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Jadwiga Maszewska

“Nobody Knows Where Aztlan Is”:
An Interview
with Daniel Chacón

Daniel Chacón is a contemporary Chicano novelist and short story writer. His novel *and the shadows took him* came out in 2004, and his collection of short stories, *Chicano Chicanery*, in 2000. Chacón grew up in Fresno, California. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Oregon. Currently he is a professor of creative writing in the bilingual MFA program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Located just across the Rio Grande from the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, the University of Texas at El Paso celebrated its ninetieth anniversary in 2004. It was established as the Texas School of Mines and Metallurgy to provide expertise for the excavation and mining of copper, silver, and other metals in the nearby mountains of Texas and New Mexico. With its Chicano Studies Program set up as early as 1971, UTEP has in recent decades been dedicated to border studies, and according to the campus newspaper, *The Prospector*, it has become a national model in educating Hispanics.

The bilingual and bicultural environment of El Paso and of its university has attracted numerous Chicano writers and poets. Among them have been the founders of Chicano literature: Tomas Rivera (*...y no se lo trago la tierra/...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*), Arturo Islas (*The Rain God*) or Rafael Jesus Gonzalez (*El Hacedor De Juegos/The Maker of Games*), as well as writers of the younger generation: Benjamin Alire Saenz (*Carry Me Like Water, Elegies in Blue*), Dagoberto Gilb (*Winners on the Pass Line*) or Pat Mora (*Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle*). Gloria Lopez-Stafford, raised in Segundo Barrio, El Paso's transitional neighborhood for Mexican immigrants, has written a moving autobiography, *Places in El Paso*; Denise Chavez (*The Last of the Menu Girls, Face of an Angel, Loving Pedro Infante*) lives in nearby Las Cruces, New Mexico and organizes the annual Border Book Festival in the historical village of La Mesilla.

The interview took place on June 22, 2004, a hot and stormy day, typical for that time of the year in El Paso. From the window of Daniel Chacón's office I could see the destitute, Third-World suburbs of Juarez. Chacón was preparing to leave for Buenos Aires, where he would be spending a year working on new literary projects.

Jadwiga Maszewska: Could you, please, explain the terms “Chicano” and “Chicanismo”? “Chicano,” “Latino,” and “Hispanic” cannot be used interchangeably, can they? Only a small percentage of Mexican Americans would identify themselves as Chicanos or Chicanas, am I right?

Daniel Chacón: Probably one of the most common questions that we Chicanos have of ourselves is where does the term Chicano come from and what does it mean. If you ask ten Chicanos, you’ll get ten different answers. Probably a more accurate question is: “What does it mean to me?” You can’t even look it up in a dictionary, or you would get some standard Webster definition but that, of course, comes from outside of the culture and not very many Chicanos would identify with it. There are also a lot of theories as to where the word “Chicano” came from. In the 1960s and 1970s the children of Mexican immigrants – field workers, farm worker, factory workers – who [growing up in the United States] spoke English as their first language and who had trouble communicating even with their parents, would go to school where the curriculum was entirely Eurocentric, based on tradition from England, and so everything that was read completely skipped over the Mexican indigenous experience. One of the goals of the young Mexican American people who began to go to the universities was to learn a little bit about themselves, a little bit about their culture. And one of the things they discovered was that prior to the Spaniards’ arrival to Mexico, there were civilizations there, there were extremely sophisticated cities, such as the city of Tenochtitlan. Chicanos began to identify with those [indigenous] people, called colloquially the Aztecs, although their actual name was the *Mexica*. And the *Mexica* became *Mexicano*. In fact, the capital of Mexico, Mexico City, is where Tenochtitlan once was, and next to the cathedral and the government building in the *zocalo* of Mexico City, you see the Aztec ruins coming out of the ground.

In the 1960s and 70s Chicanos began to hear this for the very first time because they never learned this in school, nobody ever taught them. Their parents, who were immigrants, and probably didn’t make it past the third grade, were illiterate in Spanish and didn’t speak good English, were not able to teach them much about the history or the literature of the Aztecs, not much about the conquest. The Chicanos identify with the *Mexica* because the *Mexica* were defeated by the Spaniards, just like the Chicano were defeated by the *gabacho*, the Euro-Americans. So they took out the “M-e”, and *Mexicano* became Chicano. In fact, you’ll see a lot of times Chicano spelled with an “X”. So the root of the word Chicano is an identification with the indigenous, an identification with the *Mexica*, with those who fought against the Spaniards. The *Mexica* people, before they came to the valley of Mexico and set up Tenochtitlan, lived in a place called Aztlan. Aztlan is their homeland, where they are native. Nobody knows where Aztlan is;

all we know is that Aztlan was north of Mexico, so Chicanos said Aztlan is the United States, the Southwest United States: New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona. One of the earliest Chicano novels is *The Heart of Aztlan* by Rudolfo Anaya. So it was recognizing that we are very similar to the *Mexica* people in that our language, our culture have been taken away by... instead of “the Spaniards,” we call them *gabacho*. And if you think about Luis Valdez’s early works, especially *La Conquista de Mexico*, the Spaniards in that play all speak English, and the Mexicans all speak Spanish.

J. M.: You said earlier that Chicano and Chicanismo were terms of self-identification, that you have to wish to become a Chicano.

D. Ch.: Right, because it is an identification with this particular political perspective: we recognize that we are indigenous to this area, we are not immigrants; they’ve been telling us we’re immigrants all our lives, they’ve been trying to take away our language, and we are going to resist that, we are going to resist the oppression of the dominant culture. In order to rebel, you have to identify with the group that is rebelling. Not every Chicano wants to rebel, many Chicanos want to assimilate.

J. M.: You mean Mexican Americans?

D. Ch.: Right, that’s what I mean. In order to rebel you have to identify with a particular group and it’s self-identification. To pick up the symbolic arms against the oppressor, first you have to identify yourself as an oppressed person. The Hispanic does not identify himself or herself as an oppressed person, the Mexican Americans do not identify themselves as oppressed. The Chicanos recognize themselves as oppressed in their native land.

