame so the wind blows through" (99). Importantly, the private property boom is also created by developers who "tear out six apartments filled with kids and put in one luxury duplex for some kind of rich artist" (31). Lila and her lesbian friends can only manifest their disapproval for the invasion of weekend tourists by "staring down motorists with Jersey plates" (61). They cannot intervene in any relevant way in the symbolic economy of gentrification along with its oppressive (hetero)normativity.

> After the changes started getting really dramatic, this new organization suddenly made itself known. The Concerned Neighbors for a Cleaner Block. Usually block associations were good, helping everyone get to know each other, planting trees, getting a new street light. But this one had a bad feeling about it. First they put up posters of a young white couple walking fearfully down a city street filled with menacing jungle animals, like baboons**.** The caption read 'Clean Up Our Street.' It had not taken Lila a very long time to realize that any group of people who wanted to 'clean up' another group of people were usually bad news. Long time tenants were getting evicted left and right, all these people cared about was the drug dealers selling nickel bags. (30-31)

The gentrifiers in Schulman's novel inevitably bring about the remapping of the East Village geography. Their concern with cleanliness, beauty and safety has a corollary in increased police surveillance and leads to inter-group tension. For while the creative class that follows the early gentrifiers engages in the historic preservation and aestheticisation of old working- and lower-class tenements, it drives the new real estate economy and eradicates the East Village vernacular culture. Prohibitive rents and housing costs change the neighborhood's socio-spatial relations: racial and sexual minorities, artists, drug addicts, the working class community and the small businesses they patronize are replaced by the new cultural consumers. The lesbian subculture is unlikely to survive unless it gives up on its oppositional art/politics or relocates its practices to another territory affected by economic decline. Its avant-garde aesthetics and bohemian lifestyle, contesting the sexual norms of 1980s mainstream culture, preclude absorption "back into dominant culture because [lesbians] were never offered membership in the dominant

groups in the first place" (Halberstam 160) and thus make it all the more bound to be swept away from the East Village.

Despite relative control over their subcultural production and lifestyle, Schulman's characters experience the onslaught of violence that portends an era of exclusionary urban policies. In other words, Schulman's construction of East Village liminality bears traces of the fledgling "revanchist city," defined by Neil Smith as:

> antiurbanism [that] represents a reaction against the supposed "theft" of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security. More than anything the revanchist city expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites... a vicious reaction against minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants. (207)

The new cultural economies and private real estate investment, propped up by the municipal governments, lead to the residents' uneasiness about the newcomers' gradual encroachment upon the vernacular spaces. This feeling is symptomatic of a new urban order that brings about the radical social and cultural rescripting of public space. From today's perspective, Schulman's archiving of the Reagan-era East Village lesbian subculture holds important lessons, for Lankosz among others, about the equivocal nature of class, race, and sexual struggles waged in the postmodern metropolis.

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Kacper Bartczak

Technology and the Bodily in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis*

Don DeLillo has been one of the most insightful novelists of the present day American literary scene, offering a most probing analysis of the state of culture. After the epic monumentality of *Underworld* (1997), *The Body Artist* (2001) seems a radical change of scale. And yet, this sparse book, the novelist's shortest work, is a crucial stylistic exercise for the artist. There is an obvious minimalistic tendency running throughout DeLillo's output and pushing him toward the liminal exploration of the meeting ground of rationality, language, and the sense of temporality and mortality. *The Body Artist* is a condensed treatment of these relations. With its strongly withdrawn, meticulously paced mood—with its minimalistic surroundings, which have always attracted the writer, now taking up the bulk of the narrative—this insistently uneventful, almost plotless meditation seems to give us a break from the writer's usual confrontation with the large-scale obsessions of the present-day era. As such, *The Body Artist* seems to stand in stark contrast with DeLillo's next novel, *Cosmopolis* (2003). As a fatalistic one-way plot, ending in an outburst of violence and self-inflicted death of the protagonist, set in an environment suffused with the electronic media of data management and image production, *Cosmopolis* returns to DeLillo's staple interest in the fatal combination of the culture's metaphysics of representation and violence, explored earlier in *The Names* (1982), *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), and *Underworld*.

And yet, for all the difference between them, *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis* are linked as contrastive analyses of the approaches to the role of technology in shaping contemporary consciousness. *Cosmopolis'* environment is brimming with devices of electronic processing of images and data. These technologies are crucial in the life of the novel's protagonist: they constitute his sense of the world and his identity. Although removed from center stage, the same electronic technology of the instant processing of the image and modulation of the human physical materiality (including voice), is also crucially involved in the shaping of the sense of identity in Lauren Hartke, the protagonist of *The Body Artist*.

These two portrayals of technology stand in contrast. In exploring it, I hope to highlight some larger implications for DeLillo's sense of the human. I will discuss the presence that technology takes in both novels and follow up with conclusions on the difference between

both protagonists' uses of technology and the resultant senses of identity. As we will see, the difference between them points to an element which emerges as crucial for DeLillo's thinking about the evolution of the human: the ways humans relate to the bodily.

1. Technology in *Cosmopolis*

Eric Packer, the protagonist of *Cosmopolis,* is a tycoon on the post-historical, post-political, global currency markets. He deals daily in staggering volumes of money that can raise or fell entire national economies around the globe. He lives alone, in Manhattan, in the world's highest residential high-rise building, in which his 140 million dollar apartment has a rotating bedroom, a meditation cell, and a computerized room all in screens running the digitalized representation of world's currency markets. From this room—so he believes—Packer controls the world. The novel is a record of one day of his life, a shamelessly linear tale of his moving across Manhattan in search of a place where he will get what he really wants—a haircut, something real, palpable, authentic. In the course of this journey, Eric will lose all his money, and, having precipitated an encounter with his assassin, his life.

Packer—a twenty-first-century Ulysses, set on a one-way course, never coming back home—travels in a custom-made, stretched-out, bullet-proof, sound-proof limousine, which is an extravagant gesture on the part of somebody who has a helicopter and has just acquired rights to using air routes. The extravaganza comes from a wish—common to many previous DeLillo characters—to get closer to a world beyond the veneers of variously constructed hyper-realities. Packer wants to be on the ground, to smell and taste New York, to visit women and make love to them, in between the sessions with his corps of analysts. So the decision to seek something real is half-hearted, Packer making nostalgic forays after whatever he believes is a deeper, non-liquifiable reality, only as intermissions of his normal activity of being instrumental in actually turning the world into a liquefied, relentless, all-encompassing flow of electronic data. His limousine is equipped with numerous screens, computers, cameras, and the devices both bring in data—charts of global currency markets, processed media images from all over the world, or images from the immediate surroundings of the car—and transmit data, some cameras sending Packer's image outside, to broadcasting stations. For safety reasons, these outgoing images are then fed back to Eric's own system, turning his apartment, his office, and his car into a circular, self-enclosed compound of analysis and decision making.

The world Eric Packer both craves and eventually falls victim to is a world fully represented, based on the aggressive drive toward turning it into its representation, and

manipulated through representation. Technology has become a primary tool in this manipulation. Packer participates in the process in which technology changes the world into what Heidegger called "standing reserve." According to this well-known formulation of the technological sense of being—the way in which technology becomes a means of revealing being—Eric's tools help him measure and control the world by turning it into exposable and usable knowledge. For Heidegger, modern technology is a type of revealing the world which transforms "the actual" into such a manageable reservoir of energy: enframed, disposable, at hand. Modern technology, ensuing from modern science, is a way of revealing "which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored…. [It] pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces" (Heidegger 296, 303). To be sure, that work of revealing being as standing-reserve is first effected by the capital, but it is obvious that now it is the technology of electronic storage and usage of data that boosts the flow of money as a method of enframing.

Even though Heidegger's description pertains to the modernist stage of the history of science and technology, it captures perfectly Eric's sense of what technology is for. In Heidegger, technology is the last in the series of the ways of revealing being, typical of Western metaphysics, in which the subject engages the object by way of "representing" it. As Heidegger puts it, "enframing" by means of technology is a mode of the relationship of the human toward himself and toward the world that "banishes man into that kind of revealing that is an ordering" (309). Packer wants to become a part of the world which is utterly controlled. In DeLillo's portrayal of this dream of control, money, electronics and technology come together in a kind of robotic nightmare of instantaneous connectivity of the human, the technological and the pecuniary: "There were medley of data on every screen… the polychrome numbers pulsing. He absorbed this material in a couple of seconds…. He looked at the spycam on a swivel and it looked back at him…. The context was nearly touchless. He could talk most systems into operation or wave a hand at a screen and make it go blank" (13).

As Heidegger predicted, revealing as enframing through technology predominantly reveals man to himself in a way of changing himself into standing-reserve: "he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth" (308). Wherever he looks, man sees only himself, but instead of sensing the danger of this situation, man delights in what he reads as total power of control. In the novel, we see this principle operating in Eric's belief that all the data his interconnected system brings in front of him afford him some ultimate insight into the law of all things: a complex yet accurate image of the "deep" laws of nature. To Eric, the movements of money,

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changed electronically into charts and graphs, are not dead digits; they are beaming back on him with the very rhythm of the life of biosphere:

> It was shallow thinking to maintain that that numbers and charts were cold compression of unruly human energies. In fact, data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form… the digital imperative that defines every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

The power of DeLillo's prose threatens to refute Heidegger's jeremiad. What if Packer is right and the capital-technology-electronics nexus, far from turning the world into a cold warehouse, puts us, or just Packer, in touch, with the very life of the planet? Perhaps here we have the final mystery of our organic belonging to mother earth realized? This problem suggests that other theoretical models might be more useful in approaching DeLillo. Rather than Heidegger's dramatic and poeticizing narratives, DeLillo often sounds a note suggestive of his equivocal attraction to the ideas of Jean Baudrillard. For instance, Eric clearly lives in what Baudrillard described as "Integral" or "Virtual Reality." Unlike in the earlier models of simulacra and hyperreality, the "Integral Reality" is a technologically afforded system in which representations have become a reality—a final and ultimate one. It is a world not of the disappearance of the real—as was the case in Baudrillard's earlier work—but, to the contrary, ironically, a world in which everything that we ever imagined and wished for becomes real in a very specific sense of the word: "Objective reality—reality related to meaning and representation—gives way to 'Integral Reality,' a reality without limits in which everything is realized and technically materialized without reference to any principle or final purpose whatever" (Baudrillard 18).

This real is omnipresent, flat, shadowless, and banal. The Integral world is an obscenity of the visual, with no aura of distance, mystery, concealment. It is a world of surfaces connected into a system. Most importantly, it is the human subject that has been turned into such a surface, an interface connecting with other devices, the self become a device. If Heidegger, in "The Question Concerning Technology," was wary of technology's capacity for turning humanity itself, apparently a user of technology, into "standing-reserve," Baudrillard offers an advanced version of humanity's demise by its own devices: humanity become a flat integer of the system acquiring an absolute self-saturation. There is something Parmenidean at work here: an absoluteness and immovability of that which is. But the human is diminished in it: "We invested reality with the whole of our imaginary, but it is this imaginary that is vanishing, since we no longer have the energy

to believe in it…. The passion for reality and the passion for truth have gone" (Baudrillard 19).

In Eric's world, as in Baudrillard's description, there is no longer a boundary between an inside and an outside. Inside/outside is a metaphor that has given way to a new metaphor, that of flows of information. Eric, to be sure, still believes he is the deep center of all operation, the very "interior" of the system. His dark-windowed limo, clearly an extension of his meditation cell at home, represents Eric's outdated idea of the deep, inaccessible subject—the Cartesian mind—doing the work of representation and control. Eric meditates and reads haiku-like poetry, because he clings to the idea of a purity, a mystery behind the noise of representations, the "glassy essence" of the transcendental mind that will integrate all data into a coherent story—the nature of reality. Thus Eric exemplifies the Western metaphysical subject in its technological and market avatar: the metaphysics of representation and controlling embodied in an aggressive, lonely, murderous man who thinks of himself as a master-mind, while actually being an adjunct to something much bigger: world technologies of the market-economies, the flow of money promulgating itself for its own sake.

As in Baudrillard's depictions of the "Integral Reality," the electronic technologies are driven by their own logic, which spans and already contains all possibilities of developments, all time: the past and the future. The real-time of televised world-wide data wields an iron grip on all narrative: everything is already inscribed inside the system, all stories, all possible scenarios, a totality of information. They are all here at hand. On numerous occasions in the novel, Eric sees himself on some of the screens surrounding him, performing gestures he is only about to perform in his physical actuality. Eric and other characters in the novel experience a strange dislocation of their sense perceptions and their sense of time. It is as if their selves had been lifted into the electronic image producing systems, where they begin to stir with a life that is eerily independent of their real ones. Such haunting, momentary delusions are DeLillo's metaphors of the situation of the self in the Virtual world described by Baudrillard: "Time itself, lived time, no longer has time to take place. The historical time of event, the psychological time of affects and passion… are all simultaneously called into question by virtual time, which is called… 'real time'" (30).

In all this, Eric Packer is a new version of a character that Don DeLillo has been working on for years: a lonely, aggressive American male, a sad relic of the ages of grand narratives, deep representing subjects, now defeated by their own mad creations. Surrounded by aggressive banalities of either simulacra, as Jack Gladney in *White Noise*, or the eerie surreal of "Integral Reality," as Eric Packer, they will seek violent self-destructive moves in search of the presupposed originary, non-mediated real, following

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the logic in which the system itself seeks its own validation in violence. In the second part of the novel, Eric, having lost all his money to a currency market oddity that he for once could not mentally chart and outsmart, kills his bodyguard and pursues his own assassin, earlier classified by his security as a "credible threat." The last scene is a masterful rendering of the theme discovered earlier by DeLillo, notably in *White Noise,* of being a "stranger in one's own dying." The mad circularity of systems takes a cruel vengeance on Eric. With the relentless logic of all linear narrative enclosed in the all-pervading system, Eric can see himself dead on the miniature screen, while he is still dying in reality. We will return to the scene later.

2. Technology in *The Body Artist*

The presence of technology in *The Body Artist* is much less conspicuous. The novel is not a characteristic DeLillo work for a number of reasons. It sounds hushed up, slowed down, much more localized and concentrated than all of his other recent work. Lauren Hartke is different from DeLillo's recent male protagonists, but not radically different. My contention here is that she represents a different option, a different stance toward the same issues that are central to characters like Eric Packer.

Lauren is the eponymous "body artist." She is a performer who puts together stage acts that are a mixture of pantomime, happening, multimedia installation, strenuous physical exercise including yoga positions, but also uncanny body change entailing self-mutilation, depigmentation, and changing the texture of skin. Crucial to her performance is the ability of the artist to lose herself and almost literally become the types she impersonates on stage. Lauren's act is one of slipping into other people's skin, a mimicry of selected types, or rather situations in which human types are revealed.

The book begins with a prelude scene in which Lauren is seen having breakfast with her husband Ray Robles at a seaside summer house they rent. Later we learn that Ray commits suicide, and the central portion of the text portrays Lauren, back at the house, adjusting psychologically to the loss of Ray—devising her own way of mourning. It is a very curious form of mourning and it is central to what DeLillo is grappling with in the novel.

When alone in the house, Lauren encounters a mysterious interloper—a half-naked man, helpless, apparently lost or homeless, who is materialized in one of the upper floor rooms. He seems slightly deranged, unable to identify himself or tell any story explaining his appearance. Lauren calls him Mr. Tuttle. Initially, she takes him for a harmless refugee from a mental asylum and is taking care of him humanely with the intention of delivering him to proper institutions. But it soon becomes clear that Mr. Tuttle is an ex-

ceptional case of deviation: even though he does not use language with any competence of an adult—in fact he does not use language at all, only being able to produce half-nonsensical remarks that confound semantics, grammar, and syntax—he soon reveals an uncanny ability to mimic voices. Specifically, he mimics the voices of Ray and Lauren, based on the conversations they had in the house. The immediate explanation is that Mr. Tuttle had been hiding in the large house before, at the time when Ray and Lauren were both residing here. Perhaps he even had access to a tape recorder with recordings of Ray's voice reciting ideas for next film scripts. The problem is that Mr. Tuttle also imitates gestures—and Lauren has no logical explanation of his identity. He has no sense of the self, no sense of time dimension and that allows him to reside in a strange psychological area in which easier transitions are possible between time-space locations that are also locations or contexts in which the self—or selves—find their parameters and coordinates. He seems lost in multiple ways: in his body (he has physical features of a child), in time (his grammar makes no sense of grammatical tenses), in space (he does not know where he is). Overall, he is lost on the issue of identity: he does not know who he is—neither does Lauren, or the readers. Mr. Tuttle is an oddity.

With all this mysteriousness, however, it becomes clear that Mr. Tuttle enhances certain faculties and capacities that we see at latent stages of development in Lauren's mental frame in the introductory chapter of the novel. His uncanny mimicry clearly anticipates Lauren's art. As David Cowart puts it, "in Mr. Tuttle, Lauren encounters, as a projection of her own unconscious, the artist in herself, temporarily obtunded and disoriented by late catastrophe" (206). The novel's prelude scene is an extended description of a leisurely Sunday morning at the sea-side house, when Lauren and Ray are having breakfast. Although totally uneventful, the passage is a key to our understanding of Lauren's development as an artist and Mr. Tuttle's role in it.

The morning has no purpose, no plan, no intention. The two people, hurried by nothing, relaxed, are totally immersed in the mundane activities, gestures, routine movements that one performs when having a meal in a space that one knows very well. Lauren and Ray reach for foods, handle boxes, use cutlery, touch kitchen appliances. They are also busy reading sections of a newspaper that, incidentally, is a few days old, but is the only one available to them in their seclusion by the sea. Amidst these activities, Lauren is intermittently struck by the views of birds at the feeder outside of the house. Mostly, both Lauren and Ray are distracted, not concentrating on anything in particular, not finishing their sentences, dropping off-hand remarks. Despite the distraction, it seems that they find their coordinates and understand one another perfectly well.

The scene is a crucial stylistic exercise. It is a kind of writing that is DeLillo's artistic attempt to bring forth those properties of the self that are vital to the processes of under-

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standing, memory, sense of time, and connectedness. The two people at breakfast, in a kitchen, a banal space they are familiar with, seem immersed in a web of interconnections, a web comprising their bodies (the bodies "know" the space pre-reflectively), their memories, and their immediate surroundings. It is this web that is the agent of understanding. Understanding is not the work of the human mind that is separated from anything that is out there. As participants in this active web-like system, the characters glide easily into each other's thoughts. Not only thoughts, though: the self is revealed as a more capacious structure comprising bodily movements, tics, and habitual quirks that make up the self. The unique individual is here revealed as a creation of a larger interconnectedness, surpassing mental and physical separateness. At some moment Lauren bends to get something from the refrigerator and she produces a groan which she knows is typical of her husband. To put it simply, already in this chapter, Lauren's identity seems fluid, and she is already betraying the marks of her trade as the "body artist." Most importantly though, Lauren becomes conscious of this fluidity. When reading the newspaper, she finds she can easily shift into the minds of people described in the news. She thinks: "You become someone else, one of the people in the story, doing dialogue of your own devising" (20).

The human self, as portrayed by DeLillo in this masterful passage, is not an insular subject burdened with the task of representing an outside world, but an open network, a complex web made up of sense data, cognitive operations, and physical relations to immediate space. The distractedness inscribed in the two characters in the chapter allows us to see the system at work: how understanding, reception of sense data, and decision making are stages in a systemic work that is here disclosed through minor dislocations and distortions. At one moment Lauren is having an unpleasant sensation of tasting an alien hair in her mouth. DeLillo offers the following sentence: "she scraped her upper teeth over her tongue to rid her system of the complicated sense memory of someone else's hair" (11). The self is a "system" that receives and processes data of mnemonic and imaginary nature. Memory, sense of identity, the knowledge of what and who one is, its comforts and discomforts, are all a "system" in the sense that its contents are determined by relations which confound the notions of inside and outside, of sameness and otherness, here and there, or then and now. Such a systemic network has no clearly outlined boundaries. Lauren and Ray, though the degress of their consciousness differ, are physically operating within one space. However, their sense of this space, and their sense of the moment—their spacio-temporal orientation—is made up of multiple layers of other, external spaces and moments.

This portrayal of the self as an open network brings us closer to the themes explored in *Cosmopolis*. Even though *The Body Artist* is much less suffused with technology,

Lauren Hartke as character, as a study in the network structure of the human self, is the same species that Eric Packer is: they are both humans seen as relational networks. The only important difference between them is their own interpretation of their being relational networks.

In *The Body Artist*, the sense of the self as a relational system is enhanced through the person of Mr. Tuttle. As already mentioned, his special gifts catalyze Lauren's self-understanding as an artist of mimicry. But the network sense of the self can also be enhanced by technology. Technology, as a way of revealing, may reveal the self as a network, not just "standing reserve." Importantly, as we will see, Lauren identifies Mr. Tuttle as the eerie materialization of cyberspace.

Mr Tuttle is an extreme version of the network self. In him, the sense of the inside/outside difference is gone utterly. This lack shows in language. If our linguistic competence carries with it our sense of time, space, and identity, this is precisely what has disintegrated in Mr. Tuttle's linguistic performance. His sentences sound as if they were taken from Wittgenstein's investigations, from a poem by a Language poet, or from a zen riddle. They flow too freely through Mr. Tuttle, not anchoring him in any stable points of reference.

Interestingly, when trying to make sense of Mr. Tuttle, Lauren comes up with technological analogies. Among the few references to technology in the otherwise technology-free environment of *The Body Artist* is Lauren's idiosyncratic tendency to get immersed in the images transmitted via the Internet from a traffic camera installed at a lonely crossroads in a remote place in Finland called Kotka. It is the image of a forlorn place, processed and televised in "real time" by a technology that defies time and space and comes to symbolize the idea of all time being enclosed in technological circuits, which links *The Body Artist* to *Cosmopolis*. Importantly, Mr. Tuttle seems to occupy the same detached point defying any determinate bearings in space and time that Lauren confronts in the Internet images of Kotka. Mr. Tuttle is continuous with cyberspace: "he was a man who's emerged from her computer screen in the dead of night…. he was from Kotka, Finland" (45).

A prolonged immersion in the images of a remote reality, brought in an instant continuum, gives Lauren a sense of participating in a far-off space, annulling the physical barriers. Even though not as tightly surrounded by screens receiving and cameras sending electronic data as Eric Packer of *Cosmopolis*, Lauren inhabits a world in which the dream of technology has been realized, removing a lot of the previous physical resistance of the world.

Apart from disfiguring the usual sense of spaciality, the Kotka picture, a sort of a stilled movie frame, reminiscent of Andy Warhol's experiments in filmmaking, affects the sense of temporality. Kotka is a non-place suspended in non-time. For Lauren, the

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image collapses the past, present, and future, the empty road becoming a symbol of the continuum of which time is made up. By showing a vacant and immobile portion of space for extended periods of time, this kind of "film" has a capacity of abstracting the flow of time itself. The road literally becomes the flow of time. As Cowart puts it: "Kotka is the spatial emblem of a traditional view of time in which past and future—the road in, the road out—converge from different directions on the present" (207).

This is why Mr. Tuttle "is from Kotka": his "system" is made up of coalesced moments, shuffled time dimensions. He seems to occupy a spot in which time experience is different from our normal, daily, purposeful time sense that we employ amidst the business of daily routines. But it is the very technological capability of storing image, holding, processing and transmitting it, that is crucial for this kind of conceptualization. In DeLillo, the technologies of image processing are a product of the very human nostalgia to penetrate deeper into the structures of time and space.

As such, however, the products of the nostalgia have equivocal ramifications. In another sense, what Lauren and Eric experience is the breakdown of the traditional description of the human species, the breakdown described in a different way by philosophers like Jean Baudrillard. Don DeLillo has long been given to suggestive depictions of post-modern anomalies and fatalities, very much in Baudrillard's spirit. Of the two novels discussed here, especially *Cosmopolis* is next in the continuing flirtation with these ideas: Eric is the self as described in Baudrillard's later writings, such as *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*. This self has become a surface in continual connection with other surfaces, a screen, an interface for the flow of data. This condition is nowhere to be seen with more devastating force than in the scene of Eric's death. Seeking his own end as an occurrence beyond the system—a location that would validate Eric's conviction that he himself is beyond it—Eric finds himself enclosed in more technological circuitry. His own hand watch, with its built-in camera and display screen, is turning the moment of death into another processed representation: "This is not the end. He is dead inside the crystal of his watch, but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound" (209). Technology has shuffled time again, turning the would-be moment of transcendence into more data on a screen.

3. Conclusions: The Body as Agent

In Baudrillard, the change in humanity is a dramatic event inside history, caused by the exceeding of a certain critical point of saturation of the human environment with electronic technologies. However, Lauren Hartke, the body artist, represents a different

take on the matter, and, unlike Eric Packer, she is much more DeLillo's modification than illustration of Baudrillard's post-philosophical musings. In *The Body Artist*, technology is not quite an invading element, submerging and transforming its own creator, as merely a neutral extension of a so-far undisclosed capacity of the creator. The story of Lauren Hartke reveals all the qualities of the human self to be that of a network, and the relation between her and technology is considerably different than in the case of Packer. The special capacity of entering new, possibly disorienting and confounding constellations of time and space, the capacity that is first signaled as a certain quirky characteristic and then changed into a talent, is not so much caused by the technology as brought out of Lauren with the help of it. It seems that with Lauren, DeLillo is describing the workings of human identity that are just a different hypothesis than the subject-object model of western philosophy. While the subject-object model is based on the view that the human self is based on a certain essence—the essence of the subject tasked with representing stable reality, including the reality of the subject itself—the view of the self as network makes the self a centerless and non-essential entity. As one of human creations, technology effects a change in humanity. But this may be a change in self-perception, a transformation: not a demise. The human changes, but the change was only long in coming. It is not a dramatic event dwelled upon by writers such as Baudrillard. It is another link in the vaster chain, usually referred to as evolution.

Baudrillard may be sounding too apocalyptic a note. The self as an open network is what Heidegger already described while characterizing the relations between *Dasein* and everyday objects in well-known spaces. Commenting on Heidegger's operations in *Being and Time*, Hubert Dreyfus has repeatedly pointed out how the normal everyday relation of the self to its space is one of an open-ended flow, a stream of activities which connect us continuously to our places, defying any rigid inside/outside divide. This mode of being, called "originary transcendence" by Heidegger, is a basic level of human relatedness to the world and prior to intentional action. Dreyfus is especially helpful in understanding how Heidegger's description of *Dasein*'s everydayness departs from the transcendental subjectivity of Husserl, revealing it to be a form of interconnection with familiar environments (Dreyfus 143-147). This is exactly what is revealed in DeLillo's characters in *The Body Artist* and their space in the initial chapter of the novel. To reach further back in time, before Heidegger, Dreyfus reminds us that Heidegger's description of *Dasein*'s "originary transcendence" is a radicalization of the views of William James and John Dewey, who described the self as a collection of habits the self forms as it gets socialized into its environments (6). These habits, just as the originary transcendence described by Heidegger, may experience defects and temporal breaks. In moments of distraction or relaxation, the system may stall, fail locally, as it happens in DeLillo's

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characters, but such occurrences only confirm that what is at work is not a two-way relation of subject and object but an open—ended network, or system.

But if we agree that both Lauren and Eric Packer are the same species, how do we explain the difference that is yet so pronounced between them? They are both open-ended systems, post-modern selves opened up to streams of data. Yet, they fare and cope much differently in habitats that, although differing in their suffusion with technology, belong to one world. What differentiates the characters are their uses of and attitudes toward technology. Eric, as already mentioned, entertains the delusions of a deep subject whose task is the old Cartesian dream of control (certainty) through representation. He thinks of technology as an extension of his mind, a tool of representation. Additionally, his sense of time is also typical of the western metaphysics of representation: it is a linear time speeded up with *telos*, an aim, a future.