J. M.: Could you talk about places in the United States that are significant for the Chicano people? In the introduction to your novel you mention *Califaztlan*.

D. Ch.: *Califatztlan* is just California and Aztlan together, and of course any part of the Southwest of the United States is part of Aztlan and is important to our people because not only is it where the *Mexica* people came from but it is also the area of the seven states that belonged to Mexico prior to 1848, the end of the Mexican-American War, which was an unjust war, clearly a war to gain territory. The Chicanos still identify those states that belonged to Mexico as part of Mexico, so it’s twice our land. Not only is it a part of Mexico, where our parents are from, but it’s also part of Aztlan where the *Mexica* people are from, who are our ancestors.

J. M.: What about El Paso? El Paso seems quite different from most of Aztlan.

D. Ch.: Yea, it is different and I think one of the biggest differences is that it’s on the border. Because of its Mexican American population, it has been historically much more oppressed than other parts of Aztlan. If you have a majority population and you have to acculturate them, you have to socialize them into identifying not with their *Mexicanidad*,

not with their Chicanismo but with the dominant culture, you need to obliterate language in much more brutal and effective ways than you would have to in Los Angeles, than you would have to in Fresno or Arizona. Two or three generations ago, speaking Spanish in school in El Paso was a severe violation of public school policy. In fact, they had the so-called Spanish detention. If you were caught speaking Spanish, you were punished and you had to stay after school, if you were caught speaking Spanish you were paddled. You know, if you think about this, anybody who can function in two languages, can access literature, history and just any academic subject with greater effect than somebody who is monolingual. But rather than encouraging that, they wanted to take that away because they didn't want any identification with Mexico. And that's symbolic of the way people in El Paso had been brought up, very brutal, brutal oppression. Of course, it's better now but it was a system of apartheid essentially, where you had the majority of population oppressed by the dominant culture, and it was racist, much more racist than in other areas where there wasn't as much need to dominate.

For example, a couple generations ago the university itself was a white enclave. Now, of course, the majority of the students are Mexican American but before the majority of the students were white. Now, the majority of the professors are still white and all the leaders are still white, and so that exists but certainly not as bad as it did in the past. When you oppress a culture over generations and generations, I think they begin to develop an inferiority complex, not only about Mexico but about themselves and about their city. El Paso is one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been to, it's got the most incredible sunsets, it's got the most incredible mountains, and you can walk half a mile in El Paso and the horizon changes so many times because of the unevenness of the land, and it's just beautiful; but people in El Paso think El Paso is the worst place in the world to live in because they've been told over and over that El Paso is horrible. People in other parts of Texas look down on El Paso as the armpit of Texas. So you have this inferiority complex which grows out of systematic oppression, systematic denial of who you are in your own culture, in your own history. I am teaching an American drama class this summer. Eighty per cent of my students, I would say, are Latinos. Not one of them in that class has heard of Luis Valdez, who is the most important Chicano playwright in Chicano theater, at least most important in terms of the foundation of Chicano theater. Nobody has ever heard of Luis Valdez, nobody. Nobody has ever heard of any Chicano writers. They're not teaching Chicano writers here, they are not teaching Chicano history here. And some people have even told me that unless it is a bilingual program, their children [in some public schools] are not allowed to speak Spanish. Still!!! Not at the university. Everybody speaks Spanish at the university. At this university we encourage bi-, trilingualism.

J. M.: Yet Spanish is very much present in the life of the city.

D. Ch.: Absolutely, it always has been, it's never been different; *El Paso* is in Spanish.

J. M.: And there is a Mexican-American middle class here, isn't there?

D. Ch.: Now there is, yes, absolutely. Like I said, things have changed. But what hasn't changed after years and years of socialization, of teaching you to disrespect one thing and respect another, are the attitudes, and we don't have a very strong sense of activism in El Paso. There aren't a lot of Chicanos in El Paso.

J. M.: But the city seems to attract Chicano writers, painters, muralists. Why is it such an attractive city for artists?

D. Ch.: Well, Chicano art, Chicano expression comes out of oppression and you are in a very oppressed land, and you are in a land full of metaphor and full of very strong images. There are so many striking images here that exist on so many different levels at once...

J. M.: Could you name a few?

D. Ch.: The river, the Rio Grande River. Rio Grande on one side, Rio Bravo on the other. And if you think about language, which writers do, language does not exist on its own, language exists, like anything else, on multiple levels, so the fact that it is called Rio Grande on one side and Rio Bravo on the other side is very symbolic. The whole idea of the river as archetype is, of course, shared by all humanity. The river separates people, the river here in El Paso is not a raging river, it's a dry strip of land, yet it's still separating people. It's just staggering to think of the history of that river, what it means to cross that river, where the term "wetback" came from. You have this mountain here called *Cristo Rey*, with a cross on top where people take pilgrimages. It's in three territories, I guess you can say: New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. You've got the bridge. It's just an incredibly energetic land; where there is metaphor and where there is archetype, there is artistic spirit. Because what do we do as artists? We access archetype and put our signature on it. The other thing is that this is an oppressed land. Art comes out of oppression, not always, but certainly wherever there are oppressed people, there is going to be a lot of art. And also, and this may sound a little weird I guess, you have a lot of people who have died in this area. On the narrative level, it's horrible what's happened to these women in Juarez but look at the metaphor of it and look at the theme of it, and look at the history of it, and it just fits so perfectly into this whole area. And if you think where these women are working, at these factories that belong to North America, where they pay extremely low wages. And where do they live? They live out in the worst parts of Juarez. What I am trying to say is there's been a lot of death here: a lot of people crossing the river when it actually used to be a river have died. A lot of people have come here for dreams, for hopes, you know, and have died for them. A lot of people have been

killed here. There was war here, the Mexican Revolution. Pancho Villa was based here. And wherever you have a place with archetype like we have, metaphor like we have, oppression like we had, and death, it's going to produce a lot of artists.

J. M.: Can we go on to your own writing now? You're a representative of the second or is it the third generation of Chicano writers. Who would you say are your literary masters, ancestors, *antepasados* in Spanish?

D. Ch.: I don't know what generation of writers I am, whether it's third or... My friend Andres [Montoya], a great poet who died before his first book came out, one time said to me: "Don't think of yourself as a Chicano writer, think of yourself as an international writer," and over the years, as I began to develop my craft and began to understand why it was that I expressed myself in ways that were different from other students in the workshop at the university (one of my professors used to call me experimental), I realized that my form of expression has a literary tradition, and that this literary tradition is not necessarily Chicano. However, I do have Chicano *antepasados* as well, and that comes from my political perspective. I've been influenced, like everybody, by the *veteranos*: Tomas Rivera, Rudolfo Anaya, and by the masters. I consider Sandra Cisneros a master and, of course, I've been influenced by her. How could you be a Chicano writer and not be influenced by her? Even if it's unconscious. Her language is just beautiful, she accesses metaphor through rhythm and through language, and there is not a lot separating it from the experience, so there is a lot to learn from her, but she also embraces images and values and politics of the Chicano Movement.

But later on, as I started to write, I started to read more: Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and then Lorca and Neruda and for Americans, North Americans, Bernard Malamud and Flannery O'Connor. What they write is much different from the linear North American short story, which frankly bores me. I'm really bored by the *New Yorker* East Coast approach to short fiction, which is what most of the workshops in MFA programs around the country teach you to do. Once I wrote a story which had a lot of stream of consciousness and was completely non-linear; I didn't know what the hell I was doing, I just knew that that's how the story had to be told, and my teacher said: "Dan, just let Faulkner be Faulkner." Because he thought I was trying to emulate Faulkner, which was unfortunate because I think he should have said: "Dan, find your voice, keep going because maybe you are on to something." And so now I realize that Borges and Cortázar, who are very non-linear, and Lorca who jumps from archetype to archetype just in this beautiful rhythmic language and incantation...

One time when I was in Buenos Aires I was walking down the street and there were Gypsies dancing at the crossroads... And so as I was standing on the corner, over the heads of the Gypsies and through their arms and through their legs, I could see to the

other intersection, and Lorca was standing there. I don't mean, of course, he was literally standing there but I felt him. And that to me is a sign of *antepasados*, of ancestors, when you are standing around the same archetype, when you are standing around the same metaphor. I'll give you another example. I was walking through a neighborhood, a suburban neighborhood in El Paso in the evening one time and passed by a house where the curtains of this big window were open and I could see the dining room, an empty dining room, and there was a table, and there were chairs, and it looked like it had been set up as if a formal dinner was about to take place, but it was dim and empty, and the glasses and the furniture... Even though it looked like it was real, there was a sense that they were not really used. And there were pictures hanging on the wall. It just struck me as such a beautiful, sad, and ghostly image that I had to stop and watch it for a while. A couple days later I was reading a poem by Borges which has exactly that image. It's an entire poem about an empty dining room with the chairs, the tea set that's really not being used, the photos in the background. And you just sense the ghosts. The family photos are sepia colored, and you know the people in the photos are dead, and the chairs that are now empty have been sat in by generations of people who are now dead. I was struck by that same image.

J. M.: I want to ask you about Chicano literature in the United States. When we were talking earlier you said that it needs to get beyond what it's been doing so far, beyond the theme of the search for identity. How do you see the goals of Chicano literature today? Where is it heading?

D. Ch.: I guess what I'm going to say about that may be controversial. First of all, the writing community in the United States is very small. And the Chicano community within the writing community is even smaller, and if you use the metaphor of the city, the writers in the United States are like a small city, maybe the size of El Paso or Minneapolis. The Chicano writing community is a small town, and as is true in any small town, one of the things that affects our behavior is what our neighbors are going to think. And although we want to be noticed, we don't want people to talk about us. And there are certain shared values of a small town. I think the Chicano writing community at this point is a very small town, and they have certain shared values, and those values, although many of them are very, very superficial on the level of craft, oftentimes affect the way that we work. We don't want to work outside of those values because people will talk about us, and we may not be invited to dinner by our neighbors, and we may be shunned by the community. Every Chicano writer who has a book out knows every other Chicano writer. You begin to make aesthetic decisions based not on what the work needs but on what the community expects. And that means you're bringing values from outside of the work into the work, and that is... that's a good way to begin to write poorly.

When my novel was about to come out, a Chicano writer said to me: “Well, you did not italicize your Spanish, did you?” That would be a no-no. I mean, he didn’t say: “That would be a no-no,” but that’s what he meant. Why? It makes sense on an ideological level because what you’re saying by not italicizing Spanish is that it’s not a foreign language. It makes complete sense, politically. Because if you italicize your Spanish, he is saying, subtextually, then you’re a sellout, you’re giving in, you’re conforming, man, to the white man! But what if my characters weren’t bilingual, what if my characters, even though they were Chicano, like many Chicanos, don’t even speak Spanish? It would make sense to italicize, but because the value comes before the work, it can adversely affect the development of many Chicano writers, and I think it has. There are some incredibly gifted Chicano writers whose recent works are so influenced by this community that they’re not going to break out of repeating what is acceptable, repeating what they have done, and thus on some level becoming a parody of their own work, or at least a bad imitation of their own work. And I think that’s one of the dangers of living in a small town.

J. M.: Well, thank you. That is a very interesting answer.

D. Ch.: Don’t tell any Chicanos I said that or I’ll get in trouble.

J. M.: So far, you have published a collection of very well received short stories, *Chicano Chicanery* and a novel *and the shadows took him* which came out only a couple months ago. Could you comment on the titles of these two works?