In *Cospompolis* this linearity is shown to undergo a paradoxical distortion. This is where Baudrillard's description comes true: the combined system of the capital and the technological network have all the time enclosed in them. The future is here, pending, erasing the present. Eric lives on the edge of time at a palpable disappearance of the present, and he is painfully aware of how the capitalistic technological frenzy makes objects—and thus reality as a whole—almost instantaneously obsolete: "the hand device itself was an object whose original culture had just about disappeared. He knew he'd have to junk it" (*Cosmopolis* 9). A way of being dictated by the teleological narratives of purpose—the way of being of capital and technology—fires back, killing the present. The speedy corrosion of objects and language, is accompanied, and even accelerated, by the growing capacity of the capital, helped by appropriate technological devices, to zoom us into ever tinier units of time measurement. But this kind of operation is the result of thinking of time itself as commodity, and rather than giving us more time, it threatens its ordinary phenomenology, turning it into usable, and thus soon exhausted, material:

> 'It's cyber-capital that creates the future. What is the measurement called a nanosecond?'
> 'Ten billionth of a second,' he said.
> 'There are zeptoseconds.'
> 'Because time is a corporate asset now. It belongs to the free market system. The present is harder to find…. The future becomes insistent.' (*Cosmopolis* 79)

Interestingly, Lauren is also fascinated by the technological ability to break down time and the physical human presence into ever smaller units. When calling up her friend in a remote city, she is enthralled by the synthetically generated human voice of the ans-

wering machine reciting its formula. Lauren realizes she is hearing a human voice divided meticulously into spaced-out units, a production of the human body analyzed at the level of fractions of seconds, then fed into a system, and recombined—a robot of a voice. But while in *Cosmopolis,* a similar operation—reducing time to millionth parts of the second—spells out the mechanization of human decisions subjected to the dictates of efficiency and human resources management, in *The Body Artist* the technological operation is an inspiration: if human voice can be so broken down, divided, analyzed and recreated, so can identity be broken down and recreated—a helpful realization for the artists whose routine is impersonation.

Lauren's slipping into other identities involves an alteration in the experience of time: from a one-way narrative to a non-narrative feel of time. This type of temporal phenomenology does not belong with the Cartesian mind-centered consciousness displayed by Eric. While Eric thinks he controls time from his enclosed chambers, metaphorical of the Cartesian isolated subjectivity, he is himself enclosed in a one-way narrative whose destiny is violence and death. Lauren, in contrast, participates in the lost-ness of Mr. Tuttle, in the experience of the non-narrative time sensation. In her performance, she tortures the audience with the non-eventfulness of the sequence of her postures. At one point the narrative gives us a glimpse of Lauren, already turned into the body artist, being interviewed by a journalist and commenting: "I know there are people who think the piece was too slow and repetitious… and uneventful. But it's probably too eventful… It ought to be sparer, even slower than it is, even longer than it is. It ought to be three fucking hours" (106).

The slowness of time is literally inflicted on the body. The fictitious piece of journalism describing Lauren's performance that DeLillo inserts in the novel is significantly called "Body Art In Extremis: Slow, Spare and Painful" (103). The treatment of the body is the crucial difference between her and Eric Packer. For the protagonist of *Cosmopolis,* the body, exercised, and meticulously taken care of by doctors in daily check-ups, is just an extension of the machine. For Eric, the body is an object he controls by medical measurement and full exposure. He has it medically examined daily. In one scene he has his prostate examined by palpation by a doctor inside his limo, while continuing a conversation with one of his analysts (52-54). Eric's body literally becomes the body of knowledge: it is turned into a docile controllable object, in classic Foucaultian schema, by its very owner. Lauren, by contrast, is not the *owner* of her body: she becomes an embodied self. In her case, the body becomes an active agent, a residue of the potentiality for assuming different roles; here the body is a living matrix enabling the shifts between identities and a closer experience of temporality.

DeLillo's narrative returns body to the very center of his heroine's identity. The progress of her mourning after Ray's death begins with diarrhea, a cleansing turmoil that

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makes the body present to her: "at least she had her body back" (35). After this, Lauren proceeds, led by an intuition of the body being the proper locus of the mystery of identity. When she thinks of who Mr. Tuttle is, or who her husband was, she pictures the men sleeping, with all their being so blatantly reduced to the bodily form, and yet so mysterious, the bodily form alive with dream: "The shrouded body feebly beating…. this is the secret that sleep protects in its neural depths" (54). The bodily is thus turned for Lauren into the very palpable meeting ground of life and death, matter and spirit. Not quite knowing what she is doing, Lauren devises her own exercises whose major idea is putting the body through a gymnastic regime and acting on its skin.

The descriptions of these activities are interspersed in the novel with the enigmatic conversations with Mr. Tuttle. In this way, the disfigurations of the body that Lauren practices are found in a rhythm with the disfigurations of language. Since Mr. Tuttle's lost monologues bring in the theme of one's own recognition in time-space, so does Lauren's bodily regime seem to give her access to the organism's feel of spatial and temporal coordinates. At the same time, Lauren's senses become sharper, her sight and hearing expanding their range. As these combined procedures continue, Lauren's body itself seems to change identity: its much increased flexibility, in connection with the sanding and depigmentation of the skin, make the body a more fluid, more indeterminate entity. Lauren's body begins to defy all sorts of material inertias that constrain one's personal identity to the seeming stability of the physical. DeLillo's heroine senses that that stability can be removed. With this removal, she obtains a different kind of control over identity in general:

> This was her work, to disappear from all her former venues of aspect and bearing and to become a blankness, a body slate erased past resemblance. She had a fade cream she applied just about everywhere, to depigment herself…. In the mirror she wanted to see someone who is classically unseen, the person you are trained to look through, bled of familiar effect, a spook in the night static of every public toilet. (84)

To be sure, the body is also a part of the system, not an independent, purely "natural" unit, free from participation in the network of connections. Lauren reads books on physiology, and her exercises and her sense of access to the body are contingent on the state of scientific knowledge. As we noted earlier, she is also inspired by voice processing and other technologies. In her skin operations she uses creams, bleaches, and lotions. The body is not the ultimate given reality; it is just retrieved from the dead Cartesian inertia as a platform of the permeability of the human and its environment. Lauren's art is one of participating in the flow of her experience of the environment, by accepting the inessential nature of her self, which she reveals to be a fully embodied self. Here, though,

embodied paradoxically means fluid and indeterminate. This form of one's relation to the bodily is dramatically different from Eric's treatment of his own body as matter to be measured, controlled, and mastered.

It is as such a site of indeterminacy, a meeting ground of being and nothingness, that the body becomes Lauren's primary instrument of the mourning practice. In this form of the work of mourning, the central role is given to the bodily as the primary and pre-cognitive site of all cognition, including the sense of identity and the sense of time. David Cowart has stressed this junction of time and body in the following way: "DeLillo emphasizes Lauren's view of time as a *bodily* experience…. From his post-modern perspective, DeLillo emphasizes the body… in which time literally pulses" (207). In her interviews with Mr. Tuttle, Lauren is confronting the memory of her husband Ray, and then she is finding Ray's self, as a "system," inside her own: her memory, her language, and her body as a collection of habits. Lauren's mourning, then, is the process of relocating certain fluid elements in her network self. She is literally getting rid of her husband's presence from what she has been, severing her relation with the ghosts of the past. But to do so, Lauren must get in touch with the very process of change as dying. Mourning as the erasure of a part of the network is partly a participation in dying. But such death is different from the mere cancellation of the present that Eric confronts. Packer, cut off from his body, enclosed in one-dimensional channeling of time, is also cut off from his mortality, from death as a nourishing presence in life.

Lauren, a woman who can lose her identity and become other persons, paradoxically regains her own self through the mourning process: the loss of her personality, the experience of participating in slightly deranged, mind-altering sessions with Mr. Tuttle, gives her back her own self. Mr. Tuttle is a ghost, but he is no apparition emerging from the subconscious: he is a ghost of the system of Lauren's connectedness to her husband. Mr. Tuttle is a memory of the space Lauren and Ray co-created in the house. He disappears at the end of the novel and it is a symbolic freeing of Lauren from the earlier connection, her successful relocation—through mourning—of her system, which now will have to work again, with changed bearings, because Ray, a vital part of the system, is no longer there.

Mourning as an opening to the presence of death in the basic structure of life becomes a practice of renewal for Lauren. But here the renewal is the discovery of the systemic mutability of the embodied subject. Technology, in this context, is revealed not as an enemy, but a natural product of the human as system. The condition, however, for such reception of the presence of technology, is the radically non-Cartesian treatment of the body as the site of agency. Language, memory, time and space dimensions, are what they are not because of the "categories of the mind," but because they are parts of complex embodied organisms.

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Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*: Transgressive Historical Fiction

This paper discusses the ways in which the employment of specific narrative techniques and generic paradigms shapes the presentation of the historical reality of World War II in Philip Roth's 2004 novel *The Plot Against America*. It might seem that with regard to the narrative construction of history the book does not have much new to offer and relies on the achievements of what Linda Hutcheon has famously called postmodern historiographic metafiction (124-140). It uses the speculative mode, exploits the authorial figure, transcends generic conventions, revolves around historical reinterpretations, and questions political dogmas. However, as it is the case with all major works which have been recognized as milestones of historiographic metafiction, the novel quality of Roth's text does not depend on the mere application of particular narrative components, hardly original in themselves as they invariably and inevitably emanate from the existing aesthetic and ideological contexts, but rather on the unique combination of such components. In *The Plot Against America* the combination of fiction and history yields a certain transgressive effect, which has to do with the employment of the genre of alternate history. As Gavriel D. Rosenfeld points out, this genre has undergone a dynamic development since the end of World War II, more recently attracting the attention of mainstream writers and serious academics, with historians among them (6). Karen Hellekson claims that alternate histories can fulfill a practical function in historical studies because "they foreground the notion of cause and effect that is so important to historians when they construct the narrative" (16). Rosenfeld sees alternate history as a reflection of "the progressive discrediting of political ideologies in the West since 1945": "In insisting that everything in the past could have been different, in stressing the role of contingency in history, and in emphasizing the open-endedness of historical change, alternate history is inherently anti-deterministic" (6).

Admittedly, Rosenfeld recognizes the subversive potential of the genre which has helped to effect fundamental changes in the epistemological status of history. This paper highlights a different, though related, feature of alternate history, namely its transgressive character. Rather than seeing *The Plot Against America* as an example of literary subversion, understood as an ideological consequence of aesthetic activity, this paper

deals with the book's potential for transgression, defined in aesthetic terms as an instance of a radical violation of the established variants of representation. Thus, in *The Plot Against America* this violation entails an inclusion of the paradigm of alternate history into the novel's structure and a subsequent interference with this paradigm in such a way as to strengthen, in Rosenfeld's words, "a mimetic relationship to historical reality" (5). In essence, such an operation stands in opposition to the typical strategies of constructing the world presented in alternate history, as these strategies are anti-mimetic and result in estrangement, the defining feature of the genre.

Rosenfeld claims that alternate history is "inherently presentist" insofar as it "explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the state of the contemporary world." He distinguishes two major models of engaging the present in alternate history: fantasy and nightmare. The former envisions "the alternate past as superior to the real past and thereby typically expresses a sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are today," whereas the latter depicts "the alternate past as inferior to the real past and thus usually articulates a sense of contentment with the contemporary status quo" (11). Symptomatically, both these modes of alluding to the present signify departures from it and, in the metanarrative domain, they establish a sort of safe distance between the reality known to and experienced by the reader and the reality constructed in the text. Roth's transgressive gesture consists in undermining the illusion of such a safe distance between the two separate realities. This is achieved by means of narrative solutions which conflate the reader's perspective with the narrator's. It can be inferred from Rosenfeld's description of the genre that in alternate history the present functions as a source of ideas and experiences, while it does not have a place in the narrative structure of the text. What makes the literary works representing this genre believable is the evidence of history, and not the intrusions of the present, hence the frequent inventions of documentary materials. *The Plot Against America* stands out as alternate history because it transcends a kind of self-containment which characterizes the narrative universes to be found in texts belonging to the genre. This self-containment has to do with the fact that the temporal development of the narrative cannot reach beyond the limit determined by the reader's experiential sphere. What Roth does in his novel is, precisely, encroach upon this sphere by creating a shared temporality for the reader and the author-narrator, "Philip Roth," and thus engaging the reader in more direct ways.

In Roth's alternative scenario, the famous airman Charles A. Lindbergh is the presidential candidate of the Republican Party and wins the 1940 elections, having defeated Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was running for his third term as president of the United States. The new president, known for his admiration for Nazi Germany, advocates American isolationism and diametrically redefines the strategic aims of

American foreign policy, opposing his predecessor's interventionist doctrine. Moreover, Lindbergh begins to strengthen the ties between his government and the Nazi authorities: he signs a neutrality pact with Ribbentrop, and then invites the German minister to the White House. There is a surge of anti-Semitism, evidently inspired by the president, who had identified Jews as the main advocates of interventionist policy and accused them of sabotaging the vital political interests of the United States. Jews begin to fear that the American "Kristallnacht" is bound to happen. However, as if in an effort to appease the Jewish community, Lindbergh employs as his close advisor Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf, "the religious leader of New Jersey Jewry" (34). The new administration launches the program of relocation, whose declared aim is to strengthen the integration of American society by way of resettling families from the urban East to the rural Midwest. As it turns out, the program embraces only Jewish families, therefore it is seen as an evident case of political repression, geared at segregation. In an act of discontent and defiance, the popular Jewish journalist Walter Winchell, the most outspoken critic of the new presidency, announces his decision to run in the next elections and to confront Lindbergh on the strictly political ground. Winchell embarks on a tour of the country, and he is assassinated during one of his public appearances. His death aggravates the existing antagonism: there is a series of protest marches against the president and, at the same time, a series of pogroms. In such tense circumstances, Lindbergh disappears, his plane never to be found. After a short, but stormy, period of the rule of Lindbergh's vice-president, Roosevelt returns to power and history returns to the course which we know from handbooks.

The historical account and the narrative line constitute mutual frameworks, and this connection is highlighted at the very beginning of the novel by the elaborate second sentence of the opening paragraph, inextricably binding pure invention (Lindbergh's presidency) with absolute fact (Roth's Jewishness): "Of course no childhood is without its terrors, yet I wonder if I would have been a less frightened boy if Lindbergh hadn't been president or if I hadn't been the offspring of Jews" (1). Roth re-imagines his childhood, returning to the time when he was between seven and nine years old and speculating about his parents' attitudes and decisions at the time of political terror. In essence, the story in *The Plot Against America* gradually reveals all sorts of divisions arising in the family as a result of the turbulent political situation. For example, Philip's elder brother Sandy, fascinated like so many others with Lindbergh's manliness, rebels against his father Herman and volunteers for the program for young boys from urban areas who work on farms for a period of time. On the other hand, Herman has to deal with his radically inclined nephew Alvin, who joins the Canadian army, fights on the European front, and finally returns severely wounded to his native New Jersey. There is also aunt

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Evelyn, who marries Rabbi Bengelsdorf and whom, for that reason, Roth senior treats with utmost intolerance. Predictably enough, Evelyn becomes the most influential member of the family and arranges for Herman's family to be selected for the program of relocation, which has disastrous consequences for her relatives. Having refused to take an office in Kentucky, Philip's father loses his job in an insurance company. The family lives, as the title of the last chapter has it, in "perpetual fear." Despite the hopes for improvement after Lindbergh's disappearance and Roosevelt's reelection, the Roths are acutely aware that there have been too many wrongs that cannot be easily compensated for and that there is no guarantee that another Lindbergh will never appear in America again.

The complex literary status of *The Plot Against America* begins with the novel's place in Roth's output; namely, the book belongs among the so-called "Roth novels," which feature the protagonist named after the author. *The Plot Against America* is heretofore the latest addition to this set, rather than cycle, including the following earlier works: *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (1988), *Deception: A Novel* (1990), *Patrimony: A True Story* (1991), and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993). These narratives constitute an important context for the analysis of the generic features of Roth's alternate history. The writer's concern with genre in all the "Roth novels" is evident in the use of subtitles, which purport to define the genre of individual works with greater or lesser precision. *The Plot Against America* is the only novel in the set without such a qualifying subtitle, essentially because this narrative evades all unequivocal literary classifications. However, this is quite in keeping with the generic logic—or rather the lack of it—underlying the "Roth novels" and pointing to the indeterminate nature of literary creation. The point is that the texts in this set utilize types of poetics which, in principle, stand in stark opposition: mimetism and anti-mimetism. Thus, *The Facts* and *Patrimony* are overtly autobiographical narratives, the former depicting the writer's childhood, youth, and his beginnings in the literary profession, the latter focusing on the last years of Herman Roth's life and exploring the complicated father-son relations. By contrast, *Deception*, the story of a young writer's love affair in London, with its manifest self-reflexivity, comes closest to a flirt with postmodernism, perhaps alongside *Counterlife* (1986) from the "Zuckerman novels." Finally, *Operation Shylock* is an authorial fantasy about the writer's trip to Israel to attend the trial of John Demjanjuk. There arises a question as to where *The Plot Against America* fits in such a polarized configuration. It seems that despite the whole metafictional content, *The Plot Against America* gravitates toward the mimetic autobiographical model, represented by *The Facts* and *Patrimony*. The powerful autobiographical illusion emerging from this completely fictitious narrative results from the presence of

a crucial element of the autobiographical convention, that is the recollection of childhood. Philippe Lejeune writes that although the memories of childhood are uncertain and discontinuous, at the same time they are "intense," and this "intensity" guarantees truthfulness (242).

The use of the autobiographical convention influences the construction of the historical context. Roth smoothly combines the self-narrative with the historical account, treating the former as a sort of legitimization for the latter. Interestingly, unlike E.L. Doctorow, who in his fiction often places historical figures and invented characters side by side, Roth reserves for the people known from history a distinct narrative level and a distinct discourse, thus marking the distance which is inevitable in the study of the past. The historical part of the novel has a documentary value, as it contains excerpts from or summaries of speeches and written documents, not necessarily real. Roth emphasizes the dramatic aspect of the historical account by placing the turning-point sequence—from Lindbergh's disappearance to Roosevelt's re-election—in it, and not in the self-narrative. The autobiographical part testifies to the conditions of living in the epoch. Roth supplements *The Plot Against America* with a bibliography relevant for the subject of the book, biographical notes on all major historical characters introduced in the narrative, the transcript of Lindbergh's infamous speech "Who Are the War Agitators?," and finally a short passage from A. Scott Berg's biography of Lindbergh, published in 1998 (364-391). Such a supplement refers the reader to sources enabling the verification of Roth's story, and in this way, paradoxically, it provides the background knowledge that allows one to appreciate Roth's sophisticated reinvention of history. The modification of facts is limited to the years 1940-1942, which constitute the time of action. Andrew S. Gross comments on the implications of such a construction of time:

> The novel's counterfactual structure offers… an inverted center, representing on the one hand a terrible fascist episode in the United States, but on the other hand going to great lengths to integrate this episode into actual history, and even into the life of someone named 'Philip Roth.' We don't need to confuse author and narrator to see that the story would have had a very different significance had the narrator been named Zuckerman…. It would have also had a different significance had the Lindbergh episode changed the course of history…. The book is perhaps most surprising in its reassertion of normalcy: even if it *had* happened here, things would not be so different. ("It Might Have Happened Here")[1]

[1] I wish to thank Andy Gross for allowing me to read his manuscript.

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The presence of the limiting temporal framework is crucial for increasing the credibility of Roth's alternate history in that it endows the author-narrator and the reader with the privilege of hindsight. Both the reader and the author-narrator know that the pessimistic scenario, foreshadowed by the events in the novel, did not come true. The knowledge shared with the author-narrator makes the reader, as it were, more concerned with the book's central problem and more sensitive to the text's suggestiveness. Therefore, if the reader responds to the novel with disturbance or in any other emotional way, his reaction lends further credence to Roth's invention.

The reader's presumed involvement would have far lesser significance if it had not been for the existence of the temporal dimension shared by the author-narrator and the reader. This common temporality is implied most strikingly in the following allusion to the assassination of Robert Kennedy:

> What made the death of Walter Winchell worthy of instantaneous nationwide coverage wasn't only that his unorthodox campaign had touched off the country's worst anti-Semitic rioting outside Nazi Germany, but that the murder of a mere candidate for the presidency was unprecedented in America. Though Presidents Lincoln and Garfield had been shot and killed in the second half of the nineteenth century and McKinley at the start of the twentieth, and though in 1933 FDR had survived an assassination attempt that had instead taken the life of his Democratic supporter Chicago's Mayor Cermack, it wasn't until twenty six years after Winchell's assassination that a second presidential candidate would be gunned down – that was New York's Democratic senator Robert Kennedy, fatally shot in the head after winning his party's California primary on Tuesday, June 4, 1968. (272)

This passage is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, it establishes the time of narration as "after 1968"; accordingly, this single flash-forward punctures the temporal plane delimited by the time of action and opens a space for the reader to occupy as the author-narrator's contemporary. Secondly, the passage illustrates the dynamics of contextualization which defies the standard logic of historical thinking. Apparently, the only possible historical sequence where an earlier event precedes a later one is retained here, however, in functional terms, as an instantly recognizable analogy, the death of Robert Kennedy, that is the later event, constitutes a point of reference for what—in the novel—happened earlier. Thus, the death of Walter Winchell and the assassination of Robert Kennedy become mutual contexts. Another example of a flash-forward is less ostensible, but no less revealing:

> As everyone knows, President Lindbergh was not found or heard from again, though stories circulated throughout the war and for a decade afterward, along with the rumors about other prominent missing persons of that turbulent era, like Martin Bormann, Hitler's private secretary, who was thought to have eluded the Allied armies by escaping to Juan Peron's Argentina—but who most likely perished during the last days of Nazi Berlin—and Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat whose distribution of Swedish passports saved some twenty thousand Hungarian Jews from extermination by the Nazis, although he himself disappeared, probably into a Soviet jail, when the Russians occupied Budapest in 1945. Among the dwindling number of Lindbergh conspiracy scholars, reports on clues and sightings have continued to appear in intermittently published newsletters devoted to speculation on the unexplained fate of America's thirty-third president. (320-312)

Unlike the reference to Kennedy, this interference with the temporal development determined by the time of action is very subtle, and at the same time very intricate, as it works on several different levels of association. Thus, in the beginning Roth establishes a contemporary perspective of looking at events by evoking the present common knowledge; the phrase "as everyone knows" tells everything in this respect. Then he mentions Bormann and Wallenberg, both of whom vanished in mysterious circumstances in or around 1945. Admittedly, such allusions perfectly suit a narrative set at the time of World War II; the fact remains, however, that the year 1945 is outside the primary temporal structure. Last but not least, the author-narrator writes about "Lindbergh conspiracy scholars," pointing to a particular practice in the post-war study of history. Of course, conspiracy theories were not an invention of the twentieth century, but it was in the second half of that century that they gained popularity because the circumstances of so many dramatic events since World War II could not be fully explained. The skepticism underlying late-twentieth-century methods of historical investigation helps to shape the author-narrator's perspective. Ironically enough, Roth's reliance on speculation in *The Plot Against America* suggests his affinity with "conspiracy scholars."

The existence of the common ground for the reader and the author-narrator is strengthened by the possible correspondences between the events depicted in *The Plot Against America* and the events that were taking place in the United States and in the world around the time of the novel's publication. As Rosenfeld observes: "[m]ost likely, Roth wanted his novel to serve as a warning about the contemporary dangers facing America in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the war in Iraq" (155-156). Indeed, Rosenfeld is not the only critic to believe that "[i]n portraying the United States becoming a fascist-

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like state under the administration of an ill-qualified, naïve, incompetent president, Roth offers a not-so-thinly veiled critique of the United States under the administration of President George Bush" (Rosenfeld 156). However, as Michael Rothberg argues, this political and historical correspondence involves a kind of reversal of situations and their consequences insofar as the novel shows the disastrous results of the isolationist policy, while the recent developments in American foreign affairs, in a dramatic way, reveal the traps of interventionism. The critic concludes that "[s]uch provocative reversals… frustrate attempts to draw too straight a line between the novel and any given political context." To further substantiate his point about the ambiguity of the political interpretation of *The Plot Against America*, Rothberg adds that the "evocation of anti-semitism gone wild might be read… as an indirect indictment of the contemporary resurgence of right-wing Christianity in American public life" (64). The critic implies a certain elusive quality of Roth's strategies of contextualization. It seems that this elusiveness is the resort available to the writer who wishes to defy somehow—with his limited means—what he calls in the book "history's… outsized intrusion[s]" (184).

Roth himself is ambivalent on the issue of alleged contextual similarities. On the one hand, in his essay "The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*," he dissuades the readers from searching for political clues hidden in the text:

> Some readers are going to want to take this book as a roman a clef to the present moment in America. That would be a mistake. I set out to do exactly what I've done: reconstruct the years 1940-42 as they might have been if Lindbergh, instead of Roosevelt, had been elected president in the 1940 election. I am not pretending to be interested in those two years—I am interested in those two years.

On the other hand, in conclusion he offers a predictably harsh judgment of George W. Bush:

> And now Aristophanes, who surely must be God, has given us George W. Bush, a man unfit to run a hardware store let alone a nation like this one, and who has merely reaffirmed for me the maxim that informed the writing of all these books and that makes our lives as Americans as precarious as anyone else's: all the assurances are provisional, even here in a 200-year-old democracy. We are ambushed, even as free Americans in a powerful republic armed to the teeth, by the unpredictability that is history.

The recognition of the unpredictable course of history is precisely where Roth's alternative scenario and his view of the present-day America converge. The writer even

quotes from his own novel in order to articulate his point with greater emphasis (113-114). In other words, in the authorial commentary, Roth does the very thing that he tries to prevent others from doing: he draws implicit analogies where analogies should not be made. Of course, unlike the readers and critics whose intentions Roth anticipates and whom he thus disarms, he himself does not compare two political realities, but uses them as illustrations of the general nature of the historical process. In consequence, he treats the invented and the existing evidence with equal seriousness, provoking the comparisons which he openly denies.

In *The Plot Against America*, there is a paradoxical balance between the falseness of events and the truth of feelings. In her discussion of the novel, Hana Wirth-Nesher poses the question: "What is achieved in a fictional autobiography that cannot be achieved by historical writing?," and offers the following answer:

> History aims to determine what happened, to ascertain the facts, and then to write a story that is the result of interpreting and evaluating those facts. Fiction aims to give us the truth of lived experience, the truth of emotional and psychological affect, rather than a cool appraisal of past events. In other words, what is lost in history is uncertainty, whether it is personal history in autobiography or group history. (170)

The use of alternate history allows Roth to magnify the dilemmas faced and anxieties experienced by American Jews at the time of World War II and, subsequently, to diagnose them in their entire complexity. The manifest falseness of the text is inextricable from the profundity of insight. The author-narrator uses himself as an example of the overwhelming influence of the circumstances which remained beyond his comprehension as a boy. Young Philip's nightmares, anxieties, and obsessive or compulsive behaviors reflect the way American Jews feel about the new, extremely tense situation in which they found themselves after Lindbergh's election. The self-narrative in *The Plot Against America* reads like a record of gloomy fantasies and erratic behaviors. For instance, in his dream Philip is terrified to "discover" that the stamps in his favorite set depicting the American national parks—one might say national treasures—have been marked with big swastikas: "across the cliffs, the woods, the rivers, the peaks, the geysers, the gorges, the granite coastline… across everything in America that was the bluest and the greenest and the whitest and to be preserved forever in these pristine reservations, was printed a black swastika" (43). This is a well-known episode, since it inspired the graphic design that appears on the covers of most of the editions of *The Plot Against America*: the stamp with a view of the Yosemite Park and a swastika dominating the whole picture. The national parks represent the haven of childhood fantasies, while

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the swastika signifies a brutal intrusion upon this imaginary realm. Symptomatically, young Philip loses his invaluable stamp collection while sleepwalking. It is not only nightmares that evade the controlling force of consciousness, but also compulsive behaviors. One of the boy's favorite activities becomes following strangers and learning about their secrets, as if most people around him wished to fulfill various devilish plans. Such a way of spending time apparently bespeaks of a sort of paranoid tendency in the child. Apart from that, Philip steals clothes from one of his friends, even though he does not have any use for them. The common denominator for all these peculiarities is fear, the main subject of the book, stated directly in the opening sentence: "Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear" (1). Timothy Parrish further describes this fear as "[t]he fear of being orphaned – being evacuated from your parents and thus your history."