D. Ch.: Actually, “Chicano chicanery” is a term I came up with when I was writing the story about Chicano college students who, in an attempt to incite the community and divide the university community, began to write “Fuck Shakespeare” all over the walls. I called it “Chicano chicanery” because, of course, it’s a chicanerous thing to do. In fact, that story is going to appear in the next collection, the one that I just finished. My editor suggested that I change the title of the story but I wanted to keep the title *Chicano Chicanery* [for this collection] because in the book there is a lot of chicanery going on, there is a lot of deception, a lot of trickery, and so it just seemed to work thematically. Plus, I love the alliteration “Chicano chicanery,” and also on the historical level there used to be this theory that the word Chicano came from the word chicanery because Chicanos were tricksters. It kind of works on that level too. And then of course the alliteration Chacón’s *Chicano Chicanery*.

J. M.: What about *and the shadows took him*?

D. Ch.: That novel was first called *Joey Molina*, which is the name of the main character, *What Manner of Love Is This*, *Father of a Thousand Heads*, but I finally came up with *and the shadows took him* when I was watching a movie, I think it was *Au revoir, les enfants* with Gerard Depardieu, where he plays a cellist who is learning under his master. Gerard Depardieu is telling about his master’s death, and he says “and when the

shadows took him,” and I was just so struck by that... All the other titles just didn’t fit but “and the shadows took him” fits so well not only because there is a lot of shadow imagery, and shadow is one of the most primary artistic metaphors, but there is the father-son relationship, the father overpowering the son, and of course there is always the cliché, you are the shadow of your father, the shadow of your ancestors. I think it also refers to Tomas Rivera’s *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. You know, how many titles start with ‘and the,’ and so you can’t escape that association.

J. M.: Now you have a new collection of stories ready for publication, and then you are taking next year off from your academic duties at UTEP to work on another novel in Buenos Aires. Can you say a few words about these projects?

D. Ch.: The title of the collection is *Unending Rooms*.¹ The whole book is structured like a house, and I think that every story should function like a room. When you enter a story, you should be entering a different room, and the walls of that room should rise up around you, and you are completely inside of that room as opposed to being outside and looking in because if you are doing that, you are probably not fully experiencing the work. One of the things that Lorca would say before every poetry reading was: “I would like to invite the spirit of good will or the *duende* into the room, so that way the metaphors could be understood and experienced at the same time.” This book of stories is structured in such a way that the first room, that is the first story, should be very easy to enter, there should be a lot of light. I welcome you into this room. The second room could be like the dining room, again it’s very easy to enter, but as you go deeper and deeper into the collection, the rooms become more personal, and some of the rooms become darker, and sometimes some of the rooms are just little closets, and some of the stories are really, really dark, darker than anything I’ve ever written, but those are the back rooms. It’s about twenty four stories at this point.

J. M.: That’s a big collection.

D. Ch.: Some of them are very short, though. The very first story is just a list of images. It’s almost incantation because it’s very quick. I try to evoke metaphor, to evoke archetype. I am hoping that as you get deeper and deeper into this house, you will find yourself transformed into another world. All the stories, at least on some level, are about entering a work of art.

J. M.: And your plans for the next novel? How advanced are they?

D. Ch.: I have five chapters written. Tentatively, it’s titled *She Wore White that Day, Didn’t She?*² It’s about a Chicano artist with a fourteen-year-old daughter. They live in L.A. He quits his job and they go to Mexico; he goes there to paint.

¹ *Unending Rooms* came out in 2008, published by Black Lawrence Press. In 2007 it received the Hudson Prize.

² The title of Chacon’s forthcoming novel has actually been announced as *The Cholo Tree*.

J. M.: So visual art has attracted you for a long time?

D. Ch.: Imagery is really what we are struck with.

J. M.: Why did you choose Buenos Aires as the place to live and write next year?

D. Ch.: A lot of dead people there, a lot of metaphors. Everywhere you go; it's like El Paso in that sense. A lot of people have died there during the reign of terror. It was just horribly oppressive. But it's also the city of my ancestors, and I don't mean blood ancestors but literary ancestors too. Borges, of course, is associated with Buenos Aires more than any other writer. Cortázar is from Buenos Aires, Lorca lived in Buenos Aires for a time, and it was the place where he made his speech on the *duende*, and that speech and perhaps subsequent readings of Lorca really allowed me to enter another room of my artistic development. In fact, when I was in Buenos Aires, I thought I would confront Borges, but instead Lorca was everywhere. Neruda lived there for a time and wrote about Buenos Aires. One of my favorite poems, called "Walking Around" in English, the first line of which is "It just so happens that I am tired of being a man," was written about Buenos Aires when he used to live there. And then I just found out that one of the very first writers I was attracted to in high school, Eugene O'Neil also lived there for a little while. There are so many of my literary ancestors there that it's probably going to be conducive to my own work. And another reason is that it's a walking city, I can walk any hour of the day or night. And I like that, it's like Paris in that respect, only cheaper than Paris.

J. M.: Do you think there might be an interest in Chicano literature in South America?

D. Ch.: Probably not as much as there is in Europe. Just as there is not as much interest in it in Mexico. Because it's not exotic. It's almost like two things South Americans hate most, and this, of course, is a gross oversimplification, North Americans and Latinos who are more North American than they are Latino.

J. M.: So do you think your works will ever be translated into Spanish?

D. Ch.: I hope so, but I think it will then be because of the work and not because I am a Chicano.

J. M.: Is it easy to be a Chicano writer in the U.S.?

D. Ch.: I don't think it's easy to be a writer in the U.S. There are probably more fiction writers in the U.S. than there are anywhere in the world, and I think the reason for that is the proliferation of MFA programs, Master of Fine Arts in creative writing. If these institutions are going to be supported, then you have to have jobs for these people when they get out. And so MFA programs perpetuate MFA programs, which means that there are going to be thousands and thousands of writers. A hundred thousand books are published every year in the United States. It's increasingly competitive. I don't think it's ever been like this at any time in the history of the United States. I don't think it's ever

been more difficult. But also I don't think it's ever been easier because there is a lot of good teaching out there, a lot of writers you can relate to. The *Poets and Writers Magazine* is available almost in any bookstore in the country, and this is a magazine about craft, and interviews with writers. The material that is available is incredible. But it's difficult to get published, and I think it's more difficult for Chicanos, and I think the reason for that is that literary standards come out of New York. Even if it's not New York – that's probably an oversimplification – they come out of the dominant culture. And you look at writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, she won the Pulitzer Prize for a collection called *The Interpreter of Maladies*, but John Updike could have written that book, John Cheever could have written that book, it's the exact same thing only it has Indian characters and deals with the theme of identity. But in terms of the short story form it's very North American. And it's almost: “If you're going to be a Chicano writer, it's fine. But you need to be a BigMac with salsa”; that is, the BigMac is *Americano* and the salsa is just a few italicized words in Spanish, or now the thing is not to italicize them. And I don't think that there is much room for Chicano writers who are not writing North American fiction. North American fiction, when it comes to people of color, has always been focused on the issue of identity. And it makes sense because what does the dominant culture want us to be concerned about? How we fit into their culture. So if a white editor gets a good story by a minority, as long as it's a John Updike story and as long as it deals with identity, it has a chance of getting published. But if it has a different aesthetic, I think it's a little more difficult.

J. M.: What about your own experiences with publishers?

D. Ch.: It hasn't been easy for me but it's been easier than for a lot of people I know, Chicano writers included. So I just count myself as blessed, lucky. It took me three weeks to find an agent. I have friends, Chicano friends, who have been looking for years. My first collection of stories was accepted by the very first publisher I sent it to. I've got Chicano friends who have manuscripts they've been trying to publish for years. But it's still been hard. It's not like I wrote a collection and got it published. I wrote for years and years before I got published, and I, of course, accepted a lot of rejections. And I am still getting rejections. It's difficult for anybody.

Zofia Kolbuszewska

The Discontents of Applied Teratology: A Crisis of Monstrosity in Charles Brockden Brown's "Somnambulism: A Fragment"

[E]very object whose end is unknown to us is provisorily monstrous.

(Borges 23)

The horizon where the monsters dwell might well be imagined as the visible edge of the hermeneutic circle itself: the monstrous offers an escape from its hermetic path, an invitation to explore new spirals, new and interconnected methods of perceiving the world. In the face of the monster, scientific inquiry and its ordered rationality crumble.

(Cohen 7)

Although Charles Brockden Brown abandoned his apprenticeship as a lawyer, he retained throughout his life an unflagging interest in the question of evidence, which, at its core, is a semiotic problem, a problem of representation. The writer's oeuvre, both fictional and non-fictional, reflects his anxiety about the credibility of evidence and his continuous interrogation of the sources of its validity. Not unlike his other literary works, Charles Brockden Brown's "Somnambulism: A Fragment," published in 1805 but most probably written in 1797 (Weber 249, quoted in Hamelman), revolves around hermeneutic uncertainty (Seed 122). Also, just as in other works, the writer with gusto leads the reader into the epistemological tangle that in this story arises from his treatment of monstrosity. Nowhere else does he seem to juxtapose so polarized concepts of monstrosity. In "Somnambulism: A Fragment" he pitches Nick Handyside's absolute exteriority against Althorpe's ultimate interiority.

The very subtitle of the story "A Fragment" seems to invoke the process of interpreting evidence, conceived of as piecing together a monster, because, as Jeffrey J. Cohen points out, "monstrous interpretation is as much process as epiphany, a work that must content itself with fragments (footprints, bones, talismans, teeth, shadows, obscured glimpses – signifiers of monstrous passing that stand in for the monstrous body itself)" (6). The text of "Somnambulism" consists of two parts: a newspaper report that, due to its unverifiability (Weber 250, quoted in Wilczyński 103), can be considered fictional

and therefore a part of the story, but which as a newspaper excerpt retains its historical ring, and a first-person account of a nocturnal tragedy that occurred in Norwood, U. S. The narrative structure of the story seems, by means of analogy, to gesture towards the protagonist, the “young Althorpe,” as the culprit guilty of murder. The extra- and heterodiegetic (editing) narrator precedes the fragment told from the point of view of the protagonist with a passage purportedly quoted from the *Vienna Gazette* of June 14, 1784, a report that relates the case of the murder of a young woman at Great Glogau, Silesia, a crime committed unknowingly by a sleeping, enamored somnambulist.

Althorpe’s first-person narrative relates the events that occur after Constantia Davis, a young lady he is hopelessly enamored of, and her father, who are guests at his uncle’s house, unexpectedly embark on a nocturnal journey. Miss Davis’s engagement to another man causes the narrator’s anxiety and barely suppressed anger, which he seems to channel by offering to accompany the guests, who, however, decline his civility. The young man’s efforts to stop or delay the departure of Miss Davis and her father by voicing his premonitions of some imminent danger related to a vast ancient oak looming in their way, prove equally ineffective. Meanwhile, frustrated, Althorpe falls asleep and has a vivid dream in which he seems to realize his wish of following the guests and attempts in vain to prevent Constantia’s murder by an assassin in an “artful disguise” (11), whom he believes he shoots and kills in retaliation for Miss Davis’s death.

In the morning, after his uncle finds Althorpe slumbering in an armchair, they learn of the nocturnal assault on their guests and of Miss Davis’s agony after being shot. The young man starts piecing together an uncannily omniscient account of the disaster from different witnesses’ recollections. He seems genuinely surprised that these events resemble his dream so closely. What appears to baffle him is that when sharing his grim premonitions with his guests he completely forgot to warn them about a rural monster, Nick Handyside, who might play mischief on the travelers. Conveniently, when reconstructing the events of the tragic night Althorpe takes advantage of the rumors about Nick’s nocturnal wanderings and pranks in order to create an alibi for his own pursuit of the Davises. “Like a demented detective,” Althorpe has no idea that Miss Davis died by his own hand and that “the miscreant he pursues is himself” (Hamelman).