The method of writing about history in such a way as to make intense personal experience authenticate false historical material is the narrative feature which connects *The Plot Against America* to Roth's earlier novel *The Ghost Writer* (1979). In this book, Nathan Zuckerman overhears the secret conversation between E.I. Lonoff, whom he considers the greatest living Jewish American writer, and his secretary Amy Bellette, claiming that she is Anne Frank. The circumstances of Zuckerman's discovery have a rather preposterous aura: he hears voices coming from the room above his bedroom, climbs onto the desk and perches on its edge, having stepped onto a pile of books to be able to put his ear to the ceiling. In a sense, the revelation comes to him as a reward for the acrobatic exercise he has performed. In any case, he is so deeply moved by Amy's sacrilegious usurpation that he finally begins to care about the tragedy of Jews during the war, something that the men of authority in his family and community could never persuade him to pay heed to. *The Ghost Writer* is not just "a parody of the cult of Anne Frank," as Efraim Sicher describes the novel (109), it is an insight into the emergence and persistence of phantoms. In *The Plot Against America* Roth goes much further and calls phantoms into life. The blatant historical fantasy thus reveals its power of illumination.

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Mentioning the Unmentionable: *Sex and the City* and the Taboos about Female Sexuality

That women have long been underrepresented and subjected to gender stereotyping on TV is impossible to deny. Although with recent social changes and more and more TV series being produced for women and by women, traditional non-threatening roles assigned to female characters have become more liberated, one aspect of women's life has consistently been suppressed, and that is female sexuality. As William Leith points out, "We may have equality of the sexes but we do not have the equality of sexual organs" (qtd. in Hunt).

Like most cultures, American culture is essentially phallocentric. What it means is that it is physiology that defines and segregates individuals, and, according to Sharon H. Nelson, "Physiological maleness and masculine gender together define the topmost class in a sexual hierarchy, and the sexual hierarchy becomes the basis and the model for the definition of all power relations" ("Lieder Singen"). The result is the marginalization of femininity and female sexuality, which can be seen not only in cultural attitudes but also in language.

Of course, this phallocentric suppression of the feminine has been transported to the world of television, which is a product of culture. Even though nowadays the viewer is bombarded with explicit sexual images, which are mainly images of sexually appealing women, they usually have little to do with reality. They neither show nor cater to female desire. In her groundbreaking work *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf claims that the representation of women's bodies is heavily censored and "only the official versions are visible" (136). She draws attention to how such imagery works to suppress women's true sexuality.

Feminist critics and theorists have been striving to find an antidote for the misogynistic tendencies characteristic of patriarchal societies. They have analyzed reasons behind them and looked for the possible ways of fighting with the taboos surrounding the female body and sexual behavior. Television, being both the reflection of current social attitudes and a force capable of shaping them, has come under close scrutiny. It has been emphasized that interrogating the existing fictional narratives is not enough. There is a

need to produce narratives challenging the dominant, restrictive portrayals of female identity and sexuality.

The TV series *Sex and the City* can definitely be seen as an answer to this call. Over the period of six years (1998–2004) and within ninety-four episodes, it explored the sex lives of women and largely contributed to the public debate about female sexuality. As a notorious taboo breaker, it touched upon issues which so far had been considered unmentionable. "The way they spoke, and the things they talked about, were revolutionary," says Janet McCabe, a co-editor of a collection of essays *Reading Sex and the City* (qtd. in Wignall). In one of the essays, "Orgasms and Empowerment: *Sex and the City* and the Third Wave Feminism," Astrid Henry likens the series to a "forum about women's sexuality as it has been shaped by the feminist movement of the last 30 years" (66). What exactly is the truth about female sexuality according to *Sex and the City* and its four main heroines? To answer this question, it is necessary to acknowledge that the cultural attitudes towards female sexuality are inseparably linked to the cultural attitudes towards the female body.

Models and Mortals

The conflict central to the representation of the female body in the media, that is the discrepancy between "real" women and the images available, is suggested already in the second episode of the first season of the series. Miranda complains, "What I want to know is when did all the men get together and decide that they would get it up only for giraffes with big breasts.... We should just admit that we live in a culture that promotes impossible standards of beauty" (1:2). Each of the four friends fails to meet these standards in some way: Carrie, too short; Miranda and Samantha, too small-breasted (though, in the case of the latter, it will take eighty-eight episodes to force this idea upon her); Charlotte, too full-hipped. How does the belief that they, in a sense, do not measure up make these women feel? To quote Carrie, it makes them feel "intimidated" (1:2).

The current obsession with beauty as a modern tool of oppression is central to a lot of feminist writing. A very extensive work on the subject is Naomi Wolf's best-selling classic *The Beauty Myth*. She clearly delineates the relationship between beauty and female identity, and discusses the impact of modern, idealized concepts of female beauty on different spheres of women's lives, including sexuality. What she wrote about the images of women's bodies promoted by the pop culture of the 1970s is unfortunately still true:

> The 'ideal' female body was stripped down and on display all over. That gave a woman, for the first time in history, the graphic details of perfection against which to measure herself, and introduced a new female experience, the anxious and minute scrutiny of the body *as intricately connected to female sexual pleasure*. (134; original italics)

Today, digitally improved images of flawless female bodies can be seen virtually everywhere and the pressure to look like a fashion model or a movie star is increasing all the time. Magazines, television, advertising all try to convince women that having a slim figure, perfect skin and even being forever young is only a matter of proper care. That, of course, is a big lie which makes ordinary women feel terribly bad about themselves. In her essay "Foucault, Femininity, and Patriarchal Power," Sandra Lea Bartky writes: "[s]ince the standards of female bodily acceptability are impossible fully to realize, requiring as they do a virtual transcendence of nature, a woman may live much of her life with a pervasive feeling of bodily deficiency" (149). Now, the question is: can you feel sexy if you feel deficient?

When in the seventh episode of the fifth season, entitled *The Big Journey*, Carrie sets off with Samantha on a trip to California, apart from promoting her book, she is determined to satisfy her sexual needs by meeting with Big and "getting laid." Unfortunately, on the way, a huge pimple grows on her cheek. This "tragedy" threatens to thwart the whole plan. "I can't go anywhere with this pimple," she moans (5:7). And when she finally does meet him, she finds him strangely reluctant to have sex. Although the reason for this is that, having read her book, he is for the first time genuinely concerned about hurting her feelings, she develops a silly suspicion that it might be the pimple. Similarly, in the episode entitled *One*, Samantha panics when she finds one gray hair in her pubic hair. Believing that "no man wants to fuck grandma's pussy," she decides to dye it (6:12). It turns orange and eventually she has to shave it all off even though her current boyfriend finds a "full bush" sexy. Showing the problem in a light, comic way, characteristic of the whole series, these episodes nevertheless suggest that a pimple or a gray hair, standing here for bodily imperfection, can govern a woman's sex life by making her uncertain of her own desirability. When discussing the adverse effects of what she calls "beauty pornography," Naomi Wolf claims that "the harm is apparent in the way such imagery represses female sexuality and lowers women's sexual self-esteem by casting sex as locked in a chastity belt to which 'beauty' is the only key" (146). An imperfect female body (for instance an ageing body) is seen as grotesque, and grotesque female bodies are a taboo in Western culture. By showing Carrie and Samantha sitting in a run-down train compartment, the former desperately trying to pop the pimple and the latter

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taking out silicone push ups from her bra, or by showing Samantha fighting with the natural effects of ageing, *Sex and the City* gives the viewer a rare opportunity to have a glimpse of the "unofficial versions" of women and, in a way, challenges this taboo. The fact that, despite the pimple, Carrie and Big eventually have great sex she was hoping for, suggests that perfect beauty need not be a prerequisite for a satisfying sex life. Also, the very idea that you can have a perfect body and keep it forever young is shown as ridiculous. The whole series is full of comic situations showing that it is not ageing itself, but trying to fight with it by all means, such as Botox injections, chemical peels or plastic surgery, that is grotesque as it is doomed to failure. When Samantha puts on glasses (*An American Girl in Paris,* 6:12) or declares she is "forty-fucking-five" and not ashamed of it (6:20), she is definitely more "fabulous" than the orange clown she has turned herself into during her war against one gray pubic hair.

One might of course wonder why instead of cherishing natural female bodily characteristics, patriarchal culture has been forcing women to conform to unnatural rules of femininity. What is so scary about the female body as it is that requires so much effort and pain to hide? What monster lurks underneath this artificial shell? Feminist thinkers have often turned to psychoanalysis for answers. A very interesting discussion of the supposed female monstrosity in relation to the visual medium (the film in this case) can be found in Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous Feminine*, where she refers to Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject. In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva defines the abject as something that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). Using examples from the horror genre, Creed writes that these borders may be separating for example "human and inhuman, man and beast… the normal and the supernatural, good and evil… those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not… normal and abnormal sexual desire" (11) but, most importantly, these are the borders that keep at bay everything that constitutes a threat to what Kristeva calls "the self's clean and proper body" (73). Creed takes up Kristeva's argument that due to the female reproductive functions such as menstruation, pregnancy or giving birth, as well as the mother's role in toilet training, the female body is not perceived in the symbolic order as "clean and proper," but rather as abject (Creed 12-14). Following Kristeva, Creed points to the distinction between "the world of the mother (a universe without shame)," where excrements do not cause embarrassment, and "the world of the father (a universe of shame)," which places filth under taboo (Creed 12-13). Consequently, in the patriarchal culture, the female body and its physiologic processes are placed under taboo as well. Showing life from the *woman's* perspective, *Sex and the City* inevitably comes face to face with these taboos as all of them are a natural part of women's everyday lives.

Women Who Are Drying up and the Flow Which just Came to Town

In the episode entitled *The Big Time*, Samantha receives by mail a leaflet advertising products for women approaching menopause. It reads: "sometime in the ten years before menopause, you may experience symptoms including all-month long PMS, fluid retention, insomnia, depression, hot flashes or irregular periods" (3:8). This, of course, sounds really scary and, being a few days late, Samantha is indeed terrified at the very thought that she might be "drying up" as she says. Though, in the end, she gets her period and is obviously very relieved, the "terrible" fate is only postponed. You can run but you cannot hide.

This situation fits in very well into an ongoing feminist debate on how negative attitudes towards exclusively feminine bodily experiences, such as menstruation or menopause, are shaped and perpetuated. In her essay "Medical Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause," Emily Martin offers an interesting analysis of medical writing related to these two physiologic processes. Having looked at a number of scientific texts, for example college books, she comes to the conclusion that the terms used to describe both menstruation and menopause are definitely not "neutral." She sees them as conveying "failure and dissolution" (31). To quote her comment on a recent college text describing the menstrual cycle: "[i]n rapid succession the reader is confronted with 'degenerate,' 'decline,' 'withdrawn,' 'spasms,' 'lack,' 'degenerate,' [again] 'weakened,' 'leak,' 'deteriorate,' 'discharge,' and, after all that, 'repair'" (31). Although she admits it is impossible to question the truthfulness of these descriptions, she objects to the language used as well as to putting emphasis "above all else" (35) on the negative aspects of the processes described. She writes: "I am arguing that just as seeing menopause as a kind of failure of the authority structure in the body contributes to our negative view of it, so does seeing menstruation as failed production contribute to our negative view of it" (29). For contrast, she quotes a description of spermatogenesis in which we can find terms such as "remarkable," "amazing," or "sheer magnitude" (31). Obviously, if we were to apply the same logic as the one used in describing menstruation, we would most likely emphasize that most of what the "amazing" and "remarkable" spermatogenesis produces is simply wasted. It is possible that if menstruation were described in terms of production or renewal instead of failure and degradation, and menopause as "a physiologic phenomenon which is protective in nature—protective from undesirable reproduction and the associated growth stimuli" (Martin 35) and not as "drying up," these two processes would not be objects of shame and fear.

Sex and the City makes an attempt to lessen the anxiety surrounding the two phenomena and to make them more positive and natural. Carrie's immediate reaction to the list

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of calamities mentioned in the catalogue is to make a joke that "On the plus side, people start to give up their seats for you on the bus." Also Miranda is able to see the bright side of menopause: "Well, I for one can't wait for menopause. Do you realize how freeing it will be not to have our periods?" (3:8). She would be happy not to have them; Samantha is happy when she gets it. Either way, it is obviously possible to find a positive side to something that has traditionally been perceived and presented only in negative terms. Certainly, periods can be a nuisance, just as a running nose is, but they are also a natural fact of life which would be less of a trouble if it did not have to be kept a dirty secret. And in *Sex and the City* it isn't. Even the most conservative Charlotte, who still uses the old-fashioned euphemism "I can't wait till the flow stops coming to town," is capable of walking into a cafe with a box of Tampax in her hand and putting it right on the table (3:8). And it is not the end of the world.

Carrie: Pregnant or not, Miranda had needs and decided to stop fighting them

Another exclusively female experience that renders the female body far from "proper" is motherhood and everything connected to it, that is pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. The series devotes a lot of attention to the various aspects of being a mother, for example fertility problems, abortion, unwanted pregnancy and the like. It definitely challenges the view that becoming a wife and a mother is every woman's dream and proper destiny. Of the four friends, only Charlotte is from the beginning determined to get married and have a child. Ironically, while all her efforts are in vain, the career-oriented, cynical Miranda gets pregnant by mistake during a "mercy fuck" with Steve despite the fact that she has a "lazy ovary" and he has only one ball. Within one episode (*Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda*, 4:11) we are confronted with two extremely different experiences of motherhood—both friends make an appointment at the gynecologist's: one to conduct fertility testing, the other to have the "procedure." This is far from the traditional conception of planning a baby and being pregnant as times of bliss. Although, as Astrid Henry points out, Miranda's decision to keep the baby prevents her from breaking "the US TV taboo of depicting abortion," the show is, nevertheless, "incredibly progressive for US TV in its stigma-free discussion of abortion, including the detail that two of the four lead characters have had them" (71).

However, there is something far more revolutionary in the way Miranda's pregnancy is presented and it is related to the main interest of this paper, that is female sexuality.

Bearing in mind the standards of beauty which, as has been mentioned, seem to determine women's desirability, the pregnant body definitely cannot be classified as sexy. In fact, pregnant women have traditionally been perceived in only one dimension: not as *women* any longer but as expectant *mothers*. This reduces a person who still has a variety of needs exclusively to the reproductive function.

Sex and the City, on the other hand, presents Miranda as a complex human being who has lost nothing of her wit and cynicism, and more interestingly, who has lost nothing of her sexual appetite. The following conversation is definitely not a typical pregnant-woman talk we get to hear on television:

> MIRANDA: Is it OK to fuck one guy when you're pregnant with another guy's baby? Is that safe? Could all that poking shake the baby loose or something? No, that's silly. Married couples have sex all the time. But what if it's huge? Could the dick dent the baby?
> CARRIE: Where do you think dimples come from? (*The Good Fight*, 4:13)

Despite all her doubts, Miranda believes that "nothing puts a man off sex like pregnancy," so she is determined to grab her "last chance for sex" before her belly grows. Carrie's words, "Pregnant or not, Miranda had needs and decided to stop fighting them," sound almost like a motto, and are a rare acknowledgement of the fact that being pregnant does not mean a woman stops being sexual (4:13). In fact, as the series shows, it may be the other way round. Being a few months pregnant, Miranda complains to Carrie:

> I'm so swollen and gassy. I am like a floatation device.… I've learnt to control the sound now, but not the activity.…[A]lthough, maybe, it's not that I've controlled the noise as much as my ass is so big the sound is now muffled. Look at my fingers. They're like sausages. I can't even get my ring off. I'm telling you that the fat ass, the farting, it's ridiculous. I am unfuckable and I've never been so horny in my entire life. That's why you're supposed to be married when you're pregnant, so somebody is obligated to have sex with you. I'm undesirable. (*Ring a Ding Ding*, 4:16)

Later that day, she asks Steve if she is ugly and if he would want to have sex with her. Assured that it is safe, "that night, Steve gave Miranda multiple orgasms" (4:16). The message is that, despite all the "side effects" which are culturally considered unpleasant and placed under taboo, a pregnant woman can be both desiring and desired.

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Mrs Morgan: I bet you have a beautiful cunt, dear

In her book *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, Barbara Creed devotes a whole chapter to discussing the sexual taboos of American society that *Sex and the City* challenges. Most of them are related to different sensual pleasures; however, as she writes, "the most confronting episode in the first series... involved not a sexual behavior but the uttering of the most taboo word on the media –'cunt'" (52). The promotional materials for the episode promised that it would say the unsayable. This, of course, also says a lot about the misogyny of the culture which renders a word describing female genitals the worst possible swearword. A lot has been written on the "cunt" taboo as well as on the general taboo surrounding other words referring to female genitals, like "vagina" or "clitoris." It has often been emphasized that calling a man a "cunt" is offensive because it is a form of verbal castration. According to psychoanalytic feminist theory, castration anxiety is precisely the source of the misogynistic tendencies of patriarchal cultures.

As mentioned before, an interesting study on the subject can be found in Creed's book *The Monstrous Feminine*. One of Creed's most important assumptions with regard to sexual difference is that man fears woman not because she is castrated but because she might castrate. Creed draws such a conclusion on the basis of a careful rereading of Sigmund Freud's writings, particularly the case history of Little Hans. In her view, they constitute a proof that despite clinical evidence, Freud dismissed the possibility that it is the mother and not the father whom the child fears as a potential castrator. To support her claim that man is subconsciously afraid of female castrating genitals, Creed refers to the representation of the monstrous-feminine in myths and legends across a variety of cultures in which "the threatening aspect of the female genital is symbolized by the *vagina dentata* or toothed vagina" (105). Creed writes: "The myth about woman as castrator clearly points to male fears and fantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them into pieces. The *vagina dentata* is the mouth of hell—a terrifying symbol of woman as the 'devil's gateway'" (106). In this context, placing the lexicon connected to female genitalia under taboo may be interpreted as an expression of these fears and fantasies.

Feminists have been trying to reverse the negative associations with the female genitals and their names for a long time. There is a whole movement called cunt-power, initiated by Germaine Greer already in the 1960s. The assumption is that a word's suppression is a source of its power. Therefore, women are encouraged to use it, not as an offensive term, but for example as a term of endearment. In Matthew Hunt's comprehen-

sive analysis of the subject entitled *Cunt: The History of the C-Word*, we read: "The purpose of the reappropriation of 'cunt' is to reclaim it as a neutral or even positive anatomical term, replacing its persistently pejorative male usage. This is to return 'cunt' to its original status, to revert to its pre-taboo usage. The word's power can be maintained so long as its taboo is maintained[.]" *Sex and the City* undeniably is an important contribution towards achieving this goal.

In the fifth episode of the first series, *The Power of Female Sex*, we get a chance to see an example of "cunt art" and hear the taboo word a few times. Charlotte decides to organize an exhibition of the latest works of Neville Morgan in her gallery.[1] The eccentric artist invites her to his country house to show her the canvases which turn out to be colorful "portraits" of various women's cunts. He talks about them with sincere admiration and almost religious devotion:

> MORGAN: The canvases you're about to see are what I consider to be the apotheosis of every great idea I've ever had. It's the closest I've ever come to the pure universal God force. The cunt.
> CHARLOTTE: Oh my… They're very powerful.
> MORGAN: Exactly. The most powerful force, the universe, the source of life and pleasure and beauty. (1:5)

Though, as we learn from the voice-over, "Charlotte hates the c-word… Neville Morgan was not a man to be corrected." And neither was his lovely wife, who, serving cookies, warmly encouraged Charlotte to pose for the portrait herself, assuring her she "must have a beautiful cunt" (1:5). It is understood that Charlotte, the shy Charlotte who in a moment of weakness confesses to her four friends that she never looks "down there" because she thinks it's "ugly," (*The Real Me*, 4:2) lets herself be persuaded to become a model. According to Barbara Creed:

> By displacing anxiety through humor, the episode undercuts the force of the prohibition surrounding public utterance of the word 'cunt.' It is spoken many times in the episode, but in a context which, for *Sex and the City*, is atypically asexual. The episode reminds us that the sexual revolution fell short when it came to changing public attitudes about saying the unsayable. (*Media Matrix* 53)

[1] This might be a reference to Judy Chicago's famous *Dinner Party*.

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Miranda: It's my clitoris, not the sphinx!

The obvious result of the cultural censorship of female sexuality is that female desire and pleasure remain a mystery, not only to men but to many women, too. In this sense, *Sex and the City* may be seen as playing an educational role. When watching en erotic scene on TV, Miranda notices: "Look at this. He climbs on top of her and the next thing you know she's coming. No wonder men are so lost. They have no idea there's more work involved" (*They Shoot Single People, Don't They?*, 2:4). Soon, she starts dating a man named Josh, who fails to satisfy her in bed, and she does what many women do so as not to disappoint their lovers—she fakes an orgasm. This can be understood as a metaphor for the way female sexual pleasure is represented in popular culture. It is faked. If it is shown at all, it has little to do with reality. This, of course, is a road to nowhere.

> SAMANTHA: You know, it's really not their fault. They don't come with a manual. If I had a son, I'd teach him all about the vagina.
> …
> MIRANDA: The other night, he told me he really likes that I can come while he's fucking me. How can he actually believe that that's all it takes?
> CARRIE: Because you're faking it! (2:4)

Miranda decides to do herself and the womankind a favor and educate Josh. Unfortunately, a "two-day tutorial with her ophthalmologist had turned love-making into a kind of naked-eye exam," and to reward his efforts she stages a final performance (2:4). Well, old habits die hard. Nevertheless, Miranda takes her fate into her own hands and does not settle for the little he can give her. When she realizes it will not work between them, she says goodbye. "Female sexual pleasure and agency is obviously considered a fundamental right, rather than a privilege" (Wignall).

Miranda: Everybody masturbates

Another taboo around female sexual behavior is masturbation. In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf writes:

> The cultural inversion of female sexuality starts early, beginning with the masturbation taboo. Sexual integrity grows out of the sublime selfishness of childhood, from which sexual giving emerges as generosity rather than submissiveness. But female

> masturbation is also culturally censored.… Scenes of young women's sexual awakening *in themselves* do not exist except in a mock-up for the male voyeur. It is hard to imagine, in a cultural vacuum, what solitary female desire looks like. Women's bodies are portrayed as attractive packaging around an empty box; our genitals are not eroticized *for women*. Men's bodies are not erotized *for women*. Other women's bodies are not eroticized *for women*. Female masturbation is not eroticized *for women*. Each woman has to learn for herself, from nowhere, how to feel sexual (though she learns constantly how to look sexual). (155-156; original italics)

Sex and the City leaves little to the imagination. The women not only engage in pretty frank talk about masturbation but are also shown buying and trying out all sorts of sexual toys. Samantha, being a true expert on the subject, even offers advice to other customers in a shop on which vibrator is best for what. Even the good-girl Charlotte buys herself a vibrator called The Rabbit and actually becomes addicted to it (*The Turtle and the Hare*, 1:9). Presenting masturbation as a common and much desired female sexual behavior, *Sex and the City* pays a tribute to sex-positive feminism promoted by such provocative figures as Betty Dodson, whose first book, *Liberating Masturbation: A Meditation on Self Love* (1974), became a feminist classic. Dodson, with her very rich sexual life, in fact could be seen as a perfect model for Samantha's character.

Are we the new bachelors …or… are we sluts?

Even if a woman somehow manages to stay immune to the workings of the beauty myth and the patriarchal fears, and feels confident enough about her body to engage in a rich sexual life, there is one final blow that might bring her back under control. And that is calling her a slut. In an episode where Miranda learns she has chlamydia, making a list of her former lovers, she comes up with the number of forty-two and begins to feel bad about herself. "I'm a big, dirty, diseased whore," she tells Steve, afraid that the number will scare him (*Are We Sluts?*, 3:6). But, for Steve, the number is fine and from the proud smile on his face we may suspect his number is much, much higher. In an article entitled "Democratic Sex," Betty Dodson states that what she taught women back in the 1970s is to a large extent still true:

> American society operates with a sexual double standard: an unspoken agreement or a wink that tacitly grants men the social approval to be aggressive-independent and sexually polygamous, while women are expected to be non-aggressive-dependent and

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> sexually monogamous. Women are conditioned to play a supportive role and we end up seeking security rather than independence, new experiences and sexual gratification. The way women are conditioned to accept and conform to this double standard is through the withholding of sexual self-knowledge with the condemnation of masturbation, lack of birth control methods [the most visible change] and the threat of being socially ostracized if a woman strays from sexual monogamy.... [A]ny woman who has sex with more than one-man-at-a-time just for pleasure will be labeled a slut or a bimbo. Yet any man enjoying sex with multiple partners is seen as 'a lucky son-of-a-bitch.' He's a respectable bachelor. There is still no word for a single woman who enjoys sex on her own terms.

Carrie's thoughts on the subject are very similar. "Men who have had a lot of sexual partners are not called sluts, they are called very good kissers, a few are even called romantics" (3:6). In another episode, she asks: "Are we the new bachelors?" (5:7). By showing the double standard as obviously unfair, *Sex and the City* implies that it is women's right to enjoy sexual freedom on equal terms with men without being patronized or judged. Astrid Henry writes, "In episode after episode, Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte are not punished for being sexually active; they are not treated as 'fallen women' who must ultimately encounter some terrible fate. Rather, their sexual 'selfishness', if you will, is rewarded and praised, which is highly unusual in either film or TV representations of women's sexuality" (75-76). The four heroines seek independence, new experiences and sexual gratification and they possess sexual self-knowledge. And they are proud of it.

Of course, *Sex and the City* has various shortcomings as a feminist text, one of them being its focus on white, middle-class and heterosexual characters only (Mandy Merck even calls the depiction of lesbian relationships in the series an example of "abjection of female homoeroticism"; 54), but its contribution to the public debate on female sexuality is nevertheless priceless. Referring to a number of issues central to feminist writing, it brought these ideas to general attention. It can serve as a useful springboard for the analysis of how the restrictive standards of beauty and negative attitudes toward the female body result in the suppression of female sexuality. As long as women are conditioned to feel ashamed of their bodies and desires and forced to pursue the elusive ideal of feminine beauty in order to make their bodies docile and non-threatening, they will not be able to fully enjoy their sexual freedom. Although they are attractive, the heroines of *Sex and the City* are not classic, stylized and flawless Hollywood beauties. They have their own inhibitions and uncertainties, and yet all of them manage to have satisfying sex lives, each of them in her own way and on her own terms. They manage to stay con-

vinced of their own worth and their right to sexual agency and pleasure. They actively explore the world of sensual pleasures and the possibilities of sexual fulfillment seem endless and open. To use Barbara Creed's words, "*Sex and the City* argues that if four well-brought up, attractive professional women are prepared to engage in new forms of sexual behavior, it is clear that there has been, or should be, a major shift in levels of public tolerance" (*Media Matrix* 46). It shows that the taboo surrounding female sexuality obviously can and should be removed.

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Polish and American Diplomatic Relations since 1939 as Reflected in Bilateral Ambassadorial Policies

Across the ninety years of diplomatic relations between the different republics of Poland and the United States, America has posted 25 ambassadors to Poland, and Poland has posted 25 envoys to Washington (one of them twice), with some of them holding the rank of charge d'affaires only. Both countries have downgraded then upgraded their respective embassies, predicated upon the fleeting politics of the moment, and there have been relatively brief periods when each country was not represented in the other. There have been longer periods when Poland was America's only link to parts of the communist world, such as the People's Republic of China. In fact, what has become known as the "opening" of China by President Richard M. Nixon and his secretary of state, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, in 1971 and 1972, was largely arranged in Poland. What could easily have been an earlier and less acrimonious withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam also was arranged in Poland through the Chinese ambassador at the time, but sadly this effort fell through.

With the invasion of the Republic of Poland by Nazi Germany in 1939, the immediate Soviet attack, and Germany's eventual reinvasion of the Polish territory under Russian control in 1941, the government of the Second Polish Republic fled to Paris and then to London, where it remained for the duration of the war. The American Ambassador Anthony J. Drexel Biddle continued his diplomacy by following the government of Poland in exile from 5 September 1939, first to Paris until June, 1940, and thence to London, where he served from 14 March 1941 until 01 December 1944.

President Roosevelt replaced Ambassador Biddle in 1944 with Arthur Bliss Lane, who served as the United States ambassador to the Polish government in exile at London from September 1944, and then in postwar Warsaw from the day the American Embassy was reopened there on 5 July 1945 until his resignation on 24 February 1947 in disgust that Britain and the United States failed to keep their promise to give the Polish people free elections after World War II. Both Biddle and Lane had careers in the Foreign Service, although Biddle's foreign service career began politically and Lane was a career foreign service officer. Later, author Richard C. Lukas confirmed Ambassador Lane's

reasons for anger and resignation in his 1982 book, *Bitter Legacy: Polish and American Relations in the Wake of World War II*, in which he wrote that the fraudulent communist elections of 1948 were "the consequence of Washington's having habituated the Kremlin to deal with political issues in eastern Europe without the United States during the war years" (2–3).

Ambassador Lane was deployed to Poland under Roosevelt's longtime secretary of state, Cordell Hull, and continued under Roosevelt's last secretary of state, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., and President Harry S. Truman's first secretary of state, James F. Byrnes. Truman lost Ambassador Lane much as he lost Secretary of State Gen. George C. Marshall, because Truman departed too abruptly and too drastically from the vision of his predecessor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This proceeded almost to the point where the Democratic Party, through Truman, capitulated as much to Soviet Marshal Joseph V. Stalin as it had feared would happen had Roosevelt not replaced his second vice president, Henry A. Wallace, with Truman. Wallace was assumed to be functionally in the pocket of Stalin.

From 15 December 1940, the Polish government in exile in London was represented in Washington by Michał Kwapiszewski as the chargé d'affaires, then upgraded the position to the rank of ambassador with Jan Ciechanowski on 21 February 1941, who arrived in Washington on 6 March 1941 to serve for the duration of the war. Ambassador Ciechanowski announced on 07 July 1945 that he felt "compelled" to resign because of America's betrayal of Poland by American withdrawal of recognition of Poland's constitutionally elected government headed by President Władysław Raczkiewicz ("Biografie"), reflecting feelings parallel to those of Ambassador Lane ("Defeat in Victory").

That the American voting public tended to agree with America's betrayal—particularly as evidenced by the voting pattern of Polish Americans ("Polonia") in the 1946 Congressional elections, especially Chicago's Democratic primary—has been evidenced in an abundance of literature (Ubriaco). What is less clear is whose fault this was, that of the Franklin Roosevelt administration (1933– 945) especially during Roosevelt's third term (1941–1945) with his Stalin-favored vice president Henry C. Wallace, or of Roosevelt's three Republican predecessors: Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert C. Hoover (Ubriaco 241). It is argued that America's ineptitude in foreign policy from World War I through World War II paved the way for the cold war (Gaddis 143). Part of this ineptitude has been linked to what some historians believe was the absence of any coherent policy toward Eastern Europe generally and Poland especially during the *interbellum* period (Lundestad 22).

Once Germany surrendered to the Alliance in 1945 and the American Embassy was reopened in Warsaw, Ambassador Lane played a leading role in the investigation of So-

viet crimes in wartime Poland. As Ambassador, Lane published an article in *Life* Magazine, titled "How Russia Ruled Poland," soon followed by the book *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, in which he criticized the "naïve idealism" of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Ambassador Lane contended that the information supporting his article and his book was based on participant observation. In a letter to *The New York Times*, Lane solemnly claimed that many Western journalists knew the information that he had disclosed in *Life* Magazine and that he had not obtained it from any intelligence sources:

> My article... was based on actual happenings which were known to many American press correspondents in Poland. There was no need to employ spies, even had I had the unwise desire to do so.... I [instructed] members of my staff that they should avoid contact with the underground, for I did not wish to endanger the safety of persons not in sympathy with the Polish Government[.]" ("Poland: Static")

Poland's communist government disagreed, however, and accused 16 Polish nationals, including several members of Stanisław Mikołajczyk's Polish Peasant Party, of having collaborated with Lane to supply "classified" information used in the *Life* Magazine article.[1] After his stewardship in Poland, Ambassador Lane served as chair of the commission that investigated the murder of 20,000 Polish army officers at Katyń, at first ascribed to Nazi Germany but later confirmed to have been the work of the Soviet Union, based on ballistic tests of the ordnance used for the executions. Ambassador Lane wrote the preface to Józef Mackiewicz's book *The Katyn Wood Murders* (1951).

The embassy list in Washington discontinued the name of any representative from Poland until 11 September 1945, when Janusz Żółtowski was certified as the chargé d'affaires. Poland upgraded this position to ambassador on 13 December 1945, when it appointed Oskar Lange, who arrived on 21 December 1945. Ambassador Lange was succeeded by Józef Winiewicz, who was appointed ambassador with a change of government on 22 January 1947. He arrived in Washington on 4 February 1947 and served until the People's Republic of Poland was established as a state by the 1952 constitution.

President Harry S. Truman replaced Ambassador Lane with financier Stanton Griffis, a New York investment banker who had been chairman of Paramount Pictures. Ambassador Griffis served for a year from 1947 to 1948, during the time when Bernard Baruch and Barry Bingham, Sr. directed the Marshall Plan from Paris. Griffis was succeeded by Waldemar Gallman, who is more famous for the book he subsequently wrote about Iraq

[1] Of those whom Poland accused of espionage, nine were sentenced to death and six to long prison terms ("Poland: Static").

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while he was serving as U.S. ambassador there: *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollection of Nuri Al-Said, 1954–1958* (1964). Ambassador Gallman was posted to Poland from 1948 until 1950, and was the second and final diplomat Gen. George C. Marshall deployed to Poland as Truman's secretary of state. President Truman's final ambassador to Poland was Joseph Flack, a career foreign service officer who continued for two years into the first administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Ambassador Flack had served as first secretary at the American Embassy in Warsaw, the post responsible for coordinating intelligence. He was selected by Truman's third and final secretary of state, Dean G. Acheson, who was far more hawkish and anti-communist than General Marshall had been. Ambassador Flack left Poland on 22 April 1955, and died at sea aboard the cruise ship, "United States," en route home (Flack Genealogy).

President Eisenhower appointed Joseph E. Jacobs to replace Ambassador Flack on 1 April 1955. Ambassador Jacobs had already served as ambassador to Czechoslovakia in 1948, and from 1949 until 1955 had been the special assistant to the Mutual Defense Assistance Program in Rome, which prepared him for the political unrest in Poland in the aftermath of the Poznań Riots of 1956. This was a time of uprisings against communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, most of which were unsuccessful and brutally repressed. Ambassador Jacobs was the type of senior level diplomat who was deemed essential by Eisenhower's first secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, and Dulles's brother Alan, director of central intelligence.

The leadership of Poland changed as had the leadership of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin in 1953. With Nikita S. Khrushchev as Soviet premier, some enemies of Stalin were rehabilitated, and among them was Władysław Gomułka, whom Khrushchev installed as first secretary of Poland's communist party in 1956 upon the death of the party's longtime Stalinist secretary Bolesław Bierut. Gomułka would serve for fourteen years. Moscow allowed him independence in setting Poland's domestic policy, provided he towed the Moscow line in foreign policy, as he did. Gomułka deemed himself a representative of the working class and earlier in his political career had crushed the Polish Peasants' Party. In some respects, Gomułka in Poland was the opposite of what Mao Zedong was in China during the same period: Mao had crushed the leader of China's workers, Liu Shaoqi, in favor of Mao's peasant constituency (Glover 289). Gomułka lasted a long time as first secretary due to the perception by Polish communists that he could stand up to Russia ("POLAND: Rebellious Compromiser").

Bierut had dispatched F. Romuald Spasowski to Washington for his first of two postings there as ambassador on 11 April 1955. Ambassador Spasowski arrived in Washington on 5 May 1955. He was succeeded by Edward Drożniak, appointed by Gomułka, on 18 June 1961. He presented his credentials to President Kennedy in Washington the next

day. Drożniak passed away while in office in Washington, and received a military honors funeral that was unusual because it took place at night (Mossman 183).

President Eisenhower's last ambassador to Poland, for the entirety of his second term in office, was Joseph D. Beam, also a career foreign service officer with significant intelligence experience. Deployed by John Foster Dulles, Ambassador Beam continued in office under Eisenhower's second and last secretary of state, Massachusetts governor Christian A. Herter. Subsequently, Beam was posted as ambassador to Czechoslovakia under President Lyndon B. Johnson and Moscow under President Richard M. Nixon, and he also served as director of Radio Free Europe under President Gerald R. Ford. All this prepared Beam well for the publication of his book, *Multiple Exposure: An American Ambassador's Unique Perspective on East-West Issues* (1978). He was the first American ambassador to Poland to have been born in the twentieth century. During his stewardship in Warsaw, the American Embassy was the only viable channel of communication between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China in a crucial period of time.

Between 1955 and 1970, there were some 135 meetings in Warsaw under Eisenhower's Ambassador Beam and his three successors—John Cabot, John Gronouski, and Walter Stoessel ("Diplomacy")—before President Nixon decided to move the talks to Pakistan (U.S. Dept. Of State, 1976), apparently to avoid or minimize the likelihood that the Soviet Union would gain advance awareness of Nixon's decision to visit Beijing. Of those 135 meetings, the last one in 1970 with Ambassador Stroessel was the shortest, lasting only 75 minutes ("Diplomacy"). These meetings, begun just as Marshal Chen Yi became China's Foreign Minister in 1956, worked also to aid China in "back-channeling" information to the Soviet Union that China wanted the Soviets to know about their own strategies, because these talks were conducted at the Myśliwiecki Palace, where the communist government of Poland secretly eavesdropped and passed the conversations on to the Soviet Union ("Diplomacy").

In this way, the Myśliwiecki Palace in Warsaw appeared to function as China's opportunity to indirectly confront the Soviet Union when China's chargé d'affaires Lei Yang spoke to the Americans as if the Chinese were addressing the Soviets directly. Thus these meetings became the major channel for communication between China and the Soviet Union as well as between China and the United States. Once these meetings were unmasked as being compromised by communist Poland's eavesdropping, China and the United States commenced to feed the Soviet Union deliberately falsified information. Eventually, these meetings were moved to the respective embassies of China and the United States, also in Warsaw, where confidentiality could be maintained. It is very "interesting," as *Time* magazine noted, that this change of venue was at the behest of the Chinese delegation ("Diplomacy"). Even more interesting, perhaps, is the once secret but

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now declassified memo that secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger wrote to Nixon: "We are building a solid record of keeping the Chinese informed on all significant subjects of concern to them, which gives them an additional stake in nurturing our new relationship," including a "full rundown" of American discussions with Soviet leaders (U.S. Dept. of State, 1976, 6).

President John F. Kennedy appointed John M. Cabot as ambassador to Poland in 1962, where he served until 1965 under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and Dean Rusk, the loyal secretary of state appointed by Kennedy and retained by Johnson for his entire presidency. Cabot was a career foreign service officer and intelligence operative who also had served as deputy commandant of the National War College and written the book *Toward Our Common American Destiny* (1955), in which he analyzed the problems and solutions that the United States shared with its Latin American neighbors. His ambassadorship saw negotiations with the Chinese ambassador to Poland aimed at preventing escalation of the war then emerging in Vietnam. Unfortunately, these were unsuccessful, largely because President Johnson failed to listen to or heed the advice Cabot received from China. Ambassadors Jacobs, Beam and Cabot reflect the extent of intelligence the United States gave to and received from both the People's Republic of China and the People's Republic of Poland across the decade between 1955 and 1965 as the Soviet Union became increasingly fearful of a Chinese invasion. This paranoia was so rampant that the Soviets uprooted and relocated countless towns across Soviet Asia, apparently in an effort to confound Chinese marksmanship in the event of a missile attack ("Diplomacy").

After Cabot, President Johnson sent to Poland John A. Gronouski, a Polish-American whom President Kennedy had appointed as postmaster general, the first ever Polish-American to hold a cabinet appointment and probably the first cabinet officer ever to hold a Ph.D. Gronouski was one of the few New Frontiersmen who stayed on with Johnson after Kennedy's death, and afterwards became founding dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. Gronouski made tours across Eastern Europe from Warsaw in an effort to improve trade relations with Warsaw Pact nations. Earlier in his career, he had unsuccessfully challenged Wisconsin's reactionary Republican senator, Joseph R. McCarthy, Jr., and later on, during the Carter Administration, he was chairman of International Broadcasting Corporation, the parent entity of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. It may be surprising that *The New York Times* obituary of Ambassador Gronouski captioned him as President Kennedy's postmaster general, not as America's ambassador to Poland or as founding dean of the Johnson School of Public Affairs. Referring to the talks that had taken place in Warsaw between China and the United States, Gronouski noted: "It was pretty clear that part of what the Chinese were saying was not said to us. It was being said to the Soviets" ("Diplomacy").

President Nixon deployed two career foreign service officers to the People's Republic of Poland as ambassadors. The first, Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., was sent to Warsaw just as Poland was changing. Edward Gierek had been the leader of the "young technocrats" in Poland's communist party, and he became first secretary in November 1970. Under Gierek's leadership, Poland changed abruptly, mostly for the better, at least for educated students and skilled workers. Gierek commenced a program of borrowing heavily from the United States and West Germany, ostensibly to modernize Polish factories and put cash in the pockets of the Polish work force so they could purchase Western products (Rolicki). In fact, he "opened" the country to Western media, at least to young intellectuals who could read in English, French, German, or Spanish, by allowing foreign magazines and newspapers to be placed on public library and university shelves.[2] Immediately, this diluted the influence of the Russian news media that had exercised a monopoly in Poland at least since 1952, which had been the period of an entire generation. Directly, this inspired the rise of labor movements, including Solidarity (Polish Solidarność). Indirectly, this nurtured the rise of Poland's new middle class and intelligentsia, the prelude to the free Poland as we came to know it from 1989 until the present time. The administration of Edward Gierek in Poland preceded that of Mikhail S. Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, but many of Gierek's policies resembled Glasnost, meaning openness, and perestroika, meaning reconstruction, both hallmarks of the Gorbachev period in the Soviet Union. It seems fair to say that, in part at least, Poland under Gierek contributed to the changes that led to the implosion of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, but this connection is lost to history in favor of the more direct link between Poland under Lech Wałęsa and the actual collapse of the Soviet Union by the end of the 1980s.

Stoessel was deployed by Secretary of State Dr. Henry A. Kissinger for a second purpose beyond that of supervising the Nixon Administration's new flirtation with the legacy of President William Howard Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy." Stoessel's second objective was to open a dialogue with the Chinese chargé d'affaires in Warsaw as a prelude first to the Kissinger visit to China in 1971 and then to the Nixon visit to China in 1972. Stoessel had been the American ambassador to the Soviet Union and was deployed to Poland from 1969 to 1972. It is likely that Stoesel had a role in the installation of Gierek as first secretary, probably by sharing with Poland's foreign ministry some insights about what the Soviet Union really thought about Poland. Stoessel's second role centered around

[2] Interview with Professor Ryszard Żelichowski, head of political science and sociology, Polish Academy of Science at Warsaw, with David A. Jones, on 03 December 2010. Professor Żelichowski, who was a graduate student in Poland when Edward Gierek became first secretary in November 1970, shared his perceptions concerning the conditions before and after the changes Gierek implemented.

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discussing how the United States could help to alleviate China's growing apprehension of the Soviet Union. This led to the formation of the Beijing committee that came to be known as the "study group," which Chinese premier Zhou Enlai arranged among four marshals of China, and to the courageous recommendation by China's longtime foreign minister, Marshal Chen Yi, that Chairman Mao do what Mao dreaded doing more than almost anything else: "play the American card."

Ambassador Stoessel was succeeded by his boss, Richard T. Davies, who had been assistant secretary of state for European affairs from 1970 until 1972. Davies served as the United States ambassador to Poland form 1973 until 1978, across the middle of the Gierek administration. Ambassador Davies improved American trade relations with Poland, but also tied American trade to America's concern over communist Poland's increased denial of human rights, forced upon Gierek by Moscow as the Soviet reaction to Gierek's growing Polish nationalism. Both human rights and Polish nationalism were causes Ambassador Davies championed in part because of his long marriage to a Polish woman whom he had met and courted during an earlier posting to Poland in the late 1940s. Ambassador Davies served across the administration of President Gerald R. Ford, Nixon's appointed successor, and the first half of the administration of President James E. ("Jimmy") Carter, Jr., a Democrat, thus reflecting the bipartisan support Davies enjoyed in Washington and the bipartisan commitment the United States presidents maintained with Poland.

The People's Republic of Poland under first secretary Władysław Gomułka had appointed Jerzy Michałowski as ambassador to the United States on 31 August 1967. Ambassador Michałowski presented his credentials to President Johnson on 12 September 1967. Ambassador Michałowski was succeeded by Ryszard Frąckiewicz as the chargé d'affaires on 13 July 1971, and then Edward Gierek appointed Witold Trąmpczyński as ambassador on 23 December 1971, who arrived in Washington on 07 February 1971. Ambassador Trąmpczyński was succeeded by Stanisław Pawliszewski as the chargé d'affaires on 13 January 1978, and then Gierek sent Ambassador Francis Romuald Spasowski back to Washington for a second posting on 09 March 1978, and he arrived on 07 April 1978. Edward Gierek faced declining health and labor uprisings at the end of the 1970s, and was replaced as first secretary briefly by Stanisław Kania, who in turn was replaced soon thereafter by Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, who imprisoned Gierek in 1981. Ambassador Spasowski asked for and received political asylum in (defected to) the United States on 19 December 1981 in the wake of the uprisings in Poland led by Solidarity, for which he was sentenced to death in absentia by Poland's communist government (Spasowski, *Liberation of One*). The military government of Poland then downgraded its embassy in Washington, which was now headed by Zdzisław Ludwiczak as

chargé d'affaires. On 18 December 1987, Poland sent Jan Kinast to Washington as ambassador, and he arrived on 22 March 1988.

President Carter appointed William E. Schaufele as his ambassador to Poland from 1978 to 1980. Ambassador Schaufele had served as inspector general of the Foreign Service in 1975 and as deputy permanent representative of the United States to the United Nations Security Council. Later, he would serve as assistant secretary of state for African affairs and president of the Foreign Policy Association. Schaufele was a high caliber ambassador who put Poland in perspective within the Warsaw Pact group of nations. For his service as ambassador to Poland, Schaufele received the Wilbur Carr Award. He was author of the 1981 book *The Polish Paradox: Communism and National Renewal*, that was functionally a chronicle of Edward Gierek's administration, which blended communism with Polish nationalism. Late in his administration, President Carter appointed Francis J. Meehan as ambassador to Poland. Ambassador Meehan served two years into the administration of President Ronald W. Reagan. Meehan was succeeded for six months by Herbert E. Wilgiss, Jr. as interim ambassador.

Ambassador Meehan had been the American ambassador to Czechoslovakia from 1979 to 1981, and he went on to become the American ambassador to East Germany from 1985 to 1988. Meehan was a career foreign service officer who had been President Nixon's deputy chief of mission at the American Embassy in Budapest, Hungary from 1973 to 1975. During Ambassador Meehan's watch, Poland's military government "manhandled" and expelled two American diplomats, accusing them of espionage and prompting the Reagan Administration to expel two Polish diplomats in retaliation ("U.S. Expels Two Envoys").

President Reagan appointed another career foreign service officer, John R. Davis, Jr., who served as chargé d'affaires in Warsaw from 1983 to 1987 after he scaled down the rank of his new envoy to Poland as a protest to "Marshal Times." On 23 September 1987, America and Poland decided to restore ambassadors, Poland dispatched deputy foreign minister Jan Kinast to Washington, and Davis was promoted to ambassador (Sciolino). Ambassador Davis remained in his office for two years until 1990. During that time, Ambassador Davis held "Round Table" discussions at the Ambassador's Residence in Warsaw, aimed at bringing about a transition from communism to democracy, and that achieved *de facto* recognition of Solidarity by the communist government of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski (U.S. State Department, "Roundtable Talks").

The Roundtable Talks so impressed President George H.W. Bush that he promised money for Poland in the summer of 1989, and then invited Lech Wałęsa to visit Washington, where in November 1989 he addressed a joint session of the United States Congress. In this event, the new fate of Poland premiered to the United States and to the

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world, and the fast response from America was money in the amount of 1 billion dollars from both the American public and private sectors, earmarked to seed the start of democratic and free market institutions in Poland and across Eastern Europe. From the public sector, the United States Congress passed the Eastern European Democracy Act (SEED) and from the private sector the Polish-American Enterprise Fund (PAEF) promised matching loans to Polish entrepreneurs. Another nongovernmental organization, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, offered loans and guaranties of loans together with business insurance to stimulate foreign direct investment in Poland by American businesses. In 1990, the Polish Stabilisation Fund was introduced by the United States with international participation to make the Polish zloty exchangeable with the dollar and other Western currencies. Each of these indispensable programs was the direct outgrowth of the success of the "Roundtable Talks" at Warsaw in the United States Ambassador's residence. Diplomacy worked! What had begun in Poland spread across Central and Eastern Europe. A bloodless collapse of the Soviet Union provided far greater security for the United States and its Allies.

Thomas W. Simmons, Jr. was appointed by President George H.W. Bush as ambassador to Poland from 1990 until 1993. He is an expert on Russia, and was Chair of the George F. Kennan Institute for Advanced Studies of Russia. Ambassador Simmons has been one of the most prolific authors on the transition from communism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. His books include: *The End of the Cold War*? (1990), *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World* (1993), *Islam in a Globalizing World* (2003) and *Eurasia's New Frontiers: Young States, Old Societies, Open Futures* (2008). Simmons has been an outspoken skeptic on the issue of whether the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe will be sustainable. On 23 July 1990, Poland appointed Kazimierz Dziewanowski to be its ambassador to the United States, and he arrived in Washington on 07 August 1990, to serve there until the middle of 1994.

President William J. ("Bill") Clinton sent two ambassadors to Poland. The first was Nicholas A. Rey, who was born in Poland but whose family fled with him to America in 1939. Ambassador Rey was a director of the Polish American Freedom Fund and chair of the Polish American Enterprise Fund from 1990 to 1993, when he began a four-year ambassadorship in Warsaw. His 25-year background as an investment banker with Merrill Lynch and Bear Stearns served him well as he attempted to get Poland on its feet financially in preparation for its bid to join the European Union a decade later. The second Clinton-era ambassador to Poland, from 1997 until 2001, was Daniel Fried, a career foreign service officer who came to Poland after spending four years on President Clinton's National Security Council staff, where he supervised the formulation of American policy on North Atlantic Treaty Organization enlargement and drafting the future

relationship of NATO with the Russian Federation. President Clinton deployed experts in finance and security to serve as ambassadors to Poland. Effective on 23 June 1994, Poland sent Jerzy Koźmiński to be its ambassador to the United States.

President George W. Bush sent two very different ambassadors to Poland, one for each of his two terms in office. The first, Christopher R. Hill, is a foreign service officer who also had significant National Security Council experience focusing on southeastern Europe, together with a diplomatic background in Kosovo and Macedonia. After his deployment to Poland, Ambassador Hill served as chief negotiator on talks with North Korea, and after that as ambassador to Iraq. In Poland, Ambassador Hill was a key figure in the opening of the East Asian Institute at the prestigious Warsaw School of Economics. The George W. Bush administration encouraged investment in Poland from America's private sector (Michalski). This became particularly impressive during Bush's second term in office.

President Bush's second ambassador to Poland was Victor H. Ashe, his Yale College roommate, who had been mayor of Knoxville, Tennessee for longer than anyone else and president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which awarded him its distinguished service award. Ambassador Ashe visited all 16 Polish provinces three times, and over 183 Polish cities. He led a dozen trade tours of Polish business leaders to the United States, designed to stimulate imports and exports between the two nations. Ambassador Ashe negotiated the Missile Defense treaty between America and Poland.

During this time period, Poland sent two ambassadors to Washington. The first was Przemysław Grudziński, appointed on 11 July 2000, who arrived in Washington on 05 September 2000. His successor was Janusz Reiter, who was appointed on 26 September 2004 and presented his credentials in Washington on 05 October 2004. The current ambassador from Poland to the United States is Robert Kupiecki, who presented his credentials there on 06 June 2008.

President Barack H. Obama appointed Lee Feinstein to be his ambassador to Poland. Ambassador Feinstein is a former principal deputy director of the U.S. Department of State's Policy Planning staff and senior advisor to former Secretary of State Madeline Albright. He is experienced in non-proliferation, strategic arms control, and interdiction of firearms trafficking. Also, he has been the deputy director for security policy and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. He worked as national security director for Senator [now Secretary of State] Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential campaign. Ambassador Feinstein is the 25th United States ambassador posted to Poland. Very recently, Ambassador Feinstein addressed an audience of University of Warsaw students and faculty and advised that the Obama Administration is concerned that American intervention anywhere in the world,

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including Poland, should be limited to the situations where the protection of American interests coincides with the preservation of American values (Feinstein).

Poland's ambassadors to the United States have tended to be rising (or fading) stars in their political parties. Some of the better-caliber candidates for posting to Washington were not confirmed because of the communist legacy that still haunts Poland. The United States has sent very high-calibrer ambassadors to Poland. At least half have been career foreign service officers, frequently well-trained intelligence operatives. Among the non-career appointees, several have been personal friends of the president or secretary of state who posted them to Poland, such as Ambassadors Gronouski, Hill, Ashe, and Feinstein. What this signals is the importance America places upon Poland as a diplomatic post, for two reasons: because of Poland's location at the utmost east of the European Union, and because the Polish American electorate is influential to both of America's two political parties.

In conclusion, the exchange of diplomats between the Republic of Poland and the United States of America since 1939 has witnessed the tragic but catalyzed the magic in a plethora of different ways. America stood by the Polish government in exile between 1939 and 1945, but dropped the ball on Poland in the first seven years after the victory of 1945 and let the postwar communist factions form coalition governments that were in the interests of the Soviet Union far more than of the United States. America and Poland still exchanged envoys, sometimes downgrading their ranks during times of tension, then raising rank and status as tensions subsided. Even during challenging times, such as the 1970s and 1980s, the United States gave to Poland (large financial investments, for example, to the government of Edward Gierek) and Poland gave to America in return (the setting for the "Roundtable Discussions" with China in Warsaw, for example, during which bogus information was fed to the Soviet Union). But even more than all that came out of these diplomatic exchanges. For a generation of budding young Polish students who would eventually rise to become Poland's post-communist middle class of business leaders, clerics, intelligentsia, and political leaders gained their fascination for Western values during the decade of the 1970s as Edward Gierek opened Poland's long-closed window to the sunshine of American and other Western media. The result during the decade of the 1980s became the movement that would secure freedom not only for Poland itself but for the entire Warsaw Pact of communist nations.