Even a brief synopsis of the story suggests the range of issues with which the writer wrestles in the text. Brown explores a tangle of epistemological problems which reflect an intersection of the discourse of the American Enlightenment with the echoes of European tradition and the legacy of American Puritanism (despite the legacy of Brown’s Quaker descent).¹ Concomitantly with the question of physical stigmatization believed

¹ Slater observes that “[a]ttempts to show that Brown never swerves from Quaker orthodoxy have proved unconvincing.” See note 14, 202.

by applied teratology to reflect the subject's moral responsibility and accountability, the writer interrogates the psychological question obsessively discussed by the Scottish and American Enlightenment of the extent of control exercised over the self by itself. Simultaneously, the juxtaposition of different concepts of monstrosity enables Brown to ponder broader issues of philosophical significance and of political consequence.

In gauging epistemological limits imposed in the story by somnambulism, that is by questioning the efficacy of experiential knowing of both one's self and the external world, Brown reaches the limits of Enlightenment Lockean epistemology. The full importance of a political dimension of this epistemological crisis seems to manifest itself in connection with the Alien Friends Act, passed in 1798, which gave the administration power over the "dangerous population of aliens who had disguised themselves as friends of America" (Gardner 434). It seems that Brown, steeped in the political atmosphere created by the urge to exorcise an alien element from the young Republic which led to the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts, anticipated in "Somnambulism" the epistemological consequences and aporias inherent in an attempt to control the minds of citizens. It is noteworthy that any homogenization urge creates a monster that it subsequently seeks to exorcise. Cohen remarks that "[t]he monster is the abjected fragment that enables the formation of all kinds of identities" (19). By asking what could possibly be a visible sign of the monster, the writer complicates and takes to its extreme the question of what "a visible sign of the alien in disguise" would be, a conundrum that led to the drafting of the Sedition Act, which located this visible sign in the act of seditious writing (Gardner 434).

As a systematic science which attempted to classify all monstrosities, teratology² was founded as late as in the beginning of the nineteenth-century, its name coined by the French scientist Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in 1830 (Huet 108). However, as a blend of mythical and religious lore and magic coupled with the study and interpretation of anatomical deformations, the discipline has thrived since antiquity. In recognition of the fact that in Charles Brockden Brown's times scientific teratology had not yet been founded as well as to distinguish medieval monstrous discourse and the nineteenth-century systematic science of monsters from the long tradition of interest in the monstrous implications of physical deformation, which often goes by the name of teratology too, I will designate the latter as "applied teratology."

Reflecting on the cultural meaning and significance of the monster, Jeffrey Cohen observes that

² Etymologically, the term has been derived from Greek word: *têras*, that is "monster," *Gen. têtatos* (Kopaliński 509).

The monster is born only at [the] metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place... A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns,’ a glyph that seeks a hierophant. (4)

It thus comes as no surprise that by affording a forbidden glimpse into the mechanisms of culture and by functioning as a critique of its representation of itself to itself, monstrosity has excited curiosity and fascination for centuries. Believed in antiquity to be a portent or a prophecy as well as an outward sign of moral depravity punished by divine forces, the monster was, in turn, to Aristotle, an unnecessary deviation (Huet 91), a joke of nature. Leslie Fiedler observes that the tradition derived from Aristotle regards monsters and freaks as sources of amusement (231).

Monstrosity was often invoked in connection with questions concerning the validity of resemblance as, on the one hand, a principle underlying the order of the universe, and on the other an epistemological tool employed in effort to acquire insight into this order and into the ineffable (Huet 32-37, 95-96, 221-224; Williams 6-7, 23-60, 71-74). The concept of monstrosity proved instrumental when pointing to the reality beyond the material world because “[t]he Middle Ages had transformed the classical view of the monster’s metaphysical reality from one *contra naturam* to one *extra naturam*” (Williams 13). Poised between the Neoplatonism of Pseudo-Dionysius and Thomistic scholasticism, the medieval monster looms as “a product of paradox, functioning to critique the overconfident constructs of rational analysis” (Williams 6). Constructing signs that were deformed and “transgressive of the process of signification itself” (Williams 7) guaranteed that the error of taking the sign for the thing would be avoided and the real would not be confused with its linguistic construct (Williams 7). Pseudo-Dionysius articulated it as follows: “Since the way of negation seems to be more suitable to the realm of the divine and since positive assertions are always unfitting to the hiddenness of the inexpressible, a manifestation through dissimilar shapes is more correctly to be applied to the invisible” (Pseudo-Dionysius 141A, quoted in Williams 7).

Williams points out that “there are at least two major manifestations of the monster in the Middle Ages: the symbolic and the literal.” He observes that “the metaphorical and the figurative is steadily concretized to produce the idea of living races of monsters populating various remote corners of the world.” Thus, rather than excluding the symbolic, medieval literalism guarantees it (11).

[M]onstrous semiology is authorized by the physical existence of the monsters, despite the fact that this existence is invented. The fiction of an historical existence au-

thorizes a symbolic program that in turn produces signs that can be applied metaphorically to other 'things' so as to reveal their grotesque absurdity.... (Williams 11)

Paradoxes, ambiguities, monstrosities, and "grotesqueries" familiar from medieval art and literature deform the process of normal signification thus liberating the mind from the binds of language and logic (Williams 9).

It must be stressed that "the monstrous is not a contradiction of nature but of human epistemological categories" (Williams 13). However, while negating the very order of which it is a part, the monster articulates the philosophical principles on which this order is built by deforming them, and thereby gauges its cognitive limitations. The monster thus functions as a meta-commentary on the system and its horror stems from the impossibility of expressing the system's lack of coherence from within (Williams 14-15). Paradoxically, the deformed points to the gap between sign and signified and at the same time bridges it. On the one hand there is no difference between the monstrous sign and what it stands for because signifying nothing it stands only for itself, but on the other hand there is no similarity between the monstrous sign and the concept it stands for because its absolute deformity precludes it from standing for any real signified (Williams 12).