In supporting the people of Poland during the Stalinist period, post-Stalinist (Bierut) period, the enlightenment of Edward Gierek, regression during the marshal times of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Solidarity and later the post-Solidarity time, the United States earned the lasting respect of all political parties within Poland. In many respects, Poland's respect for the United States was earned as the product of individual hard efforts

by the envoys these countries exchanged. If there is a common thread amongst the diplomats that Poland sent to the United States since 1945, it was that they harbored views of Polish nationalism and independence, even during (particularly during) the common period. After all, the Soviet Union never did more than to threaten to invade and occupy Poland. If there is commonality among the diplomats the United States sent to Poland, it would be that they provided personal and independent assessments of Poland as their host country, sometimes even taking their views directly to the American public. Most of the American envoys deployed to Poland were security operatives one way or another, and sometimes in a scholarly way, but this demonstrates how important Poland was in the eyes of postwar American presidents. If the diplomatic exchanges between Warsaw and Washington evoked "the tragic" between 1919 and 1939, the diplomatic exchanges between the two capitals since 1939 have witnessed a steady rise that may be depicted accurately as a form of "the magic." Very few other nations have embraced the United States and the American people as unreservedly and as strongly as Poland has done. Former United States vice president Albert E. Gore, Jr. viewed Poland as a model for the transformation of Eastern Europe (Richter).

There is somewhat of a "roadmap" to be learned from America's diplomatic relations with Poland that may be applied to the current crisis in the Middle East and North Africa. It is that the United States can provide emotional and financial support effectively, but ought to try at least to resist military support unless absolutely necessary. This worked in Poland, more or less, because a new generation of educated Polish citizens emerged from the Gierek period in late 1970 and eventually took back their country themselves. A new generation of educated citizenry appears to be emerging across North Africa and the Middle East, from Tunisia across Libya to Egypt and beyond. Their objectives parallel Poland's of 40 years ago, and can be achieved in the same way if careful diplomacy is favored over military intervention. The lessons of Poland are there to be appreciated and understood, if only they will be heeded.

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REVIEWS

Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors, eds., *A New Literary History of America*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. 1128 pages.

A special website created as an Internet advertisement for the 2009 Harvard University Press *New Literary History of America* edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors welcomes its visitors with the following invitation: "Pick a card, any card." A deck of cards we are asked to choose from—a set of pictures from the book's dust jacket—shows various staples of American culture—not only of what is conventionally understood as *literary* culture. The very choice of dust jacket images (a portrait of Frederick Douglass, an electric guitar, Jimi Hendrix, some baseball players, a computer, an airplane) is significant in that it points to the fact that what the book offers is not just another periodization of American literature, but a rather curious intersection of history, literature, visual arts, music, folk/popular traditions, politics and social sciences, and mass-oriented culture, all of which, in the editors' view, can and should be gathered under the heading *literary history*.

Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors' effort is a successor of earlier attempts at providing college students and the so-called general reader with a literary history of the United States. To say that compilers such as Arthur Hobson Quinn, Robert E. Spiller, Emory Elliott, or Sacvan Bercovitch to name but four, completely ignored spheres of culture other than that of letters would not do their work justice; yet with Marcus and Sollors we have a culture-based approach at its apogee: we are constantly reminded that literature cannot be viewed on its own. It should always be analyzed within a larger cultural context, treated as an integral part of culture (culture understood, in an anthropological sense, as all human activity, be it political, social or artistic). Hence the editors provide the reader with informative entries on the first Asian Americans, the skyscraper, the birth of the *cool* aesthetics, the atom bomb, the song in country music, the word "multicultural" (supplied by Sollors himself), the invention of the blues, the matter of Haiti, the Salem witchcraft trials, Jim Crow laws, Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" or Bob Dylan's "Song to Woody." The authors effectively provoke their readers to rethink the very notion of "a literary history," seemingly taken for granted by earlier editors, and, more specifically, the very meaning of the word "literary." In the introduction they bring

forth an interesting definition of the term: "literary means not only what is written but also what is *voiced*, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form" (xxiv, my emphasis). Interpreted in this way, a literary history means the history of human communication in general, an exchange of ideas through different means, not only through writing.

Acknowledging oral, speech-based forms of expression as "literary" is of crucial significance. By giving speech credit the editors automatically open up the canon, which I believe they consciously intended. Although they stipulate that "[t]he goal of the book is not to smash a canon or create a new one" (xxiv), it seems quite obvious that by "set[ting] many forms of American speech in motion, so that different forms, and people speaking at different times in sometimes radically different ways, can be heard speaking to each other" (xxiv), they do let into their story many voices absent from other *strictly literary* histories. They seem to bear in mind that the notion of "writing" in America has elitist connotations—after all, for centuries literacy used to be the privilege of white Americans of European descent.

I want to emphasize once again that by seeing culture as human activity in its entirety, as opposed to the activity of the powerful elite, white male *founders* of the country, portrayed by Robert E. Spiller in his 1946 *Literary History of the United States* and Arthur Hobson Quinn in his 1951 *Literature of the American People: An Historical and Critical Survey*, Marcus and Sollors invite to their pages those who built the country and contributed to forming its distinct culture anonymously and whose once nameless efforts were not chronicled by early (white, male) historians. They come to the aid of the underprivileged artists, "minor," or forgotten writers, especially those belonging to ethnic minorities. To give but one example, never before have I seen entries so elaborate and revealing on writers such as Phillis Wheatley or Charles W. Chesnutt in a non-specialist book.

In regards to Wheatley and Chesnutt, an important thing to notice is that the entire introduction is marked by the touchy question of race relations in the United States, as if it were the center around which the fragments of the story evolve. On the one hand, one may view it as a manifestation of political correctness. On the other hand, in macroscale, it can be seen as a metaphor for the powerful ("subjects" of history)—the powerless ("objects" of history) dialectic. Undoubtedly, such a dialectic is among the foundations of the Western culture, later transplanted onto the American ground. I view this important aspect of *A New Literary History of America* as an expression of longing for social and cultural justice. Showing how much American culture owes to native American and West African traditions as well as all the immigrant cultures, the editors speak against the marginalization of those groups. Paul Lauter, the editor of the canon-expanding *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, aptly notices that the shape of national culture is always determined by power relations: "[m]arginalized works are, largely, the prod-

ucts of groups who have relatively less access to political, economic, or social power. To say it another way, the works generally considered central to a culture are those composed and promoted by persons from groups holding power within it" (10). Lauter also observes that "[t]he United States is a heterogeneous society whose cultures, while they overlap in significant respects, also differ in critical ways. A[ny] normative model presents variations from the mainstream as abnormal, deviant, lesser, perhaps ultimately unimportant" (9). And that is exactly why Marcus and Sollors wish to drift away from any normative models. They give up all conventional, artificially imposed divisions into literary periods and genres, offering instead, in a form of a timeline, a collection of dates—some of which tell more and some less—which serves as a rough guideline for the reader. In this way they are on the safe side: by avoiding any direct causal relationships between phenomena, they put together a fragmentary story that does not seem authoritarian; the impression is that it is the reader who is asked to find a chronology of his/her own. They also emphasize that the essays collected in the book were written "from the vantage point of not a specialist but of an enthusiast, a skeptic, a digger, a reader, a listener, a viewer" (xxvi), as if they laid no claims to "objectivity" and "authority." Finding the very intention praiseworthy, I do not think that what they have achieved is entirely satisfactory.

Aware of their audience, Marcus and Sollors set some kind of norm, whether they want it or not. After all, what they claim to be editing is *a new literary history*, in itself a magnificent task. As the *authors* of such an adventurous undertaking, they must assume some kind of *authority* as much as they must present some kind of *vision* of American culture. Needless to say, absolute objectivity and neutrality are impossible to attain. Therefore, the question is *not* whether or not the editors present the readers with a "distorted" view of literature and history; it is about the way this view is distorted. I have an irresistible impression that some of the older writers who occupy more space in the earlier histories, or, conversely, the younger writers who, for obvious reasons, were not mentioned in them, are reduced to a brief remark or excised; whereas the widely read (mostly prose) writers, or the writers who are currently, for some reason, "fashionable," receive the most attention. That is not to say that Wheatley's, or Chesnutt's, or Adrienne Rich's, or Gayl Jones', or Toni Morrison's work should not be dwelled upon; it definitely deserves analysis, but why not someone else's too? Why, one might ask, did the editors decide to completely omit the entire avant-garde tradition in the poetry of the second half of the century? A key figure in the American avant-garde poetry, for both black and white experimental writers, Charles Olson, is mentioned only once on page 840 in the context of his critical study *Call Me Ishmael*. Language poets are referred to as "poets admired within the academy" only once on page 1032. Critic Stephen Burt, responsible

for one entry on new poetry, discusses briefly Rae Armantrout, Yusef Komunyakaa and C.D. Wright only, expressing a widely held view that "[a]nyone who followed American poetry at the start of the twenty-first century encountered repeated complaints that nobody read it" (1030). Even if poetry's popularity has been declining since the times of Robert Frost and Robert Lowell, should independent scholars such as Marcus and Sollors be in concert with this trend? There are more legitimate questions to be asked: what are the criteria behind the editors' choices? What do they want to achieve by interrogating the canon the way they interrogate it? Is it their aim to reexamine as much critically underrepresented work as possible in order to bring the readers closer to the entire spectrum of American *literary history*, or rather, do they want to promote a narrowed picture of American literature so that it is suitable for *literature consumers*? Although in their concluding note, Marcus and Sollors cautiously state that "[t]here is no attempt to give every name its due, to visit every state or the era of every presidency" (xxvii)—they are too smart not to be aware of the traps of institutionalized scholarship. They know very well that authoring a book such as *A New Literary History of America* is a political gesture, and claiming that "[t]here is no attempt to give every name its due" cannot de-politicize that gesture.

As a closing remark, it is absolutely necessary to remind the readers about Emory Elliott's groundbreaking *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (1988). Like Marcus and Sollors, Elliott was a scholar devoted to revising the canon and his efforts from the late 1980s cannot be overestimated. *Columbia…* in many ways resembles the organizational pattern of Bercovitch's *Cambridge History of American Literature*, although their scope is probably beyond comparison. As far as college instruction is concerned, *Columbia* will probably stay unsurpassed as a reference book, while Marcus and Sollors' volume will serve as an informative addition.

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Zbigniew Mazur, *The Power of Play: Leisure, Recreation and Cultural Hegemony in Colonial Virginia*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2010. 221 pages.

Zbigniew Mazur's book is a worthy contribution to the increasingly vibrant field of cultural history. It is an area that has been newly energized as scholars have come to

appreciate more fully than ever before that cultural distinctions and identities are crucial to understanding societies—whether in distant past or in distant areas of the globe. This understanding has penetrated even such disciplines as political science and economics, liberating them from such follies as the rational choice theory. For historians, this development has been especially fruitful, because it enables them to apply much of the recent progress in anthropology, semiotics, hermeneutics, and epistemology to interpreting the symbolic sphere on which the edifice of culture rests.

Mazur makes good use of all these tools to advance the main thesis of his book that recreational activities practiced by the eighteenth-century Virginia planter elite contributed to the power they held in colonial society. As he presents the rich variety of their leisurely preoccupations, he asks how these practices enhanced the coherence of social bonds, and especially to the ability of the elites to exercise influence over the rest of the population. It is this line of inquiry—how control by cultural means was wielded—that is the book's most interesting contribution to scholarship. Virginia was a non-urban, decentralized, and rural society lacking many social, legal, political, and institutional structures that in the metropolis enhanced the relationship of dominance between the rulers and the ruled. In this context, it makes good sense to investigate how provincial symbolic practices filled that void. Mazur makes the most of this opportunity by analyzing a wide spectrum of what he calls "the discourses of pleasure" (185) at both genteel and popular levels (although the book follows the written sources, and thus tilts rather heavily towards the elites). He unfolds a panorama of colonial festivities—each meticulously dissected as cultural text. They include balls and barbecues, horse races and rides, dining and dancing, billiards and cards, cock-fights and gambling, drinking and socializing in taverns, weddings and birthdays, hunting and picknicking, theater-going and fairs, as well as civic events such as assemblies, court days, militia musters, and various parades.

In terms of conceptual order, the author focuses on three social implications of play in Virginian culture: how it helped construct the identity of the elites, how it enhanced their domination as a political class, and how it boosted masculinity as a form of exerting power. To achieve these goals, he takes an anthropological approach, treating the various forms of play as rituals, and interpreting the significance of their symbolic meanings for these three areas. The volume is organized into six thematic sections: on the provincial elite's quest for gentility; on public ceremonies; on forms of entertainment expressing white masculinity; on recreations that conveyed the supremacy of the plantation gentry; on black leisure (briefly), and on the links between religion, particularly the Great Awakening, and popular recreations. In all, the interpretative axis is play as an expression of dominance.

The question of dominance is, of course, a time-honored topic, and modern inquiries into the relation of culture to power have produced some venerable studies, particularly those inspired by Antonio Gramsci with his concept of cultural hegemony, later by Michel Foucault with his concept of discursive practices, and more recently by Pierre Bourdieu with his symbolic power of language. These theoretical frameworks drew attention to the political implications of cultural symbols and symbolic practices, and specifically to the fact that elites of power—through their prestige, public voice, and the ability to generate legitimacy—are able to persuade the subordinate classes to accept the rulers' view of the world and the social structure that sustains their dominance. Mazur draws firmly on these frameworks in building his argument, but—to his credit—remains aware throughout that such supremacy through the symbolic sphere is only one of the many aspects of domination. Other factors such as coercion and economic power played equally important roles, and only in combination with them can culture exert its influence in reproducing power relations.

The book is well documented and based solidly on a broad spectrum of sources ranging from manuscripts and colonial newspapers to diaries, acts of assembly, and travel narratives. Notably, the author properly contextualizes the various examples of play under discussion, so that his argument is always rooted in a broad cultural matrix specific to eighteenth-century Virginia. This is important to his approach because it is this matrix that generated meanings. By the same token, one wishes that the author placed a bit less stress on the Virginia elite's cultural domination "disguised" in various forms of entertainment, and emphasized more the fact that culture is primarily made up of subjective meanings. We historians quite frequently get a bit carried away in using our hindsight and ability to create macro-scale, presumably objective, frameworks through which to view the past—such as, for instance, "hegemony." But subjectivity and agency are central to culture. The author's argument is entirely persuasive as he succeeds in convincing us that recreational practices contributed to Virginian elite's hegemony, but we should at least be aware that such large frameworks are ideal models, and were not on the minds of the contemporary actors. In other words, it is likely that many among the elite as well as the common folk in the Chesapeake region eagerly participated in games and races for the sheer fun that such pastimes provided, and not to symbolically signal this or that relationship of power. None of this, however, takes away from Mazur's considerable accomplishment. His book carries a wealth of insights and offers much that will be of interest to scholars and students. It is a laudable contribution to American cultural history.

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Marta Skwara, *"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej* ["Polish Whitman": The Functioning of a Foreign Poet in National Culture]. Kraków: Universitas, 2010. 476 pages.

"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej, Marta Skwara's beautifully designed and illustrated, elegant book, offers a pioneering, comprehensive overview of the reception of Walt Whitman in Poland. The mass of materials gathered (including 24 pages of bibliographical references) and the scope of the compilation make Skwara's book a unique resource for readers and scholars. As the author observes, the lack of a tradition of comparative studies in Poland means that contemporary scholars have to perform the arduous and thankless task of gathering basic source materials and constructing bibliographies: was there a more solid basis, "a Polish researcher at the beginning of the twenty-first century would not have to find herself in the somewhat schizophrenic situation of [combining] the ground work of a nineteenth-century scholar compiling for the first time a full bibliography of translations and reception... [with that of] a twenty-first-century neo-pragmatist reflecting on 'how it works,' or what the function is of a given text (writer, movement, school) in the national culture."[1] The ground work is perhaps the most valuable aspect of Skwara's book. Considering that, and the fact that the book approaches its subject from a variety of perspectives—from presenting texts on Whitman, through translations of his poems and original work which alludes to Whitman, to film—and attempts to account for no less than 150 years of reception, it is not surprising that the book lacks a single methodology. The author does, however, make a claim for the coexistence of translation studies and comparative literary studies, arguing that they mutually complement each other, the former addressing literary works from a linguistic and cultural perspective, the latter providing texts with social and political contexts. And while this "division of labor" may seem problematic to both some comparatists and some translatologists, Skwara makes a compelling argument about contextualizing the formal study of texts, so that our readings address also commentaries, interpretations, anthologizations, intertextual references, as well as comparative interpretations.

Skwara begins by discussing basic information on Whitman available to Polish readers, from *Wikipedia* to old editions of Polish encyclopedias. The randomness of information found in Polish *Wikipedia* is not that surprising (though the omissions, as Skwara briefly points out, are rather telling), but a similar arbitrariness of entries in the PWN

[1] Marta Skwara, *"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej,*" Kraków, Universitas, 2010, 11. All references in parentheses are to this edition. All translations from Polish are the reviewer's.

Encyclopedia, long considered the most reliable reference for Polish readers (and students at all levels of education), is truly shocking. Interestingly enough, Polish encyclopedic sources tend to freely copy entries from older ones, so that the level of knowledge on the topic remains unchanged for decades, with the same errors circulating in all available reference materials. Skwara's—necessarily brief—comments indeed shed dramatic light on Polish culture, and more specifically on the state of Polish knowledge and quality of Polish research. The structural limitations of the necessarily sketchy commentary Skwara can give to numerous brief texts take their toll in the discussion of biographical notes, where her critical comments occasionally become somewhat elusive. For example, it is difficult to say why Skwara finds inappropriate Stanisław Barańczak's use if the term "discipline" in relation to Whitman's poetry opposing it to "ceaseless search," a term used by another critic. Whitman's expansiveness, his long line and what one may call verbal "excesses" could be juxtaposed with the tightness and concision of, say, an Emily Dickinson lyric, and the prose rhythms of his long poem were indeed a conscious reaction to the highly crafted conventions of the traditional lyric, but that in no way denies discipline to his language or at least should leave the matter of discipline open to redefinition. A debate on interpretation, however, cannot be performed in a sentence or two. This is where the scope of Skwara's enterprise comes at a cost and one only hopes her book will allow future commentaries on Whitman's reception in Poland—including her own—the luxury of dwelling on particulars one cannot afford when performing a task of these proportions.

The first section of the book where Skwara allows herself a more in-depth analysis of specific texts is devoted to the politics of Whitman's reception. After reviewing the English and German tradition of leftist interpretations of Whitman's work, Skwara moves to a discussion of two—according to her equally problematic—modes of "politicizing" Whitman, which construct, respectively, a "socialist" and a "homosexual" Whitman. Polish post-World War II readings are mockingly disparaged for blatant propagandist tendencies and their "simplistic" quality apparently does not lend itself to an engaged reading. The topic of homosexuality addressed extensively in this chapter in fact recurs throughout the book. Skwara is clearly and openly uncomfortable with the "homosexual" readings of Whitman. The book does not avoid the topic of sexuality, almost obsessively returning to it so that it becomes one of its main stumbling blocks. A relatively long passage in the section on "politicized" Whitman is devoted to the reading of Federico Garcia Lorca's "Ode to Walt Whitman" and its Polish translation, which become a pretext for a discussion of homosexuality in Whitman's reception and criticism. Skwara mocks "the fervor of searching for homosexual symbols" (135) and prefers their sublimation into "the kinship of souls, the need for poetry" (136), finding it is

"problematic to inscribe Whitman into homosexual poetics" (139). The logic of her argument becomes questionable when Skwara claims that the word *maricas* is difficult to translate into Polish (and rejects the Polish equivalents of "pervert," "queer," "faggot" or "sissy" used in English translations), suggesting instead that "we remain with the opposition pure-impure" (132-3). Having performed this erasure of the homosexual trace in the text, she speaks of critical "abuses" which construct Whitman as a homosexual poet without textual evidence to support such claims. Needless to say, when referring to interpretations of Whitman which presuppose heterosexuality as the unquestioned norm, the author does raise similar concerns. And while her reservations about the uses of biographical evidence are well-founded, the overall argument she proposes is in fact based on unexamined heteronormativity:

> As I tried to show, I disagree with such politics of reading Whitman. Whitman uses a very diverse range of metaphors, trying to appeal to various ways of experiencing the world and is successful in that effort as far as the response of readers is a measure of a poet's success. The reading of his poetry was also an important experience for readers of various sexual orientations, religions, race or nationality.… I do not think therefore that narrowing the Whitmanian text to the problem of homosexual poetics is justified, what is more, such reading resembles the politicization such as was performed by Marxist manipulations: the oppressed working class is replaced by the oppressed class of homosexuals fighting for their social rights. (152)

Such comments raise a number of questions. Why are readings of heterosexual eroticism not equally limiting? Why does the naming of sexuality as *homo*sexuality somewhat preclude a "richness of metaphor"? Why cannot masses of readers of "various sexual orientations" enjoy that richness, if it comes from a poet of non-normative sexual orientation? And finally: is the reading offered by the quote above *a*political? Any less political than the readings of Whitman as a nonheterosexual writer? Obviously not, and necessarily so, because Whitman *is* a political writer, most expressly so when it comes to social justice. The perception of the transgression of heterosexual norm as limiting the poet and alienating the readers is what here seems to shut down the breadth of interpretive potential.

A particularly interesting section of Skwara's book is the chapter devoted to the reception of Whitman by specific Polish prose writers and poets. Doubtlessly, the opportunity to devote more space to each of those writers gives these readings a breadth and involvement of a more sustained discussion which is not possible in relation to brief notes and encyclopedia entries. Here we learn about Miriam's criticism of Whitman's

formal failure to write poetry "in the true sense of the term" (164; interestingly Miriam not only complains about the—fatal according to him—lack of rhyme and meter, but also denies Whitman rhythm...) and disapproval of the poet's use of references that are "trivial" and "in bad taste." He does, however, grant Whitman the "raw material for a poet." Not surprisingly, Miriam's translations aim at "poeticizing" the original, polishing and organizing it. Antoni Lange offers a more positive evaluation of Whitman's work, situating him firmly in the American context and pointing out his importance as the original American voice, a true "Yankee-poet," full of enthusiasm and free of the "melancholy" which burdens European literatures. At the same time, he searches out parallels between Whitman and the European Romantic tradition. Lange is obviously also a more attentive reader of Whitman, capable, for example, of recognizing the Biblical rhythms in *Leaves of Grass*, his translations doing justice to Whitman's extended catalogues as a crucial aspect of Whitman's poetic form. Stanisław Brzozowski is a writer who redefines his attitude to Whitman: initially, he blames Whitman for facile ecstasies, but learns to appreciate the writer after reading *Democratic Vistas*, to finally come to admire "a quieter, metaphysical Whitman" (182). Jerzy Jankowski finds a space for Whitman's love of democracy, his search for "the new man," and his anarchic attitude to tradition in the ideology of Polish Futurism. The most engaged readers of Whitman among those presented by Skwara are undoubtedly Julian Tuwim and Czesław Miłosz. Tuwim situates his own enthusiastic reception of Whitman in the historical context of the post-war years, with Poland's newly regained independence, a time when artists "rebelled against the pessimism and aestheticism" (191) of the pre-war writers of Młoda Polska (Young Poland). Whitman was an obvious choice: a poet of the new world, whose work, like that of Tuwim's contemporaries, aimed at being "universal and cosmic, spiritual and physical, religious and scientific... contemporary and democratic, teaching acceptance of life and death" (192). Tuwim values Whitman's prophetic voice, his "dithyrambic rhythm," colloquial language, the "modesty" of the title *Leaves of Grass*, and his vision of an all-embracing unity above the dictates of canon, dogma and routine. He is also the first to enthusiastically embrace Whitman's eroticism and physiology which, as he says, "our sloppy modernity has turned into a dirty secret" (196). Skwara emphasizes that Tuwim's views on Whitman undergo an evolution and is quite critical of the last stage where she sees Tuwim's work become mere propaganda. Similarly to Tuwim, Jan Stur emphasizes the unprecedented quality of Whitman's poetry, situating it in a world where "cities and city people are transplanted onto the primary, barbaric soil" (222). Stur praises Whitman, among others, for his "materialist-spiritual synthesis" (223) and "equality of all symptoms of life" (224). Czesław Miłosz's Whitman is called "the poet of epiphany" (229). Similarly to Tuwim's, his attitudes to Whit-

man are shown to have evolved, from his early encounters with Whitman in pre-war Poland, through emigration, where the major body of his work on and inspired by Whitman was produced, to his last years in Poland and the final vision of Whitman as "the great realist" and "the poet of epiphany" (230-1). At the same time, Miłosz most clearly argues for Whitman's own diversity as a poet, to whom he refers as "many Whitmans" and whom he situates in a variety of (not only Polish) literary traditions. In the discussion of these very different versions of Whitman in Poland, Skwara points out the importance of the availability of different editions of *Leaves of Grass* to Polish readers. For example, the popular English edition, put together by William Rossetti, which excised all the more erotically provocative poems, may have been responsible for some of the more sanitized readings of *Leaves of Grass* in Poland.

In reference to a number of these writers, Skwara describes a very peculiar mode of reception where paraphrase, translation and interpretation often merge and become indistinguishable. Quotation marks may bracket a paraphrase which freely disposes of some passages while expounding on others. Direct quotation may be woven into the text without acknowledgment. A model of literary criticism emerges which is very different from its Anglo-Saxon counterpart—in itself an interesting cultural phenomenon. Polish commentary on Whitman tends to be essayistic, free-floating, impressionistic, affective and rarely analytical or structured by interpretative discipline. As Skwara notices in her discussion of Tuwim, "references to Whitman... had to be transcended to be creative. And this is what happens in Tuwim's poetry, perhaps at the expense of 'the Polish Whitman,' but to the advantage of Polish poetry" (212).

Perhaps the most engaging (though also most difficult to paraphrase) chapter of *Polski Whitman* is the one which undertakes a comparative analysis of various translations of individual poems. The comparison of the similarities and differences in the translators' choice of diction, sound, rhythm, line break, voice and intertextual resonance often leads to interesting conclusions about the aesthetic, philosophical and political positions adopted by the translators, at the same time situating them in the Polish cultural context. Skwara discusses "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," "We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd," "Miracles," section 11 of "Song of Myself" ("Twenty-eight young men..."), part 6 of "The Sleepers" and "The Noiseless Patient Spider," in translations by, among others, Ludmiła Marjańska, Stanisław Barańczak, Czesław Miłosz, Andrzej Szuba, Julian Przyboś and Krzysztof Boczkowski, The topic of non-heteronormative readings of Whitman returns here again, this time discussed in reference to specific translators' choices. Skwara demonstrates a particular linguistic difficulty Polish translators confront when faced with gender ambiguity or gender fluidity which is such an important marker of Whitman's work (one could argue that the category "queer" is particularly

useful in defining that quality, but Skwara never employs the term in her study, preferring to work with binary oppositions of hetero/homo-sexual and man/woman). In Polish, gender markers are much more fixed (by noun, verb, adjective endings, numerals, etc.) and therefore the translator's decision usually comes down to an arbitrary assignation of gender. And while the penchant for preserving Whitman's ambiguities is understandable, it is less obvious why the preference for such assignation of gender as would make any potential coupling heterosexual. Skwara insistently claims that underlining heterosexuality allows for the an opening out of interpretive possibilities and readings which are universally applicable, while a suggestion of homosexuality necessarily narrows down the poem, so that it becomes a poem *about* that (see her discussion of "We Two...," ""Song of Myself," "The Sleepers" and, later, of Iwaszkiewicz's "Tatarak"). The claim that one cannot speak of "lesbian desire" where "there is no touch," only "enchantment," "recognition of sensuality," and "a teenage girl's infatuation with a woman" (329-32) suggests a misunderstanding of the critical category of "desire," while comments on the "typical phenomenon of a girl falling for a woman, often described in developmental psychology, which rarely takes on a sexual form" (331) take a discussion of lesbian sexuality almost a hundred years back, for even Freud was willing to speak, in 1920, of "a case of homosexuality in a woman" in reference to a girl who was in love with (though clearly did not have sex with) an older woman. This consistent resistance to homosexuality which, again, limits Skwara's interpretative scope is somewhat compensated for by a great find and a beautiful reading of Ludmiła Marjańska's translation of a passage from "Song of Myself" ("The twenty-eight bathers") which opens the text to the potentiality of figuring a female orgasm—unlike any of the men translators. Occasional attempts to judge (rather than simply situate, analyze and compare) the translations (what does it mean that a given text is "most poetic"?) seem less productive here than the culturally based argument about how contingent the translator's text (and its appeal) is on the context of its production, and in fact run counter to the argument about "many Whitmans"—to use Skwara's quotation from Miłosz—whose emergence Skwara's book so painstakingly and engagingly documents.

A chapter on Whitman's presence in texts by Polish writers is a fascinating record of how texts travel. Skwara discusses Żeromski, Miciński, Staff, Wierzyński, Kurek, Gałczyński, Różewicz, Mostwin and Iwaszkiewicz, demonstrating the broad scope of—often incompatible—readings and appropriations of Whitman's poetry in Polish. After brief commentary on Whitman's more recent presence in Polish consciousness via American movies, in the last chapter of the book, Skwara compares the reception of Whitman in Poland to that of Frank O'Hara, an American poet for whom the Whitmanian heritage was particularly important. And while she is perhaps unduly critical of the

phenomenon of "O'Harism" in Polish poetry of late twentieth century, she rightly points out that both Whitman and O'Hara appeared as valuable models in Polish poetry at times of political change (after World War I and after 1989, respectively), providing the paradigm of "strong poetic identities rooted in reality" (401). At the same time, however, neither of the poets ever had a broad readership or following in Polish culture "which valued more the high model of intellectual poetry based on refined linguistic and cultural practices." One may only hope that this will change and Marta Skwara's detailed study will require further supplementation.

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Marek Paryż, *Figures of Dependence, Figures of Expansion: Representations of the Postcolonial and Imperial Experience in the Discourse of American Transcendentalism*. Warsaw: Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, 2009. 270 pages.

Marek Paryż has already established a solid reputation as a scholar of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature through articles on Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. *Figures of Dependence* extends his studies in discursive traits and rhetorical strategies characteristic of the period by examining nineteenth-century tensions between American postcolonial identity and national expansionist impulses. Paryż posits that certain Transcendentalist writers—namely, Henry David Thoreau, Emerson, and Walt Whitman—explored persistent contradictions between the postcolonial implications of anti-British sentiments and the "imperial" push to expand US territorial holdings in spite of others' claims to the land. These writers pursue such paradoxical attitudes through recurring tropes, topoi, and the narrative speakers that articulate their textual arguments.

One of the most impressive strengths of *Figures of Dependence* exists in its author's familiarity with Transcendentalist literary criticism and postcolonial theory. Characterizing postcolonial theory as both "a tool of historical diagnosis" and "an interpretative model," Paryż links its resonance within early American discourse to the country's origins in colonial settlement (15). Sensitive to their country's vexed beginnings, Transcendentalist writers created textual structures that could help them investigate the philosophical manifestations of national identity, drawing on a set of shared "rules of utterance" to do so (28). Paryż's insight into the theoretical bases of these writers' discursive strategies is due in large part to his broad knowledge of both contemporary analyses and recent critical work. In every chapter, he illustrates both the work that has preceded his own and the important interventions that his book makes. Such a demonstration of the

book's worth is especially crucial in a field like nineteenth-century American literature, particularly the period of Transcendentalism, to which so many scholars have already staked claims. Paryż's argument also positions both emerging American national identity and the writers themselves within a transnational context that challenges the more insular perspective on Transcendentalism that many earlier critics have offered.

Paryż identifies key distinctions among his study's three central writers in their interpretations of the country's current stage of cultural and intellectual development, noting, for instance, that Emerson sees the country hesitating at the end of an era, while Whitman perceives a new beginning (253). In his three chapters on Emerson's essays, Paryż describes "Emerson's America" as a nation still progressing toward maturity; this early sense of nationhood renders Emerson more ambivalent than unreservedly patriotic (38). Because Emerson feels that the nation still has tests to pass before it can prove itself to be wholly independent, he also perceives both imperialist and postcolonial tendencies as latent rather than manifest (53). Paryż examines Emerson's slowly emerging sense of American national strength in the context of travel writing, a genre that his collection *English Traits* helped to adapt to extra-British sensibilities. The collection in fact foregoes a taxonomy of specifically American characteristics in favor of an explication of the country's current postcolonial status (90). Emerson also altered his discursive representations of the US over time in order to grapple with "the issue of American expansionism," an important key to codifying national identity (98). Paryż notes that Emerson explains expansionism as "a form of response to the land" in which inhabitants' actions depend upon the transcendent qualities of the land itself (108, 110).

Paryż's analysis of Thoreau's attitude toward the state of the new nation identifies both "postcolonial sentiments" and "the rhetoric of empire" in his work (126), on the other hand, suggesting that he contributed more deliberately to the conflicting politics of the period. Like Emerson, Thoreau adds to the genre history of travel writing; however, his exploration narratives, such as *The Maine Woods*, carry a much stronger imperialist flavor (154). Though he employs the personal journal and the scientific report as a means of exploring "ways of relating selfhood to nationhood" (155), his "double focus on the exploration of the place and the encounter with the natives" resonates with French and British colonization narratives (156). The ambivalence that Thoreau does express, unlike Emerson's, is tied to his depictions of nature, which Paryż interprets as meaning that he "found the discourse of empire appealing and inspiring" but "did not support the imperial political plans of his nation" (170).

Paryż discusses the figure of the speaker in both Emerson's and Thoreau's work, but it is not until his analysis of Whitman that he distinguishes the poet as a key individual contributing to the formation of national identity (190). Like his fellow writers, Whitman

explores both "postcolonial and imperial discursive strands" in his work (192), but his poetry's uniqueness exists in part in its "combative" nature (203). Though he may aim to create "a subtext of Western imperialism," Paryż asserts, he also "casts doubt on the political priorities of the imperial project" (221-22). Whitman clearly doubts the ultimate goals of American imperialism, as his many poetic ruminations on human nature suggest, but he also contrasts dynamic American national traits with Orientalist ones, which he interprets as static and emblematic rather than specific in such poems as "Passage to India" (237). Here Paryż draws on Edward Said's seminal work in order to define the paradoxical nature of Whitman's political position: the "imperial zeal" he depicts derives from a "lingering sense of... colonial anxiety" (245).

In general, *Figures of Dependence* is a useful text for scholars wishing to gain a solid grounding in Transcendentalist scholarship or those seeking to understand the United States' peculiar status during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a former British colony struggling to come to terms with its pioneering, expansionist present. Though such postcolonial contexts are more familiarly associated with South Asian countries, Paryż demonstrates that the theory can be usefully applied to a new country with an emerging imperialist mandate. Overall, the book is recommended as an up-to-date resource that synthesizes and explicates new perspectives on American Transcendentalism.

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Karsten Fitz, *The American Revolution Remembered, 1830s to 1850s. Competing Images and Conflicting Narratives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 337 pages.

Karsten Fitz, in his book on the visual representations of the American Revolution in the antebellum period, demonstrates that in the 1830s through 50s American artists were preoccupied with the legacy of the Revolution in no lesser degree than the political leaders of the nation. These decades constituted a particular historical moment when writers, thinkers, visual artists and politicians converged in their attempts to search for what Fitz calls—after Van Wyck Brooks and Henry Steele Commager—a "usable past" (22). Understandably enough, the American Revolution served as a basis for re-imagining the nation, and the past achievement offered a frame of reference for those who defined the current political goals. It goes without saying that acts of commemoration not only evoke the past, but also provide a key to the present state of culture and politics. This double bind between the past and the present is adequately reflected in terms such as "collective

memory" or "cultural memory" around which Fitz has structured his theoretical argument in the first two chapters of the book. Fitz draws from the work of prominent scholars in the field of memory studies, among others Pierre Nora and Michael Kammen, to show that remembering, in its cultural manifestations, is dynamic and creative. And it is this dynamic, processual quality of cultural memory that makes it inextricable from identity understood as a shared quality and value. Accordingly, acts of commemoration introduce, sanction and strengthen ideas and visions that ultimately form social, cultural, and political hierarchies. These hierarchies, in turn, substantiate the ideological content of national narratives in which certain kinds of experience have been acknowledged, while others have been erased. Therefore, as Fitz rightly points out, the discussion of cultural memory entails the recognition of cultural amnesia.

Chapter Three, the first devoted to the analysis of historical visual material, concentrates on the construction of what Fitz calls an "overarching narrative" (75) which revolved around the analogy between American colonists successfully confronting the British army and the biblical David defeating Goliath. The point of departure in this chapter is Paul Revere's famous 1770 picture of the Boston Massacre, the work which resounded, in various ways, in antebellum visual representations of the American Revolution. Revere's engraving shows a regular British regiment literally slaughtering helpless American civilians, thus juxtaposing the military power of the oppressors with the moral superiority of the victims, which is very much in keeping with the David vs. Goliath-motif. The civilian victims, presumably yeomen farmers, represent the social class that would soon establish militia forces capable of resisting the British. Therefore it comes as no surprise that, in the course of time, the figure of the minuteman/yeoman became a national and cultural icon, recurring in the pictorial renditions of the Revolution in the antebellum years. The main reason why this image appealed so much to the imagination of Americans at that time was that the myth of the farmer turned minuteman had strong agrarian underpinnings. The use of agrarian imagery emphasized the moral aspect of the involvement in the Revolutionary struggle. Antebellum visual artists repeatedly referred to the combined symbols of the plough and the rifle, as symptomatically shown in a series of book illustrations produced by Felix Octavius Carr Darley in the 1850s. The epitome of the farmer who immediately becomes transformed into a soldier was General Israel Putnam who fought at Bunker Hill. According to Fitz, the choice of Putnam as the personification of David was not accidental, given his actual commonness, which distinguished him from many other Revolutionary leaders. However, George Washington was also a protagonist of a number of visuals which emphasized his background as a farmer. An interesting variation on the David vs. Goliath-motif was the attribution of the features of savagery to the British troops in the pictures that depicted

the tragic consequences of the alliance between the British and the natives against American colonists. In such pictures, Indian violence was perceived as an extension of British tyranny.

Chapter Four deals with the visual representations of the African American participation in the Revolutionary War and, like the previous chapter, it begins with a reference to Paul Revere's *The Bloody Massacre*. Fitz argues that Revere's picture is characterized by a meaningful omission, namely none of the figures in it is black. The point among the men who were first killed in the Boston Massacre there was an African American named Crispus Attucks, the "Black Indian" as he came to be called because of his mixed ancestry. Fitz analyzes a selection of antebellum visual presentations of the Boston Massacre and highlights the differences in how particular works re-acknowledge Attucks' contribution to the patriotic cause. These differences attest to a fundamental difficulty in accounting for African American patriotism. Thus, William C. Nell, in an illustration for a broadside commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, envisages Attucks as a patriotic martyr and shows the black hero dying in the arms of a white man. William L. Champney goes much further than Nell and portrays the African American in an active pose, a true leader just a split second before his death. For a change, in Alonzo Chappel's painting the face of Crispus Attucks is barely visible in the crowd of rebels, but it is there notwithstanding. In general, the differing visual interpretations of Attucks' role in the Boston Massacre can be seen as an expression of a great ambivalence about the place of African Americans in American history, cultural memory, and current life. The same kind of ambivalence seems to infuse those visual depictions of the Battle of Bunker Hill which mark out the space for Peter Salem, a black patriot who reportedly shot one of the highest British officers. Finally, Fitz discusses two analogous pictures of George Washington's family—one from the 1790s, and the other from the 1840s—and comments on the absence of Washington's black servant, William Lee, from the latter. This erasure is symptomatic insofar as it expresses the tendency shared by antebellum visual artists to avoid associating great historical leaders with the institution of slavery. The narrative of the American Revolutionary origins that thus emerges clashes with the narratives acknowledging the African American involvement in the Revolution.

Chapter Five is devoted to the constructions of womanhood in antebellum visual depictions of the Revolutionary period. Fitz writes that, in the 1830s and subsequent two decades, the growing interest in how American women had been affected by the War of Independence was not accidental, given the rise of female literary authorship, the popularity of sentimental fiction, and the appearance of the first postulates regarding women's rights. There was a natural correspondence between the conventions of representing female experience in literature and in visual arts. Importantly, this correspondence mani-

fested itself in the clash of two models of constructing womanhood: that which emphasized female submissiveness and passivity, and that which foregrounded female agency and initiative. The epitome of the former type of womanhood was Jane McCrea, the heroine of quite an impressive number of visuals produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1777 Jane McCrea was killed, during a journey to meet her fiancée, in a fight between her Iroquois escort and another group of Iroquois Indians. The typical visual renditions of this event show a terrified, helpless woman on her knees, assaulted by two violent Indians. This narrative about the predicament of the woman who has left her domestic environment was challenged by the narrative about a heroine who easily performed male tasks in a strictly male domain, which was the battlefield. This heroine is Molly Pitcher, described by Fitz as "the universal female patriot" (241). Fitz identifies two historical figures who served as models for Molly Pitcher, but the pictures in which she appears rather ignore this subtle fact. Molly Pitcher features—sometimes prominently—in a number of depictions of the Battle of Monmouth of 1778. In most significant cases, she is portrayed standing by a cannon which she helps to operate on a par with its male crew, her posture expressing total dedication and immense activity. More nuanced portraits of American women at the time of the War of Independence can be found in Elizabeth Ellet's historical book *Women of the American Revolution* (1848), which provided a direct inspiration for a series of paintings and lithographs created in the 1850s.

Chapter Six, as Fitz announces its subject, "discusses variations on the theme of *Washington Crossing*… as they inscribe American history in a mythologized form into an American national and cultural memory" (267). First and foremost, he probes the reasons why Emanuel Leutz's 1851 painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* surpasses all other visual versions of the same or related themes in its contribution to the establishment of the trope of *Washington Crossing* as a site of cultural memory. Therefore, Fitz compares and contrasts Leutz's work with the representations of the same scene by George S. Lang, Thomas Sully, and George Caleb Bingham. Admittedly, Leutz's painting is much richer in positive symbolic meanings than any other variation on the subject, and this enhances the mythologizing effect of the picture. Fitz argues that in comparison with the works by other visual artists Leutz's painting has a much greater ideological impact, which has to do with the painter's departures from the historical truth in order to emphasize Washington's monumentality and the historic significance of his actions. The image of the strong, active, confident, and visionary leader appealed to the imagination of American people at the time of the continental expansion. In the metaphorical sense, Leutz's Washington determines the course to be followed by the subsequent generations. It is interesting to mention, after Fitz, that the east-west movement of Washington's boat shown in Leutz's painting is a reversal of the actual west-east move-

ment (280). Leutz portrays Washington as "the *pater patriae*, the mythic father of an idealized nation, a fearless, statuesque and invincible leader of unmatched determination and unprecedented moral values" (282). This image can be seen as a powerful summation of the imaginings about George Washington as reflected in the visual depictions of this national hero in the course of seven-eight decades between Washington's rise to glory and Leutz's emergence as a leading myth-maker among American painters.

Karsten Fitz's *The American Revolution Remembered* is a thoroughly researched and meticulously documented monograph. It is richly illustrated, although apparently the inclusion of an extensive visual material proved to be a major editorial problem, because at places one finds smaller or bigger blanks where neither text nor illustration could be fitted. This editorial drawback is more than amply compensated for by the quality and coherence of the argument. The central thesis about "competing images and conflicting narratives," as stated in the subtitle, is developed as convincingly as it only can be on the basis of examples which are varied as much as intriguing.

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Eva Boesenberg. *Money and Gender in the American Novel, 1850-2000*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 525 pages.

The volume by Eva Boesenberg, impressive in its scope, examines the intersecting themes of money and gender in American literature over a period of 150 years, presenting an analysis of thirty-five novels, grouped into nine chapters. The texts include canonical classics, lesser known texts by canonical authors and a few gems rarely discussed in survey courses. The list includes Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Edith Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but also H.D's *Hermione*, Fannie Hurst's *Luminox*, and Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl*. The key for organizing the chapters is chronological and while the novels may seem to be chosen arbitrarily, Boesenberg's analysis is applicable to practically all works of American literature. The author's primary interest in this study, that is the function of money in the construction of femininity and masculinity, is a cross-cutting issue in American fiction. The book opens with an introductory chapter presenting the economic history of the United States as related to changes in gender norms and, particularly, women's increasing economic agency. Boesenberg notes that securing the possession of money, as a goal of one's life, has been intertwined with American individualism (and thus American masculinity) since Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* established the blueprint of the American "rags to riches" narrative. Her readings of the numerous novels quite often focus

on how male writers have grappled with this aspect of the American Dream and how female writers have challenged or—albeit much less often—supported women's exclusion from the sphere of economic agency.

The extensive scope of the analysis is made possible by Boesenberg's broad understanding of the concept of money. The volume opens with an overview of the different definitions of money, mostly as discussed by major economists (Keynes, Galbraith, Friedman), pointing out that the absence of a "concise, practicable definition may not be a serious handicap" (2), for it opens up interpretive possibilities. Even though the author announces that her study will concern "money in all its manifestations, as income, property, unit of value, coin, bank-note, etc." (3), in praxis this far-reaching goal is extended even further and the book becomes a perceptive analysis of the intersections of gender and economic relations. What may seem to be a shortcoming of the volume can also be seen as its asset: the book delivers more than it promises. However, the vagueness of the author's definition of money may, occasionally, lead to confusion. What seems particularly worrisome is the periodic use of the word "money" as something of a shorthand for both "capitalism" and "economic self-sufficiency."

In the part of the volume devoted to nineteenth-century literature, money is understood more through association than through an encyclopedic definition; and, in that time period, the association stemmed from the ideology of separate spheres. Money, alongside countless other attributes, is ascribed to the domain of the public and thus of the masculine, along with "self-interest, reason, politics and the law" (84). Boesenberg's analysis of Beecher Stowe's monumental *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reveals how this ideology engendered "oxymoronic effects" (85) in the perception of money. Boesenberg recounts the by now classic argument that Stowe uses the ideology of separate spheres—and particularly the ideology of motherhood—as a powerful tool against slavery. In fact, she shows slavery to be a result of valuing money over Christian morality and the family (84-85). In the division of attributes of each of the spheres, within the framework of the "cult of true womanhood," money becomes an antithesis of virtue (88). It is the commercialization of the mother-child tie, the most sacred bond in sentimental discourse, which serves as the strongest argument against slavery and which is aimed to elicit empathy of the white female reader for the plight of the slave.

Boesenberg then proceeds to reveal the contradictions within the ideological framework of Stowe's novel. She does this with flair, showing how Stowe sometimes uses the logic of the market to further the abolitionist agenda. Some of the examples include Stowe's endorsement of free-labor over slave labor as more profitable in the long-term, demonstrated in the fate of George Shelby's liberated ex-slaves who remain with him and contribute to maximizing his gains (94), or in the final chapter which authenticates

the experiences of fugitive slaves by providing an account of their monetary value, thereby reducing them to the status of property, in a similar manner as the discourse of slavery did (93). Notwithstanding—and Boesenberg is well aware of this—such a portrayal of ex-slaves was a tactical maneuver meant to emphasize their self-reliance, ability to lead independent lives and success, which must necessarily be measured in dollars.

Boesenberg argues that money management skills are linked to manliness (91), and that in order to create a stronger argument for the capability of ex-slaves to lead self-sufficient lives, the book must depict black men as endowed with skills for managing and multiplying money. And here she provides the example of Tom, whose proficiency at managing his masters' money (first of Shelby, then of the particularly effeminate and utterly wasteful St. Claire) proves, she claims, "his manliness and sterling character" (88). However, this example seems ill-suited as Tom—as was pointed out as early as 1949—has been "divested of his humanity, robbed of his sex" (Baldwin 18) and can hardly serve as an example of "manliness." Notwithstanding this example, the author's analysis of the—logically incoherent yet strategically necessary—reading of money in abolitionist discourse, as both the ultimate evil which entails the outrages of slavery and as a structural element of the construction of free masculinity, is logical and innovative. The only shortcoming of this argument is, as I have stated above, the definition of money. If one replaces the umbrella term "money" in the above sentence with more precise terms, such as free-market capitalism on the one hand and economic self-sufficiency of the individual on the other, the result may be confusion.

A major shortcoming of this book is its lack of grounding in Marxist theory. Discussing the role of money in the construction of gender in America without, however briefly, mentioning Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, a classic text proving that the link between the Protestant ethic, which lies at the foundations of America, and capitalism, was visible long before Franklin, decreases the credibility of the author's perceptive close readings of literary works. Nonetheless, this highly interesting and inspiring volume is most certainly proof of Beosenberg's awe-inspiring fluency in literary criticism and constitutes a significant and most welcome addition to scholarship on the construction of American literary masculinities and femininities.

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Janet Floyd, Alison Easton, R.J. Ellis, Lindsey Traub, eds. *Becoming Visible. Women's Presence in Late Nineteenth-Century America*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010. 370 pages.

The title of this interdisciplinary collection is already an attempt to transgress binary dichotomies in rendering spatiality; the volume functioned under the working title of *Stepping Out* until the editors realized that by adopting such a title they would, paradoxically, be strengthening the public/private and inside/outside oppositions which they were aiming at revealing as not just constructs to be overcome, but also as parameters that are insufficient for describing the lives of many American women at the end of the nineteenth century. The title was thus changed to *Becoming Visible* in an effort to emphasize the degrees of change rather than its radical either/or character. The lives of the women discussed in the collection—including Ida B. Wells, Mother Jones, Jane Addams, Rebecca Harding Davis, Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, Louisa May Alcott and Kate Douglas Wiggin—show the complex interweaving of the public and the private, the instability of these domains, and their numerous overlappings.

The essays are quite an eclectic collection, including historical research documenting women's lives, essays analyzing the lives of individual women as representative of larger changes taking place in the American society at the time as well as texts presenting critical readings of nineteenth-century literature by women. In fact, the position of literature seems a bit privileged but the volume was inspired by a colloquium organized under the auspices of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. The interdisciplinary approach allows the editors to present a fuller picture of women in the Gilded Age and, inevitably, reveals the interconnected nature not just of the supposedly separate spheres but also the need for a methodology that surpasses the boundaries between the various disciplines, a trademark maneuver of outstanding volumes from the field of gender studies.

This goal is most poignantly achieved in the essay by one of the co-editors of the collection, Alison Easton, titled "'Outdoor Relief': Sarah Orne Jewett, Annie Adams Fields, and the Visit in Gilded Age America." In an unorthodox gesture that transgresses disciplinary boundaries and methodologies, Easton compares two books published by the two life companions, Jewett's third novel *The Country Doctor* and Fields's manual *How to Help the Poor*, and analyzes the trope of visiting as a narrative device providing a link between these two texts and exposing the transgressing of boundaries between the public and the private in the lives of middle-class women. Visiting was, as Easton notes, something "Fields organized and Jewett imagined" (134). In each of the two very different books visiting was an opportunity for entering the private realm of another family or individual while performing public obligations.

Easton explores the surprisingly subversive aspects of the socially conservative activity of philanthropy. Fields's manual concerns a form of charity work referred to as "outdoor relief," that is establishing the actual needs of the poor through house calls or visits. The author does not simplistically rejoice in the possibilities for "stepping out" into the public sphere which such activities opened up for women, but points out the tensions related to intersections of gender and class implicit in the process: "if middle-class visitors… were less concerned with working-class privacy… it was because charitable visitors deemed these home conditions a matter of public concern" (133). However, the (female) visitor was not simply a representative of the law, anointed with the power of the public sphere. Her gender made carrying out such work particularly uncomfortable and, as Easton puts it, forced the visitors to step "out of their own safety zone" (137). Jewett's *A Country Doctor* also utilizes the trope of visiting in a similarly multi-layered manner. The main protagonist, Nan Prince, boldly enters the medical profession, a task which, in the countryside, requires making numerous house calls. Easton notices that Nan's visiting is both "legitimate (doctors step in between public and private) and alarming (women entering a male profession)" (140). It does matter that Nan's paternal family are upper-class and they are the ones who try to persuade her to give up professional work and limit her activities to housekeeping. Easton's unusual comparative reading of the social-work manual and Jewett's novel (and a few other works of fiction) reveals that the distinction between the private and the public was a fiction that only the rich could afford to maintain.

Brilliant readings like Easton's are complemented with historical analyses like S.J. Kleinberg's article on women's employment in the period 1880-1920, illustrating the reality of women's wage labor in the late nineteenth century. Kleinberg presents data, in graph form, showing the racial and age stratification of women working in white-collar, agricultural, service, and manual jobs. The overwhelming "popularity" of the service sector (maids, housekeepers and cleaning ladies) proves the points made by Easton and other contributors, that is that paid work, usually conceived as located in the public sphere, in reality was (and often still is) located in the private homes of upper class families. This argument is only augmented in Margaret Walsh's chapter "Visible Women in the Needle Trades," which through a historical analysis of the working conditions reveals that in the Gilded Age the private space of the home of working-class women became public as "most entrepreneurs used outside workers whose home was their site of gainful employment" (71).

Other contributors take on the definition of women's visibility more directly, a case in point being the essay by Lindsey Traub, also one of the co-editors of the collection, on Louisa May Alcott's narrative experiments related to depicting female visibility. Traub

explores how in Alcott's fiction "through internalization and continuous modification of the effect of their visibility, women can sometimes exert a degree of control over it" (157). Furthermore, she contextualizes Alcott's particular emphasis on visibility in the context of nineteenth-century ideas of femininity, Alcott's own life and the literary genre of domestic fiction she was engaging. Traub notices that Alcott's strategies for negotiating visibility had to necessarily be more subtle than those used in the convention of the gothic fable, which used exoticism to achieve the necessary distancing, thereby preventing "any suggestion of reader emulation or moral sanction" (159). Subtlety, however, does not equal a lack of subversive possibility and Traub splendidly reveals how the agency of Alcott's characters is related to the control they have over their visibility, and, in contrast, how a woman being watched unaware, as Sylvia Yule is in the opening of *Moods*, is in fact shown as vulnerable, as prey of the man who watches.

Many of the remaining essays are no less interesting than the ones referred to above, although the collection does suffer from a certain unevenness. Even though the main premise of the volume is not groundbreaking—an analysis of how the private/public distinction had been constructed has been taken on by many scholars from the field of gender studies (and these are dutifully referenced by the editors)—the book vividly contextualizes how the distinction influenced the lives of women in the Gilded Age and, most importantly, how understanding women as confined to the private sphere constitutes an oversimplification of the complex roles they played.

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Astrid Franke, *Pursue the Illusion: Problems of Public Poetry in America*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. xiv + 281 pages.

Having acknowledged conventional reasons for the claim that poetry may be "the least" public of all genres (2), Astrid Franke performs a *volte-face*, asserting that this may be precisely the source of its strength and of its "dangerous" potential as a political medium. In an impressively intricate introduction that leaves few loose ends, she explains that precisely *because* you cannot take poetry's political potency for granted, the genre's traditional public commitment has required constant rhetorical and formal innovation. The author argues that poetry calls forth its reading public, shapes it and raises it to collective self-consciousness in ways best described by Dewey. She also claims that it is American pragmatism that offers a more useful paradigm for literary studies than Habermasian 'public sphere.' Franke's is a fresh approach to the question of public poetry, an interesting contribution to the field dominated in the last two decades by scholars

like Cary Nelson or Michael Thurston. Unlike them, she is not interested in the recovery of socially engaged poets snubbed by the academia which still adheres—though it can no longer explain why—to the criteria of stringent literary excellence. Paradoxically, her freshness consists in that she engages well-known public poets, almost cardboard literary history figures, such as Longfellow, Whitman or Eliot. Zooming in on the literariness of their poems, she offers nunanced "Adornian" readings. Franke often looks for unresolved formal tensions that betray anxieties in the way poets address the intended public, align themselves with a "we" or separate themselves from others.