The Middle Ages transformed the tradition of the monster into a symbolic language that would express "the inadequacy of human cognition in containing the limitlessness of the real." However, along with the development of the more rational methods of scholastic logic and dialectics the deformed imagery migrated to "the culturally more marginal discourse of mediaeval mysticism" (Williams 6): "It is through the presence of the monstrous signs in the text... that the reader sees through the assertions of the discourse to its contradiction, and by the same grotesque mockeries that the reader hears the silence of the text and understands its meaning as what is not said" (Williams 15).

In developing Areopagite's³ thought, John Scotus Eriugena and Gregory of Nyssa identify man and God as the Unknowable. Appositely, in the apophatic tradition the monster is that-which-is-not, the unknowable, self referential – as much outside the system as the divine is. Indeed, in the tradition that originated with Pseudo-Dionysius, God is metaphorically represented as monster. Man, in turn, the creature made in the image of God, must be "similarly mysterious, unknowable, uncontainable, limitless, and formless" (Williams 93). Eriugena emphasizes that the radical identification of man and God has its source in the apophatic nature of both God and the human mind, "[f]or the human mind does know itself, and again does not know itself. For it knows that it is, but does not know what it is" (Eriugena 4.771A-B, quoted in Williams 93-94).

³ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

In calling attention to a void or abyss in the human – “man contains at the core of his being the superabundant nothing that is his source” (Williams 94) – Eriugena points to man’s identity as a monster. The philosopher warns of the terror that “arises from the ultimate confrontation with the mysterious truth: we are the monster we fear. Like the monster, humanity is paradox, both angel and beast, and like the monster humanity contains all the forms of creation” (Williams 94). It is noteworthy that the monster and the abyss have thus become interchangeable as tropes of the inexpressible.

In early modern times the monster becomes an object of systematic investigations aimed at exploring the causes of monstrosity rather than being interested in the monster in its cosmic significance or as a prophetic message or portent (Huet 36). However, despite this “progressive naturalization of the monstrous” the concept has retained its “complex, often conflictual status” (Pender 145) throughout the period. Pender emphasizes that the passage from the view of monsters as prodigies to monsters being considered by medicine a pathology was by no means smooth and there seems to have been a “more fluid interchange between the portentous and the merely anomalous” (145). Moreover, “[b]ecause monsters instantiate a particular relationship between inside and outside, between the deformed [ex]terior of the body and opaque interior, they were the occasion not only for analogical thinking but for sustained meditation on the dialectics of inside and outside” (Pender 151). Pender invokes the view of the seventeenth-century physician John Buwer, who argues that the deformity of the outside of the body effects a disfigurement of the inside thus disrupting “the resonances between the human and the divine” (153), while William Hay observes in 1754 that it is “natural to imagine... that the inward Parts of the Body must in some measure comply with the outward Mould” (Hay 20, quoted in Pender 153). The eighteenth-century interest in monstrosity and its abnormal anatomy was emblematic of what Barbara Stafford considers the “heart of a master problem for the Enlightenment,” that is the obsessive desire to penetrate into “the interior of things” (Stafford 47, quoted in Pender 154). The locating of monstrosity in the divide between Althorpe’s slumbering consciousness and his waking self seems to be in keeping with the Enlightenment obsession with the interior as well as emphasizing the growing awareness of and anxiety about the force of the unconscious growing beyond the control of consciousness, which anticipates the direction of the further evolution of Gothic fiction.⁴

⁴ See Cusick 148. Although Cusick discusses late nineteenth-century Gothic fiction in this article, he also comments on the parallel between the development of the Gothic since its emergence as a new genre and the rise of the analytical psychology. The scholar points out that over time the process of bringing unconscious content to consciousness in the Gothic fiction has accelerated and intensified.

Based on the developments in Scottish Common Sense thinking on dreams, late eighteenth-century American medical and fictional inquiry into the nature of dreams and the problem of the dreaming subject's responsibility for them may well be interpreted as reflecting an anxiety about the integrity of man's rational mind, a belief underscoring the Enlightenment vision of man (Susan Manning 41). Brown must have been familiar with the Scottish Common Sense inquiry into the nature of dreams through his participation in the meetings of the Friday Club and his close friendship with the medical doctor Elihu Hubbard Smith. Smith studied under Benjamin Rush, who, deeply influenced by William Cullen, a leading medical theorist and an important figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, initiated "a new, clearly American, school of medical thought at Philadelphia" (Susan Manning 43). In his diary Smith mentions Rush's lecturing on the subject of dreams in Philadelphia in 1790-1791 (Susan Manning 43). In his opus magnum, which appeared in 1812, Rush classifies dream as a transient kind of delirium but distinguishes it from madness (Susan Manning 43).

All accounts of the phenomenon of dreaming provided by the Scottish and Philadelphia Schools seem to be poised between metaphysical and pathologizing, i.e. medical, explanations. The evolution of Scottish Enlightenment views on dreams commences with Andrew Baxter's *Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*, published in 1733, in which he asserts the demonological provenance of dreams. Baxter contends that the voices that speak in dreams come from outside of the dreamer's self and sarcastically dismisses, on the grounds of common sense, the possibility that these voices be traced to a part of the self of which it is ignorant (Susan Manning 40). Dugald Stewart dismisses Baxter's beliefs as whimsical in what is "probably the Scottish Enlightenment's most widely read chapter on dreaming" (Susan Manning 41), the first part of the *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, published only in 1792 but available to the public in nearly the same form since 1773, which viewed dreaming in the context of the associative powers of the human mind. Susan Manning argues, however, that it is Baxter who threw into relief the three key "issues that continued to dominate discussions of dreaming as they passed out of the hands of theologians and into those of philosophers, medical theorists, and finally of novelists." These are: "the provenance of the unauthorized voices of dreams, the implied inner division and doubling of the conscious and unconscious, waking and sleeping selves; and the place of will and moral responsibility in the matter of accountability" (Susan Manning 41).