Her analysis of Phillis Wheatley is exemplary. Franke explains how Wheatley's frontispiece and her poems in the tradition of the Puritan funeral elegy project a diversified audience; how they make an irrefutable claim to a variety of sentiments and traditions, moderating its racially subversive impact. Such attitudes of the elegiac tradition as humbleness, expert bereavement by African Americans, special veneration for the dead who happens to be a British aristocrat cannot be repressed or denied but they win over emotional acceptance for a different political landscape. I am won over by her argument that the kind of cultural work performed by politically "dangerous" poems takes place in our participation in the poem's attitude. Reading a poem is entering a "state of being" "participating in a manner of speaking" (27). The reverse side of Whitley's poem's awkward performativity is that they also make evident various rifts running across American society—the divisions between Christians and secularists, or loyalists and patriots.

Between two poets Vachel Lindsay and T. S. Eliot, neither of whom she considers truly public, Franke strings a continuum that will help her assess the achievements of others. Lindsay doesn't address, to say nothing of calling forth, any self-aware public that can be moved by a cause to an action; in his determination to reach the mass audience he became something of an Aeolian lyre of popular entertainment, advertisement, commodity culture and the ruling ideologies of his time. Curiously, T. S. Eliot does not fare any better: he reached ever abstract levels of self-awareness to find himself thoroughly immobilized and alienated. The two failures—at least from the perspective of the public sphere—embody the hazards that William Carlos Williams and Muriel Rukeyeser effectively avoided.

Painstakingly researched and highly readable, though resolutely pedestrian in style, the book comprehensively contextualizes the rhetorical situations of public poets and their precarious position. Franke discusses them in pairs, as if they were coming in generational waves. Different as they are each time—you do not see Lowell compared with Hayden often—they give a better view of the larger shifts of public culture and of variety of possible responses. Very carefully thought out, the book explores and maps all the nooks and crannies of her theme with admirable attention. It offers an original interpre-

tive approach which must have been very challenging in the works, though the results are deceptively and refreshingly easy to read. Franke is always attentive to the formal features of language, never neglecting to comment on meter or an assonance scheme.

Perhaps occasionally the author seems to be yielding to a dissertation-derived regime of "thesis plus five applications." For what else may have pushed her to offer a very competent but nothing-out-of-the-ordinary reading of Lowell and his overdiscussed public poems such as "For the Union Dead," "Memories of West Street and Lepke" or *Near the Ocean*? The claim that he developed the paradoxical voice of the "silent majority" and achieved the stature of a major public poet precisely by articulating the position of powerlessness, passivity and disillusionment is not anything surprising; Franke herself points out that such a take on the author of *Life Studies* has many progenitors. Ultimately, Lowell's rhetorical stance serves mostly as a handy contrast to illustrate Hayden's self-positioning as a black poet. Hayden could never claim anything approaching Lowell's natural authority to speak for the nation at large. With his address on Beacon Hill, Lowell made everyone—including, rather famously, Elizabeth Bishop—green with envy; hence Hayden's neomodernist impersonality.

Though all chapters deserve praise, the most *useable* perhaps will be the one on the more recent trends in American public poetry. In this final, unabashedly evaluative section, Franke sifts through hundreds of poems to isolate a trend which, to her mind, demonstrates the enduring relevance of the genre. She homes in on the work of Haryette Mullen, Alicia Ostriker and on the more recent work of Adrienne Rich, and argues that they may represent the most promising development today, swerving as it does from the deconstructive mode practiced not so long ago by the Language poets. Instead of warring against the construction of the self and the world, they emphasize it and build upon it. In a manner that reminds me of Frank Bidart, they develop intensely cognitive and emotive modes to arrive at a better understanding of their "relation to the world." Thus they recover their sense of their wider responsibilities and restore their ability for empathy and the possibility for action.

Craftily planned out and splendidly executed, the book draws richly from the work of European philosophers and leading European Americanists. Adorno and Habermas set the terms for her discussion; Heinz Ickstadt and Marc Chénetier are found most helpful. Needless to say, one expects nothing less from the winner of a newly established Rob Kroes Publication Award and a book that has the recommendations of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), bent, I am sure, on maintaining the reputation of its imprint as an unfailing guarantor of scholarly excellence and of the European perspective.

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Andrew S. Gross and Susanne Rohr. *Comedy—Avant-Garde—Scandal: Remembering the Holocaust after the End of History*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 206 pages.

Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr, eds. *The Holocaust, Art and Taboo: Transatlantic Exchanges on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 272 pages.

As artists first began to imagine the Holocaust, questions of ethics and the conventions of such representation were raised. What were the limits of representation? What could and could not be represented? What did authentic depiction of the catastrophe look like? Additionally, what were the conventions (thematically and structurally, at least) of representing the Holocaust? What were adequate modes of representation? Finally, should the Holocaust be depicted at all?

In those moments, Holocaust representation entered a historical process that began with attempts at depicting the reality of the event. The traditional didactic demand was that representation should function as a way to teach the "lessons of the Shoah." These early generations of artists focused primarily on how to depict the Holocaust toward that didactic end. In their useful Introduction to *The Holocaust, Art, and Taboo*, editors Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr identify a paradigm shift in Holocaust representation that occurred decades later. The book consists of contributions to the international conference of the same title, held at the University of Hamburg in June 2008, along with a few additional writings on the theme. They show that the pedagogy moved from earlier demands for a direct didacticism, illustrated by an almost complete adherence to realism in representation, to a search for new ways of expression. The immediate reaction to this new kind of art, which broke long-held taboos, was outrage and indignation. These generic and thematic shifts were seen as a transgression of established forms of representation, and instead of offering Holocaust art as a lesson, provoked viewers to remember. To illustrate the transgression, each of the authors included in this volume investigate the paradigm shift from a different perspective.

In *Comedy—Avant-Garde—Scandal*, authors Andrew S. Gross and Susanne Rohr also discuss the idea of artistic transgression of conventional modes of representing the Holocaust as a provocation to remember. They find the foundation of this theory within modernist aesthetic debates between questions of mass culture as "mystifying" or the equation of popularity with bad taste. Is shocking Holocaust art insensitive or simply a "(cultural) return of the (historically) repressed" (9)? Yet, they observe a consensus among all critics that assumes the Holocaust to be pervasive and significant and at the same time unsignifiable. This paradox argues against a propriety of Holocaust images, allowing new strategies to open up in representation.

Examined in isolation or as part of the book, the essays in both fine collections take a long and wide look at the Holocaust through the question of cultural memory. The questions they raise are absolutely pertinent to our contemporary moment, where the need for the new must still include acts of (even sentimental) remembrance. New commemorative art must forge a connection to the past. Can avant-garde strategies help us traverse this terrain? Can we read transgression as a form of commemoration? A central theme in both books concerns American cultural memory in particular. Is the Holocaust an American memory? What is the international memory discourse?

The essays acknowledge and closely examine, through a diversity of genres of Holocaust art, this paradigm shift from a purposeful and didactic demand to a variety of representations and different points of view. There are several possible moments which date this shift; they point directly at one in particular, but another follows close behind. The first, the release of the 1997 film *La vita e bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*) by Roberto Benigni, caught the public off-guard. Winning several Academy Awards, the film eventually won over the public, shown by comments made by the national director of the American Anti-Defamation league, Abraham Foxman, a Holocaust survivor, who saw it as a new strategy of Holocaust representation.

Taboos continued to be lifted, and an important example of what became scandalous art was the "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art" exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in New York in Summer 2002. This exhibition was paramount in challenging the focus of Holocaust representation. The 13-artist exhibition focused on perpetrators rather than victims; with varying degrees of confrontation they force us onto morally ambiguous terrain. The "LEGO Concentration Camp Set," in particular, created an international commotion resulting in outrage and indignation in communities around the world. In the preface to the catalogue, Joan Rosenbaum, the director of the Jewish Museum, wrote that the artists "dismiss classicism, edifices, and memorial rituals. They replace them with a disquieting, demanding, and jolting approach, which asks us over and over again to look deeply into human behavior." New questions emerged from the images and our reaction to them. What did the face of evil look like? Did one depict images of suffering, or the evil-doers who caused such suffering?

As history recedes, what approach leads to deeper knowledge of these events and to deeper understanding of the human condition? Do we sanctify the unmediated memoirs and realistic depiction of Nazi persecution, created in the first few decades after the Holocaust, or as James Young observes, do we see the "vicarious and hypermediated" experience of those born after the Holocaust as a necessary obsession of second and third generation children of the catastrophe?

Since the 1990s, Holocaust art has presented a radical departure from earlier decades in the content and presentation of Holocaust imagery. It moved from relatively conventional formats, identified clearly in national terms, to forming a prominent theme across borders in American, European, and Israeli art, literature and film. Much of this art attracted international attention by breaking a number of taboos. The untraditional modes of representation were highly provocative, even scandalous. Implicit and explicit comparisons to other atrocities was shocking. Art Spiegelman's graphic novels, *Maus I* and *Maus II*, which describe the author's father's experience during the Holocaust while presenting the author's own experience as a child of survivors, won a Pulitzer Prize Special Award in 1992. Noted in the *New York Times*, was the observation by members of the committee, that it was hard to classify the cartoonist's depiction of Nazi Germany. Was it history, memoir, or a comic book? The inability to understand not just the generic classification but the author's intent and artistic motivation challenged the critical climate such works were born into.

Both of these volumes concentrate on the international rupture caused by the widespread nature of the controversies of these individual pieces and curated exhibitions. By addressing several key questions, the editors and authors present their understanding of what this paradigm shift meant at the time and what it suggests for the future of Holocaust imagery. Why did the Holocaust become so prominent in transatlantic art in the 1990s, and why did so much of that art court controversy? The authors and editors of these volumes carefully argue for the global effect of the Holocaust and its growth into an event whose memory is influenced by global intellectual shifts. Taken together, both volumes are keen to help us understand that contemporary culture re-shapes images of the past to suit present memory. Holocaust imagery became inadequate once it was understood that it was beyond the limits of understanding.

The present collection of essays proposes that avant-garde presentation of the Holocaust has caused yet another paradigm shift—from outrage and indignation to nonchalance. Komor and Rohr question whether the Holocaust has entered a media-saturated moment and thus lost its special status, and become just another subject for art to deal with. After such films as *Life Is Beautiful* were released, one asked whether a comedy set in a concentration camp crossed the line in artistic representation of the Holocaust. The public willingly rode out that debate, and is still traversing the terrain of viewer discomfort. But being able to ask a question about such representation already signals a different set of central questions. How would such new strategies function? Would they teach the same questions? Are there new lessons to learn?

Artists discussed in these volumes inherited rather than experienced the Holocaust. As a result, we can observe that the main artistic aim now has become the reflection of Ho-

locaust rhetoric. These writers, and the art they examine, analyze the shift in perspective and time by closely investigating both traditional and unconventional forms that are particularly illustrative: testimony, visual art, theater, literature, popular culture, and theory. They look at transatlantic art that ruptures any comfortable sense of an ethics or aesthetics of representation. They present debates that help re-frame questions for our contemporary times, where our reaction to such art has moved from outrage to a kind of nonchalance. These are big questions which understandably concern memory most of all.

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Joanna Durczak, *Rozmowy z ziemią: tradycja przyrodopisarska w literaturze amerykańskiej* [Conversations with the Earth: The Tradition of Nature Writing in American Literature]. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2010. 278 pages.

It is with great joy and gratitude that I greet Joanna Durczak's pioneering work, whose impressive record is to be found in her latest book *Rozmowy z ziemią: tradycja przyrodopisarska w literaturze amerykańskiej*. Tracing the development of a specifically American genre of nature-writing, Durczak's work addresses a number of issues which are conspicuously missing from Polish critical debates concerning the tasks of literature and its relation to the non-linguistic world. Though the book is devoted almost exclusively to the discussion of selected U.S. nature writers (Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Kathleen Dean Moore) with only one chapter reserved for a survey of examples of Polish nature-writing, the larger concerns it expresses reach beyond the context of American literature and open up new possibilities for thinking about literature as such. Durczak's work invites a reconsideration of such fundamental issues as the status of the author (who, in the light of the ecocritical approach her analysis often employs, is no longer dead), the validity of knowledge literature is capable of transmitting, and the textual strategies developed by different writers to engage the readers in the process of acquiring this knowledge and thus to invite them to revise their received responses to the natural world.

Why would American nature writing be interesting from the perspective of Polish readers? As Durczak explains in her "Introduction," there are several reasons why now, in particular, this genre deserves a careful examination. First of all, in the face of the current ecological reality—the possibility of a global ecological crisis—American nature writing with its variously expressed eco-awareness has become more valid than ever.

Moreover, the specificity of American literary accounts of nature lies in the fact that they connect the broader philosophical, political, economic or ethical question with the perspective of particular lived experience, thus appealing to the sensitivities of individual readers.

The capacity to address human imagination is of crucial importance, because it is through the appeal to particular readers who live their lives in specific environments that writing may become activism. As the proponents of ecocriticism have repeatedly stated, the belief in the ecological potential of literature is grounded in the conviction that the roots of the modern ecological crisis lie not only in wrong political or economic decisions, or in what traditional Marxism would define as the "base" of social organization, but also in the "superstructure," namely, in the harmful ways in which we, people of the Occident, have figured the relationship between ourselves, other animals, and the earth. The authors discussed in *Rozmowy z ziemią* challenge or at least problematize the anthropocentrism of Euro-American culture. The questioning of anthropocentrism—the foundational premise of humanistic philosophy—is already clearly discernible in the work of Henry David Thoreau, whom Durczak sees as one of the originators of the American tradition of nature writing. It is because of Thoreau's ambivalence towards the humanistic understanding of nature that the author of *Walden* eventually parts way with Emerson. Unlike Emerson, Thoreau perceives clearly that nature does not serve any human purpose, not even the purpose of the contemplation of divinity. Consequently, there are no correspondences between the shapes of the natural world and the construction of the human mind, which further entails the impossibility of a full understanding of nature. Respect for non-human nature's resistance to comprehension and representation is one of the distinctive features of nature writing as understood by Joanna Durczak.

Although Thoreau is a figure no student or practitioner of nature-writing can afford to ignore, it would be wrong to assume that those who follow in his footsteps merely reiterate the ideas presented in his essays and journals. The specificity of Aldo Leopold's work, for instance, is that he believes the conservation of wild nature should be motivated by ethical (and not, for instance, aesthetic, economic or scientific) reasons. What is more, the ethical challenge posed by the otherness of non-human nature is to be answered not only by institutions or organizations but primarily by individuals (*Rozmowy z ziemią* 140). Leopold's ideas are partly derived from his innovative (for the times) reading of some fragments of the Bible. What official Christianity ignored was that some passages in the Old Testament (for instance in the Book of Ezekiel) explicitly condemned the exploitation of forests and waters (115).

The next author and activist discussed by Durczak is Edward Abbey. She notes important affinities with Thoreau, notably in Abbey's most esteemed book, *Desert Soli-*

taire. The similarities concern not only the worldviews of the two writers but also rhetorical devices they employ in their work. Abbey's explanation why he decided to spend time in Archers National Park (we get a fragment in Joanna Durczak's efficient translation) echoes a famous passage from *Walden*:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms. (394)

Abbey, too, speaks about the desire to stand "face to face" with life, regardless of what the costs of this encounter may turn out to be. He goes as far as to say that he would be willing to put his own humanity at risk, as authentic existence is always connected with risk. Though clearly inspired by Thoreau, he radicalizes his predecessor's work, both in terms of style (by adding elements derived from American naturalist tradition) and in terms of conservationist activism. In an important footnote, Durczak presents the recent outcomes of a campaign initiated by Abbey in 1975 to destroy Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River (188). What seemed to be a utopian idea thirty years ago, is now presented by most commentators as an inevitability.

The last of the American nature writers discussed in the book is Kathleen Dean Moore. Here the divergences from Thoreau's proto-ecological philosophy are marked most clearly, not least because the author is a woman. In the chapter devoted to Moore—arguably the most interesting part of *Rozmowy z ziemią*—the author also presents a brief history of women's nature writing. It does not come as a surprise that the exploration of nature, both in reality and in creative work, was traditionally the domain if men. Consequently, the early instances of feminine nature writing copied male paradigms. Kathleen Dean Moore, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and University Writer Laureate at Oregon State University in Corvallis, enters into a courageous dialogue with her male predecessor's. In Durczak's view, one of the distinctive feature of Moore's feminine environmentalism is its insistence on the collective character of human encounters with wild nature, as opposed to male (post)romantic valorization of solitude (Durczak points out that male writers, for instance Thoreau and Leopold, often purposefully omit the fact that during some of their contemplative experiences they were accompanied by other people). Moore is never alone in her books and the presence of others—students, friends, family—does not impoverish but, on the contrary, intensifies her experience of the

world. The fact that one's encounter with the world outside of the confines of one's self is never completely solitary is reflected in Moore's writing also through her extensive dialogues with other thinkers and writers (Socrates, Plato, Bacon, Kant, Thoreau, Leopold). Moore also deconstructs the myth of wilderness as that which must pose a dangerous challenge. Contact with wild nature is not *heroic* in her account, rather, it belongs to the realm of everyday life, work, or recreation. Moreover, she explicitly criticizes Thoreau for choosing "wilderness" (to the extent that the woods around the Walden pond might have been considered as "wild") and opposing it to what she labels as "morally abandoned" landscapes. She challenges contemporary writers to establish meaningful connections to places that are all but wild: cities, farms, suburban fields and fallow lands. It is through this reorientation of the nature writer's interest that she develops her environmental care ethics, which is in keeping with the contemporary tendency, in environmental writing and ecocriticism, to problematize the nature/culture binarism and to reach "beyond nature." [2]

Durczak's compelling work might have been made even more stimulating had the author included more of second-wave ecocritical perspectives in her analysis of the texts discussed in the book. One issue which might perhaps be developed is the problem of anthropomorphic representations of animals in writing and other art-forms. Traditional, "first-wave" ecocritical line, reiterated by Durczak in her introductory chapter, is that anthropomorphism is a form of colonization by means of the imagination. By assigning human features to animals, one denies their otherness, their ultimate unrepresentability. However, one could make an argument which goes in exactly opposite direction. In the light of the radical otherness of non-human nature is not self-conscious anthrophomorphization the most *honest* of all representational strategies? Is not the very notion of representation already deeply embedded in the strictly human way of relating to the world? By pretending that the human imagination can transgress its tendency to anthropomorphism, one would be suggesting that a truthful (objective) representation of non-human nature is possible, at least as a kind of a theoretical ideal, whereas the very idea of "an objective representation" is simply a contradiction in terms. Antrophomorphisation can thus be read as a signal of the artist's awareness of his or her own irreducible position as a human being who observes, understands and re-presents the non-human reality from a certain limited perspective. But this comment should not be read as criticism: rather, as an invitation to further discussion and analysis.

[1]The titles of some of the most significant 21-century ecocritical publications reflect this turn. See, for instance, *Beyond Nature Writing* (ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, University Press of Virginia, 2001) and Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

What needs to be emphasized is that Joanna Durczak's work provides a bridge not only between two cultures (American and Polish) but also between the two respective languages. The majority of the works and critical sources quoted in the book have not yet been translated into Polish, which means that the author had to do all the translation work herself. The sheer immensity of this task deserves admiration. The few instances where more fortunate solutions are possible in no way diminish the great linguistic achievement of the book, but they ought to be mentioned for the sake of its further perfection: the Polish phrase "literatura środowiskowa" does not really convey the same meaning as the English expression "environmental literature"; and "środowiska ochroniarskie" (English: "conservationist circles") bring to the mind of the Polish reader the idea of some sort of association of companies offering security services. These, let me reiterate, are minor complaints about a book whose merit, as a work of literary scholarship and an act environmental activism, is unquestionable.

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Sascha Pöhlmann. *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 381 pages.

Not only is Sascha Pöhlmann's engaging book *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* a cogently and thoroughly argued new contribution to Pynchon studies, but it is also a critical intervention which substantiates the thesis put forward by Aníbal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist and thinker, that the specific historical-critical imaginary bound up with historical-critical knowledge, or critical theory—a utopian horizon—has been lately restored and is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Like Thomas Pynchon in *Mason & Dixon*, Quijano emphasizes in "The Return of the Future and Questions about Knowledge" that a new horizon projected by the inception of America "created a different meaning for each history, in each space/time" by promising the time that "was far more than a mere continuation of the present. It was something new, it involved change, and it announced or promised what was desired or hoped for, perhaps even dreamt about" (75).

Quijano further explicates that "[t]he idea of a future horizon as a new time for social existence, and hence, as the bearer of a new understanding of history, whether total or partial, radical or superficial, clearly points to a specific perspective on the imaginary di-

mension: that of a historical imaginary" (77). He invokes the historical defeat in the 1980s of this imaginary dimension "linked to liberating people from power—from all power" through "[t]he struggle for the expansion and deepening of democracy in society and not only in the nation-state," as well as through "materialization of the idea of social equality of peoples and … legitimation of their diversity as a form of day-to-day relations among peoples in every sphere of social existence throughout the world" (82).

Quijano traces this defeat back to Eurocentric perspective of critical thought and critical theory of society, growing technocratization inherent in the social theory developed within the Eurocentric cognitive perspective, and the worldwide hegemony of historical materialism as "the most definitely Eurocentric of the versions" (83) of the critical thought and its concomitant critical theory. He points out, however, that the end of the 1990s also marked the end of this defeat due to the worldwide resistance against capitalist globalization: "the worldwide resistance that has got under way implies—or may imply—the reconstruction of a critical imaginary and the rebuilding of a new horizon of future quite different from the one that has been extinguished" (84). The Peruvian sociologist conjectures that it is the "disputes and combinations between the modern nation-state and the new community" that will stake out new ground for "the search for new institutional forms of authority in which power is not present or is reduced and kept under control" (85).

In *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* Sascha Pöhlmann goes further and explores the critical theory and practice of the postnational as projecting an even more radically utopian future horizon and historical imaginary: "[t]his utopian element renders the term *postnational* useful even in a world that is not *temporally* postnational" (18). He defines the postnational as "anything that works towards dismantling the hegemony of nation-ness as a metanarrative" (8) and stresses that "postnationalism seeks to emphasize and maintain diversity and radical pluralism while challenging those (meta)narratives that seek to curb it" (17).

The epigraph to the introductory chapter "Pynchon and the Postnational World(s)"—a short passage from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—aptly identifies the concept pivotal to Pöhlmann's considerations. The idea that things could be other than they are bespeaks both his critical formulation of the concept of the postnational and ways of carrying it out and the discussion of Pynchon's postnational imagination because, as Pöhlmann's considerations self-reflexively foreground, "[w]hat makes literary texts especially significant postnational material is their capability to create worlds instead of describing 'the' world" (19). The last four chapters of his book are devoted to the author's interpretation of Pynchon's novels *Mason & Dixon*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and, briefly, *Against the Day*, through the lens of the critical reflection developed in the chapters two and three. At the same time, however, his conception of the postnational is put to test and

proves an apt and efficacious tool in the process of interrogating Pynchon's non-linear narratives. It provides new perspectives on the writer's representations of nation-ness, his critical view of an alleged necessity for a particular geopolitical order to emerge and the extent of its biopolitical rule.

Importantly, Pöhlmann takes into consideration the phenomenon of negative potentiality in the form of oppression or an entrenchment of alterity, which also inhere in the radical openness. He clearly shows that what makes Pynchon's texts compelling is, among other aspects, the fact that their postnationalism is twofold. On the one hand, "*Mason & Dixon* and *Gravity's Rainbow* form *part of* a postnational imagination in that they seek to imagine other worlds than this national one" (21). On the other hand, "they also *describe* this postnational imagination in that they demand for it a multiplicity of ideas instead of the hegemony of a single metanarrative" (21).

It thus comes as no surprise that although chapter two, "What is postnationalism"—the longest in Pöhlmann's book—presents and discusses an array of views, theories and philosophical thought which contribute to the articulation of his original definition and understanding of the phenomenon of the postnational, the words 'imagination' and 'the imaginary' claim the readers' attention as they appear in the first and in the last sentence of this section of the book. As in the introductory chapter, the author emphasizes here a tremendous role played by imagination and the collective imaginary as a social force in the emergence of postnationalism, while the radical character of the notion of the postnational is indicated by the epigraph taken from Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions*: "And every nation will burn" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 25).

In dismantling the metanarrative of nation-ness, Pöhlmann draws on the long tradition of social constructivism. He comments on the works by Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson as theorists of nation-ness whose reflection indirectly gestures towards postnationalism. In the section devoted to the discussion of the views of thinkers consciously articulating what can be interpreted as postnationalist ideas, Pöhlmann interrogates the writings of Jürgen Habermas, Martin Albrow, Arjun Appadurai, as well as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, all of whom point to the necessity of thinking "outside the national categories that prove to be insufficient in the contemporary world" (70). By reaching as far back as Ernest Renan's reflection on the nation as a social construction in his lecture "What is a Nation?"(1882), the author shows that the roots of thinking in postnational terms and the questioning of the essentialist claims of nation-ness can be found in the late 19th century in the midst of the surge of nationalisms and the rise of nation-states. Moreover, Renan's reflection on the relationship between nation-ness and history and his meditation on *forgetting together* as opposed to *remembering together* invoked by nationalists as crucial to creating a national bond, make the French philosopher a predecessor of

thinking in terms of non-linear para-histories so important for the emergence of postnationalism.

Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism proposed in *Nations and Nationalism* where he shows it to hold that the political and national entities should be congruent, is very useful as a negative comparison in Pöhlmann's later apology of non-linearity, alterity, difference, polivocality, multidimensionality, and potentiality of postnationalism. Gellner's emphasis on the emotional entanglement of nationalism and the power of eliciting loyalty comparable to that of religious metanarrative help Pöhlmann explain the tenacity of the grip of nation-ness and show why it is still a relevant issue that to a certain degree still contributes to the shaping of our worldview. In discussing Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* the author considers, among other ideas, the performativity of nation-ness and the national identity, which leads to the conclusion that "the postnational imaginary can create new communities" (66).

In "The Postnational Constellation" (1998/2001) Jürgen Habermas points to the necessity for the democratic process to transcend the nation-state borders, but simultaneously fears that outside its traditional habitat democracy might evaporate. Although he thus introduces a negative reflection on the scope of globality which produces challenges beyond democratic control, he nevertheless postulates cultural solidarity as a decisive factor contributing to the success or failure of a community. Pöhlmann believes that postnationalist project can contribute significantly to the creation of a pluralist collective identity based on an expansion of solidarity beyond national borders, but he is also aware that "[i]f postnationalism attacks rigid structures and identities, it must be careful not to establish some itself" (79).

Martin Albrow theorizes a paradigm shift in *The Global Age* where he considers the displacement of the modern age by the global age, which will result in the radical change of the point of reference for individuals and groups in terms of social organization and practice. However, the postnational critique, according to Albrow, cannot engage only nation-ness but also capitalism and modern rationality as they all create an intricate network of symbiotic interrelationships and mutual constructions. It is on the territory of the global culture that the hegemony of the idea of nation-ness fades because of culture's fluidity and unpredictability.

In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai expresses an opinion that the materials needed for the emergence of postnational imaginary are to be found around us already. By employing them the work of imagination can freely transcend the boundaries of nation-ness. This can happen, for instance, in the process of launching "subversive micronarratives" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 98) through which individuals and groups seek to implement the idea of 'self-making,' a strategy that evokes a space of contestation poised between the utopia of the purely emancipatory and disciplining policies. As Pöhlmann points out, "Pynchon's

novels are precisely that material" (99), because they probe into the narrative(s) of America as the space of both a defeat and a possibility of postnationalist utopia's interplay of micro-narratives.

In *Empire* Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri warn us against a new sovereignty, which has risen along with the crossing over from a modern to a postmodern mode, in the process of "relocating from the nation-state to transnational structures" (Pöhlmann 114). They call Empire a series of national and supranational entities operating under what they designate as the single logic of rule, whose goal, "like that of nation-ness, is to be inescapable" (119). In *Multitude*, in turn, Hardt and Negri explore the concept of the multitude—an alternative, or a "constructive countermodel" (115)—ensconced in and growing with Empire, which they define as "biopolitical self-organization" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 133). Multitude is an open "network that provides the mean of encounter so that we can work and live in common," in which "all differences can be expressed freely and equally" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 115). In being "always fictional, no matter how real it may be" (138), the multitude remains in the dialectical relationship with Empire. Thus, "motivated by postnational desire, the multitude cause[s] the creation of Empire; on the other hand it remains directly opposed to it" (125). Pöhlmann summarizes Hardt and Negri's position insightfully and elegantly by pointing out that although they "deal with this world… they also imagine another world; their use of fictional strategies—carried out more self-reflexively than by many historians after Hayden White—is in itself an illustration of what they theorize" (115).

In discussing Thomas Pynchon's texts as postnationalist, Pöhlmann demonstrates that it is a consideration of possibility that most efficaciously questions the myth of necessity. Therefore, "[p]ostnational thought attacks the self-proclaimed necessity of nation-ness by showing alternatives to it and celebrating the possibilities it excludes" (134). Pynchon's postnational strategies are aimed at laying bare the mystification of "the bizarre natural-ness" (135) of both capitalism and nation-ness. In the chapter "Postnational Parageography," Pöhlmann draws the readers' attention to a passage from *Mason & Dixon*, ignored so far by critics, which introduces the term "parageography" understood as "superimposing of alternative maps of the world upon the more familiar ones" (142).

Parageography and "parahistory" modeled on it are fundamental postnationalist practices both represented and engaged by Pynchon in his interrogation of the mutual related histories of Europe and the USA in *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*. While in *Gravity's Rainbow* "rationality, capitalism, and nation-ness" work together in Pynchon's representation of the relation between the histories of Europe and the USA "to limit the potential to the actual for purposes of sovereignty" and "America as an open space of potential [is represented as] ruined by the forces that limited it to a place subsumed under the narrative of nation-ness," *Mason & Dixon* can be considered "a representation of that open

space under attack by these forces" (153-154). Pöhlmann's postantionalist perspective on *Gravity's Rainbow* demonstrates, however, that besides representing—in the postnationalist spirit—of "the consequences of this closure," the novel can also be regarded as "a meditation on possibilities of resistance and the potential of space opening again" (154). This interpretational gesture on the part of Pöhlmann thus performs the postnationalist restoration of the utopian horizon, whose demise and recent resurgence has been announced by Quijano.

It must be emphasized that not only is Sascha Pöhlmann's *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* an outstanding contribution to the body of scholarship on Thomas Pynchon as well as being a groundbreaking critical intervention developing ideas connected with the concept of postnationalism, but it is also an excellent didactic aid, a handbook usefully ordering and commenting on the foundational texts pertaining to the concept, critical theory, and practice of postnationalism. Moreover, Pöhlmann's book creates a multidimensional postnationalist space in its own right, conducive to the presentation of multiple views, alternative ethical and aesthetical perspectives and interpretations, and open to possibility, where the readings of Pynchon's representations of openness and closure are in constant flux, concomitant with the emergence of utopian imaginary and critical practice at the cusp of philosophy, sociology, politics, and literary imagination.

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Dominika Ferens, *Ways of Knowing Small Places: Intersections of American Literature and Ethnography since the 1960s*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2010. 199 pages.

As most books touching the live tissue of current cultural debates, Dominika Ferens's study initially appears too heterogeneous in its analytical material, hardly coherent in its overall argumentation, and rather wayward and amorphous in its structure. But soon these objections turn out to be just first impressions, and any eventual reservations as regards matters of form and thesis dissolve on reaching the end of the work. This book simply had to assume the shape it did in order to embrace most of the diversity and nuances of its subject which concerns the multiple and complex interrelations of aesthetic and ethnographic writings in America, from the 1960s until the present.

Ferens's book develops its argumentation on the basis of specific, provisional as she cautions, generic categories of these interrelations which the author scrupulously distinguishes and names in her introductory chapter. These are ethnographic fiction (autobio-

graphical fiction written by ethnographers), minority fiction containing figures of anthropologists and conceived as a critique of ethnography, auto-ethnography (minority writings responding to the mainstream readership demand for authentic cultural representation), counter-ethnography (minority fiction turning the ethnographic gaze at mainstream America), mock-ethnography, and anti-ethnography (proposing ways of cultural perception alternative to the ethnographic) (26). In subsequent chapters the author analyzes these generic types and their combinations on the basis of carefully selected examples of both "white" and ethnic/minority writers, beginning with texts written in the 1960s and ending with those published as late as 2003.

As the title itself announces, the object of study will be, on the one hand, epistemology (ways of knowing), and here of greatest interest to the author is the traditional ethnographic perception of cultural difference, as well as its recently developed variations and alternatives, often with the help of literary methods. On the other hand, the book's central concern is the ethnographic depiction and literary representation of "small places," specifically islands, which constituted favorite locations for classic ethnographic fieldwork. It typically concentrated on cultures isolated and exotic for the western reader, enabling him to recreate the "timeless" patterns of "primitive" life, and compare them to more complex western modes of existence in order to capture the process of transformation from the primeval to more complicated social structures. In the course of ethnographic cognition, "small places" were usually taken out of history and represented as unchanging idyllic societies which offered tempting, if unreal, alternatives to western civilization. The texts analyzed by Ferens expose and debunk these mythical underpinnings of classic ethnography, in the process of reversal which often relies on placing the insular locations back in their historical, colonial, postcolonial, or neocolonial contexts.

Mythologization apart, the very scientific venture to observe and describe the exotic was as a rule based on the positivist assumption of the neutrality and objectivity of the ethnographic gaze that rendered the ethnographer's presence and activities amidst his native "informants" invisible. What was even less likely to be noticed was a network of power relations and cultural hierarchies that decided about the superior position of the anthropologist vis-a-vis the people he came to analyze. Moreover, the traditional explorer of cultural difference was even further removed from an awareness that there might have been something improper about his prying into the most intimate aspects of the natives' lives: what he did was after all made legitimate by the authority of science itself. And even as late as the 1990s, as consummate an ethnographer as Clifford Geertz justified the ways of ethnographic perception by referring to anthropologists as modern purveyors of magic, "merchants of astonishment," pursuing their exotic dragons for the benefit and instruction of their audience at home.

The breakthrough decade of the 1960s brought early documented instances of returning the impassive ethnographic gaze by islanders of diverse ethnic origin, and fixing it on the oppressive dominant culture that once observed them and their ancestors as "natives." Ethnographers themselves, inspired by anti-positivist tendencies in science, began to question and problematize their methods, the narrative voice and perspective in their accounts, as well as the degree to which their own writing was suffused with literary techniques, and as such could be easily called to doubt as objective and epistemologically neutral scientific evidence. Dominika Ferens first proceeds to explore the resulting interconnections between ethnography and fiction writing on the basis of two groups of American authors: these who are mainstream ethnographers themselves and self-consciously use fictional methods to make their cultural analysis if not more penetrating then more attractive to the reader (Rhoda Halperin, Margery Wolf, Edith Turner), and those minority writers who use the character of an ethnographer in their plots to expose the pretence of misconceived superiority assumed in contact with the object of ethnographic study (Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Russell Leong), Ferens devotes her first two chapters to these two groups of authors, reversing, however, the order one might expect: the first chapter concerns the minority writers poking fun at classic ethnographic performance as it were, while in the second she focuses on white female ethnographers employing fictional methods in their accounts of cultural otherness, and by this disturbing the usual ethnographic perspective. This maneuver proves a little confusing: one might assume that the innovative scientists of the mainstream should be looked at in the first place, to give way to an analysis of further instances of departure from the classic ethnographic position. However, it might be also granted that the author of the study wanted in this way to avoid too prompt and easy generalizations that might emerge at the crossing points between these two types of writing.

The following third chapter brings an exhaustive discussion of O. A. Bushnell's fictionalized treatment of the Hawaii leprosy commune Molokai of 1963, written by a native, but white and therefore a dominant, inhabitant of the island. As Ferens underscores, an interesting aspect of Bushnell's perspective was his submerged attention paid to non-normative sexuality and the status of disability as a sign of stigma, abjection, and pathology. The environment depicted in Bushnell's novel seems to subvert the normativity of the outside world: in the reality of Molokai, the sick and the abject displace and question the norm, or rather, they become the norm themselves. An additional asset of Ferens's discussion of Bushnell is her meticulous account of other, mostly earlier literary responses to the Molokai settlement, such as those by the San Francisco writer Charles Warren Stoddard, Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife, Jack London, and later Paul Theroux, in whose rendering the commune "served as a figure of the culturally and ra-

cially contaminated Hawaii, its innocence and primitive glory swept away by modernity and imported disease" (100-101).

The next portion of the book, chapter four entitled "Islands of Multiculturalism," concentrates on the extra-literary, market-oriented aspects of ethnic minority writing, where the author analyzes the ideology of multiculturalism and the mainstream readership demands of ethnographic accuracy in representations of the exotic from within, by minority writers as participant members of their respective ethnic communities. From this point of view, as Ferens propounds, minority fiction most resembles the genre she calls auto-ethnography, which poses extra problems to most minority authors, also exposed to the expectations of their own ethnic groups to have their life within the dominant culture represented with the utmost precision and verisimilitude, nevertheless always containing a latent political agenda. Most minority writers, as Ferens observes, do their best to avoid the pitfalls of the requirement of ethnographic accuracy, since this demand effectively drives the readers' attention away from formal innovation and the writers' achievement as artists. Yet, they always have to take this requirement into account as representation of the exotic invariably serves as the most saleable attribute of their work in the publishing market.

One of the most rewarding passages of this chapter is devoted to David Cowart's *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America* (2006) in which the critic of a distinctly conservative political persuasion effortlessly, as it seems, co-opts the perspectives of minority writers to prove his point about their serving as go-betweens familiarizing the exotic for the majority which, like the critic in question, conceives of itself and its culture as "transparent and normal." As Ferens rightly observes, by making use of his own literary and cultural erudition, and "retreating to a world of religious metaphors and cross-cultural analogies worthy of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Cowart manages to deflect attention from the fact that the 'torment and confusion' experienced by the protagonists take place in the purgatory of modern-day U.S. Yone's narrator [in *The Coffin Park*] fixes an unflinching gaze on American society; Cowart redirects it to ancient myths and legends" (132). By means of this ruse, the conservative critic seems to get involved in the impossible task of defusing the rage and accusation by deflecting the inexorable immigrant gaze away from its target and turning it backward, toward the once safe exotic islands as subject of ethnographic exploration, reducing the minority writer's role to that of ethnographer of his own culture.

The effort to disarm by reverting the ruthlessly unmasking gaze of the former "native informant," fixed now on the culture of those who once observed and generalized about her island, appears hopeless in the increasingly globalized world: proof of this can be found in the fiction of a woman writer from Antigua, Jamaica Kincaid, whose work is

analyzed in the fifth chapter of the study. Ferens focuses on four books of this author: the first is a formally ambitious collection of stories *At the Bottom of the River*, in which Kincaid "explored the limits of opacity, ellipsis, and fragmentation," and in which the form "seems deliberately unyielding, as if to suggest that the island cannot be taken in at a glance, simplified or generalized about" (145). The second of Kincaid's works is the novel *Annie John*, in which the narrator adopts the perspective of a child or an adolescent girl, and although understandably simple and naïve, its view on the island proves striking not because of the oddity of the islanders' customs it refers to (sexual and burial customs, obea spirituality) but because of its ordinariness. In an impressive move, Ferens juxtaposes Kincaid's representation of Antigua with that of Margaret Mead in her now classic depiction of idyllic islands in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). The American woman ethnographer came there to a conclusion that communal "primitive" cultures managed to bring up contended and well-adjusted individuals due to their downplaying individualism, instead of breeding the "maladjustments of youth" that plagued the individualistic American society. Contrary to this view, in her depiction of Antiguan culture, Kincaid pinpointed the traditional ways of patriarchal society which, with its postcolonial and neocolonial burden, was particularly responsible for the maladjustment of young girls, forcing them to suppress individualism and to accept humiliation in their adult life.

In *A Small Place*, an angry diatribe against colonialism and neocolonialism as evinced in her native Antigua, Kincaid unflinchingly performs an act of staring back at western tourists, proving that their assumed distance and impartial attitudes to alterity are mostly illusory, though at the same time herself adopting a posture of a patronizing ex-islander resorting to ethnographic stereotypes and infantilizing the islanders' point of view. Kincaid's novel of 1990, *Lucy*, brings, however, another instance of reverting the ethnographic gaze, this time performed by Kincaid's alter ego, an ex-islander girl employed as an au-pair in an American middle-class household which becomes the site of her ethnographic exploration. Although hardly sensitive to the personal plights of her employers, Lucy manages to liberate herself from stifling cultural stereotypes and hierarchies by using photography as a means of self-individuation. As Ferens aptly notices, Lucy acquires a new and different perspective in her ethnographic venture because of her relentless self-reflexivity, paying attention to the interconnectedness between the objects of her analysis and her own daily existence. She thus downplays the difference and valorizes, if not sameness, then proximity and similarity.

The last chapter of Ferens's book opens with a recourse to the 1990s debate concerning the contemporary value of ethnography, undermined and questioned by young scholars such as Nicholas Thomas in his essay "Against Ethnography" from 1991. Going against Clifford Geertz's anti-relativistic credo meant to legitimize the anthropologist as

a "merchant of astonishment" in constant pursuit of the exotic thrill all over the globe, Thomas contended that the ethnographic dragons could be merely produced for the benefit of the curious western public, and "fabricating difference" meant to maintain the distance between "others" and "ourselves," pandering to the traditional perspective on others as always being different. His conclusion was that "in a globalized world the pursuit of 'dragons' is anachronistic" (162). In the remaining sections of the chapter, Ferens discusses three novels by women writers of diverse ethnic descent, Lois-Ann Yamanaka of Hawaii, the Cuban Achy Obejas, and Japanese American Karen Tei Yamashita writing about a Japanese commune in Brazil. In the case of all three works, Ferens postulates a mixture of two genres mentioned in the introduction: auto- and anti-ethnography. Both genres problematize the value of "ethnic" authenticity and question knowledge, pointing to the inherent instability and precariousness of human cognitive perspective, including in this category the ethnographic gaze and suggesting that "the gaze is never neutral, that the native does look back, and that ethnographic interest can be mutual" (170).

As I hope to have shown, Dominika Ferens's book is a must for anyone interested in ethnic and minority cultures and literatures, irrespective of their own worldview, political opinions, or cultural positioning. It repeatedly makes us aware or reminds us of the necessary limitations of our own gaze, wherever it may be located, and of our own situation within this world's networks of power, however innocent and untainted we like to think of ourselves we are. As observed at the beginning, when reading this book one might object at times to incomplete, or fragmentary, or not detailed enough analytical insights in the book's treatment of particular texts, or to the material under analysis being too heterogeneous to enable the formulation of any general conclusions. Yet once the book is read and absorbed, it leaves us with a sense of impressive sweep and control at the same time, of abundance and complexity, expertise and competence, and finally, of formidable cultural relevance at the present moment of history.

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Aneta Dybska, *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s*. *American Studies and Media*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. 194 pages.

Aneta Dybska's *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* explores two distinct bodies of writing—sociological and ethnographic studies and autobiographical texts written by black men in the 1960s and 1970s.

The texts examined in the study represent different scientific approaches and methodologies, ranging from functionalism, the consensus paradigm, to the conflict paradigm, insider and outsider perspectives, detachment and participation, and different literary genres, from the conversion narrative, through the Bildungsroman, to essays and letters. Dybska shows how these diverse works produce different black masculinities, perpetuating or challenging the dominant ideologies of "hegemonic masculinity," patriarchal gender relations, "black matriarchy," emasculation of black men, and black hypermasculinity.

Dybska opens her book with an analysis of the controversial study *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, commonly referred to known as the *Moynihan Report* (1965). Daniel P. Moynihan's central conclusion was that the source of pathology in the lower-class black family, which was considered as an accurate representative of the whole black community, stems from the presence of "black matriarchy," which deprives black men of their patriarchal power in the domestic space and precludes the assimilation of African Americans to the traditional American middle-class standards. Referring to the research findings of a renowned black sociologist, Franklin Frazier, Moynihan explains this gender reversal as a legacy of slavery and an outcome of migration and urbanization of the black rural community to northern cities. The report evoked a heated debate. Its critics' main argument was that it is structural racism of American society, rather than domineering black women, that is the source of the ghetto pathology. In particular, the thesis about the black matriarchy was undermined by black feminists, who highlighted patriarchal oppression rather than matriarchy in the black community. Historians countered the claims about the disintegration of the black family as the result of slavery, documenting that substantial numbers of black slaves managed to maintain familial bonds despite all the odds. In spite of the fervent critique of the report, it was one of the most influential sociological texts produced in the twentieth century on the black community, hence, all the following texts dialogically refer to his claims and either reinforce or challenge his notion of homogeneous weak black masculinity as an inevitable result of "black matriarchy."

The first text competing with the *Moynihan Report*, which is discussed by Dybska is Ulf Hannerz's *Soulside: Inquiries into the Ghetto Community* (1969). Identifying black community as the underclass, he discusses it in terms of "culture of poverty," as a subculture within a paradigm of cultural relativism. Hannerz problematizes the notion of the matriarchal or broken black family, analyzing different models of ghetto familial relations as adaptive alternatives to the normative nuclear family. Analogously, he does not approach the behavior of black men as violating the norm, but as a compensatory alternative, which Dybska analyzes with reference to Robert Connell's concept of "protest

masculinity," "a marginalized masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in the context of poverty" (114). In Hannerz's study, black men perform "imaginary manhood" in public mostly though verbal creativity, boasting about their prowess and projecting an image of success. As Dybska claims, Hannerz's work illustrates the contemporary approach to (black) masculinity as heterogeneous, relational, and contextual. A corresponding plurality of masculine behaviors is represented by the next examined study, David A. Schulz *Coming Up Black: Patterns of Ghetto Socialization* (1969). In contrast to Hannerz, he focuses on the domestic sphere and shows how underclass black men enact their gender identity in different ways that Dybska interprets as diverse functional adaptations. Instead of black matriarchy or reverberations of slavery, Schulz identifies discriminatory practices in the labor market as the source of the anomie represented by black men. The first part of the study ends with a chapter on Kenneth B. Clark's *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (1965). Primarily in contrast to Moynihan's outsider perspective and consensus paradigm, he is an "insider" to the black community and represents the conflict paradigm. As a result, Clark focuses on the interracial conflict and colonial-like situation of African Americans.

In the second part of *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s*, the body of knowledge produced by sociologists and ethnographers is confronted with non-scientific texts contemporaneously written by black men. The first texts discussed as intervening in the hegemonic narratives of black masculinity are Dick Gregory's *Nigger: An Autobiography* (1964) and Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965). Both combine the ethnographic account and the autobiographical self-made man narrative. Gregory's text intervenes in the dominant discourse of poverty by giving agency to the underclass, typically represented as objects determined by overpowering social forces. Brown, in contrast to sociological studies, normalizes homosexuality or even prostitution as alternative but acceptable behaviors, using the liberal discourse of sexuality. What follows is a comparative analysis of two autobiographical texts by Bobby Seale: *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party* (1970) and *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (1978). The former text is read as a conversion narrative, in which the narrator gains radical political consciousness. The latter, on the other hand, is a more personal Bildungsroman, a novel of social development. By confronting two distinct modes of autobiographical writing, with different content yet written by the same author, Dybska convincingly illustrates the thesis she proposes at the beginning that "the process of self-representation is necessarily mediated by the generic conventions, ideological allegiances at a particular historical moment, the intended audience, as well as authorial self-interest" (103). Another set of

self-narratives analyzed in the study represents prison literature, which is regarded as a particularly significant genre of contemporaneous African American literature. Dybska reads the two texts as examples of "studying up," an oppositional strategy to the ethnographic gaze pathologizing and objectifying the black community. Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968) repositions the black inmate from the criminal to the victim of the self-fulfilling prophecies of American racial myths, notably of the black rapist, and simultaneously he manages to resist objectification by the very act of self-writing. Analogously, George Jackson's *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (1970) reveals the racialization of black men's criminalization, and thus challenges the image of the black man as the individual perpetrator personally accountable for his actions. Yet, as Dybska argues, in their challenge to the pathologizing and criminalizing gaze, both authors embrace the patriarchal ideology of hegemonic masculinity and reproduce dominant gender hierarchies and homophobia.

The final chapter comparatively examines the central themes in the two bodies of texts analyzed in the main body. Dybska claims that the autobiographical writings successfully undermine the notion of the black man as a passive and powerless victim perpetuated in most of the social science texts; however, by representing black men as violent and domineering they are complicit with hegemonic masculinity. All the texts respond to Moynihan's thesis about "black matriarchy." Interestingly, the line of division does not follow the ethnography v. autobiography or black v. white divide. White ethnographer Hannerz together with the black autobiographers—Seale, Gregory, and Brown challenge the notion of the emasculation of black men; whereas black scholar Clark together with Jackson (black) and Schulz (white) perpetuate Moynihan's conclusion. Another theme that interpolates the study and is summed up in Conclusion is non-normative sexuality, which is diversely represented in the analyzed texts. Social scientists seem to be influenced by the popular contemporaneous assumptions that homosexuality is a white and middle-class pathology, or that it is an issue belonging to the interests of psychology rather than sociology, and hence they ignore the subject in their studies. Correspondingly, the prison autobiographies strategically erase the theme of prison homosexuality, which helps them project black men within the hegemonic masculinity. Brown's autobiography is the only text that represents non-normative sexuality in a non-pathologizing way as a visible and accepted individual choice in the black community.

Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s is a clearly written, structurally coherent, and thematically consistent project. Dybska accurately introduces her methodology, which draws on various contemporary approaches within cultural and literary studies, ranging from gender and sexuality stu-

dies, poverty studies, to autobiography and prison literature studies. She also competently uses traditional tools of literary analysis such as the conversion narrative or Bildungsroman; her literary examination, however, could benefit from closer text analysis in both parts. Dybska fluently and effectively applies current scholarly paradigms and concepts, most notably gender perfomativity or autobiography as textual performance of subjectivity as well as many notions originating from the recently flourishing masculinity studies, such as "hegemonic masculinity" or "protest masculinity." Although she focuses on the performance of heterosexual black masculinity, she examines it as a relational process; consequently, her study does not ignore the significance of constructions of black femininity and non-normative sexuality. Thus, Dybska's study aptly illustrates the intersectional character of identity construction. Such rigorous scientific discipline, accompanied with a thorough attention to the historical and cultural context, makes *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* a study which can be recommended for graduate students and academics researching American culture, especially for scholars interested in the 1960s and 1970s, masculinity, and autobiography.

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Christopher Garbowski, *Pursuits of Happiness: The American Dream, Civil Society, Religion, and Popular Culture*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2008. 246 pages.

Christopher Garbowski analyzes different aspects of pursuing happiness by Americans: starting with various forms of realizations of the American Dream, through demands and responsibilities imposed by civil society, obligations and rewards offered by religion, to pleasures and role models that popular culture brings. The case in point is Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, which through its complexity, as Garbowski claims, offers various perspectives on American culture. And all the pursuits take place within culture—here understood in its broad sense, as the reality that creates meanings and shapes our lives.

Yet, *Pursuits of Happiness* transgresses the American cultural terrain. The fact that the author was residing in Poland during the time of political and social changes the country underwent enabled him to come up with a comparative perspective on Poland and the United States. What can be inferred from the book is that Poland still lacks solidly founded and well-functioning civil society whose blueprint it could emulate from the society across the Atlantic.

As the author postulates, in the USA the foundations of various forms of pursuits of happiness stem mainly from two different concepts: the Puritan ethos of individual self-restraint vs. Jefferson's and the Transcendentalists' idea of individualism. The former, through demanding morality and work ethic, proposed moderation and procrastination of pleasures in order to work for the well-being of the community, whereas the latter advocated individuals' rights to decide about themselves and their fate. Two additional traditions—agrarianism and urbanism—also played a significant role in shaping Americans' attitudes to attaining happiness. They helped form two diverse paradigms in American life: that of the nurturer and that of the exploiter, respectively. The former intended to work as well as possible, thus serving the land and community; the latter aimed to be maximally efficient through minimum work and maximum gain. Thus, the exploiter always preferred institutionalized forms of subsistence.

The ethnic, racial, and youth groups also contributed to their particular realizations of the pursuit of happiness. The 1960s constitute the point of reference against which the author presents different aspects of American society. In the case of immigrant groups, the idea of the melting pot has been questioned since the 1960s: in its stead, Americans started favoring the concept of cultural pluralism. The same mechanism concerns American Blacks; more and more of them want to depart from the preferential treatment ushered in by the affirmative action of the 1960s. As the author claims, the majority of them give priority to qualifications than to preferences. In the case of major feminist gains of the 1960s, such as the awareness of gender inequalities, liberal approaches toward the family, marriage and motherhood, which proved socially divisive, there has been a shift in attitudes. As Garbowski maintains, more and more women nowadays treat the real concerns of the day and peaceful coexistence with men as issues of paramount importance in their lives. The American youth, in turn, seem to depart from the "do your own thing" attitude of the 1960s and look for guidelines within religion and tradition.

Much space in the book is devoted to the human, social and moral foundations on which civil society is built. The author analyses such pertinent issues as the contemporary family, local community and the religiosity of Americans. The accumulation of data and evidence from an extensive variety of sources allows Garbowski to come to the following conclusion: "It seems that however much they may be shaken, the family, the neighborhood, and religious communities are still the bedrock of civil society and the moral order in American society. They often do not receive much support from the media, and the cultural elites value them only to a limited degree… but a good many Americans, to a large extent at least, seem to intuit on a deeper level that it is within them where the greatest moral and spiritual resources for themselves and for their society reside." (141)

Garbowski also goes a step further in order to paint a possibly full picture of different Americans' realizations of the pursuit of happiness. He searches the domain of popular culture, because this is where manifestations of cultural memory of American civil society and meaningful narratives of its members reside. Films, according to the author, are a terrain worth examining in particular, since they not only record everyday experiences but also constitute a living testimony to the ways Americans view their pursuits of happiness. In the light of analyzed movies, two aspects seem to dominate: the question of love in all its different emotional shades, and the religious perception of the world, which offers hope and a vital repertoire of motivational factors, which in turn help Americans carry on their pursuits.

Despite minor editorial shortcomings, most noticeable in endnotes and bibliographical entries, *Pursuits of Happiness* reveals an insightful and appealing analysis. The book offers a well-evidenced counter-narrative to the liberal or leftist outlook on American society. Instead, it is a reminder of such conservative values as the traditional family, local community and religion-inspired morality, though the author relatively rarely exposes his personal opinions—if one looks for them, they have to be inferred from the line of argumentation or the selection of citations. An undoubted strength of the book is that Garbowski does not hesitate to touch upon matters which lay at the core of American civil society in the past but whose validity seems to be questioned nowadays—when religion has been relegated to the private sphere, the institution of marriage and family is buffeted against numerous interpretations and different configurations, and communitarian values have been confronted with self-oriented imperatives imposed by the highly competitive lifestyle. However, Christopher Garbowski's *Pursuits of Happiness* leaves the reader with a sparkle of optimism transpiring from the contemporary reservoir of myths which is popular culture, in particular through transitory though sought-after consolation as the one offered by Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*.

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