Stewart allows for unconscious mental processes and thus "internalizes the dream to the dreamer," bringing it to the border of abnormal psychology and readily available to appropriation and pathologizing by medicine (Susan Manning 42). Dreaming disorders, now ascribed to the influence of the unconscious caused by dysfunctions of bodily or-

gans, such as, for instance the stomach, change their etiology from physiological to psychological thanks to William Cullen. He considered dreaming sleep as pathological and close to insanity (Susan Manning 43).

The entry on dreams in the third edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, compiled and published in Edinburgh in 1797, reveals that the link between moral corruption and the lack of control exerted by reason over imagination is fundamental to Scottish Enlightenment thinking on dreams. “[L]ike fever and madness,” dreams “demonstrate the operation of the mind under the suspension of reason, and become therefore a crucial site of moral ambiguity” (Susan Manning 44-45). James Beattie’s dissertation “Of Dreaming” is recommended for further reading in this entry, and was most probably familiar to Elihu Hubbard Smith, who records reading a “Scotch Encyclopaedia,” (Smith 399, quoted in Susan Manning 44). The essay transfers the discussion to the sphere of literature. Also, Beattie claims that in spite of the will’s passivity in dreaming, the waking self is to be held answerable for “the nature of its slumbering voices.” On the other hand, Beattie believes in the therapeutic value of bad dreams. Nevertheless, he insists on the fundamental inscrutability of the mystery of dreaming (Susan Manning 45). Brown embraces this view of dreaming in his works. The climate of moral ambiguity and mystery surrounding sleeping disorders invests all his dreaming characters with traits of monstrosity. Moreover, the writer’s literary use of dreams “reveals the sophisticated sensitivity... of [Brown] to the ambiguities inherent in combining within a cultural framework of enlightenment complex literary idioms inherited from, on the one hand, a broadly English literary tradition, and on the other, a Calvinist theological structure” (Susan Manning 40).

The possibility of a split in what seems to be a normal mind, a split that opens up a gap between consciousness and the unconscious, both repels and attracts the Enlightenment mentality. This is felt to be uncanny and often rejected as a logical absurdity (Susan Manning 40). The split is believed to destroy the evidence of self-consciousness, which in Cartesian philosophy and in Enlightenment thought is “the surest and most intuitive foundation of all our knowledge” (Baxter 53, quoted in Susan Manning 40). This must lead to the sense of monstrosity because there is no telling man from the savage then, a distinction of paramount importance for the Enlightenment. The credibility of the evidence provided by man’s appearance thus becomes ambiguous because it is not the sign (man’s appearance) that becomes deformed. Instead, the equivocality of the split consciousness distorts the simple relationship between the sign and the signified (the mind), and by the same token makes it monstrous.

Significantly, the writer communicates the operation of Althorpe’s double consciousness by a textual strategy which has affinities with the apophatic interpretative tradition.

By analogy, the *Vienna Gazette* report of a monstrous murder committed by a somnambulist implies the unspeakable truth impossible to elicit from the protagonist's first-person account. The Old World murder points to the unknowable in the New World Althorpe's split consciousness and his crime. Moreover, this strategy itself introduces double voice and double consciousness into the story. The report can be construed as a voice representing the public world, emblematic of consciousness, while Althorpe's fragmentary recollections can be read as emblematic of the unconscious voice. Thus the split is repeated on the level of the frame narrative. Incidentally, it is not unlikely that this split brings out Brown's ambiguity about the Old World and unacknowledged echoes of the past in both the writer's own oeuvre and the New World, contradicting its view as an altogether new and utopian project.

It seems that in "Somnambulism" the writer takes to its extreme the concept of the monstrous rooted in medieval apophatic tradition, a concept conceived of as "a deformation necessary for human understanding" (Williams 3), because in Brown's story it is the unidentifiable monster that reveals the impossibility of knowledge. Significantly, Brown thus returns to the exegetical tradition which contributed to the development of Puritan typology. Even if "[t]he concept of typology is certainly not identical for the medieval and for the Puritan theologian," Stephen Manning admits that "for that matter, it was not identical for all medieval theologians." Furthermore, he believes that "[a]lthough the Reformation also reformed typology, it did inherit enough of the medieval tangle as perhaps to make some observations about typology in medieval exegesis and literature relevant to the study of Puritan literature in America" (47).

Thomas M. Davis shows that though the Reformation broke sharply with the tradition of medieval allegoric exegesis, this position, in turn, changed over time into carefully guarded application of interpretative methods developed by the Church Fathers. Calvin, less severe in his condemnation of allegory than the earlier Reformers, accepts a restricted application of allegorical interpretation (13, 40-41). This evolution culminates in Jonathan Edwards' work. The eighteenth-century Calvinist, mystic, and revivalist, Edwards moves between the orthodox Puritan typology and an epistemology that is "analogous to the medieval habit of mind by which the physical universe was believed to represent the spiritual in a Platonic or allegorical fashion" (Lowance 223). In *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* Edwards transforms the nomenclature of scriptural typology in order to expound a cosmology of his own, firmly rooted in Platonism. Importantly, Edwards combines Lockean influence with a mystical inclination. He "turns to the vast Book of Nature for a faithful image of the spiritual realm" (Lowance 232) and then in graduated movement passes "from natural 'type' to spiritual truth," which is "Platonic in design, but... is also parallel to the process of revelation followed in mysticism" (Lowance 241).

Larzer Ziff makes a connection between Brown and Jonathan Edwards in “A Reading of *Wieland*” by observing with dismay that “[b]eginning consciously in the camp of the benevolent Philadelphians of the American Philosophical Society... Brown ends his journey through the mind by approaching the outskirts of Edwards’ camp” (54).⁵ Although John F. Slater admits that “[o]nly tantalizing scraps of information, at best circumstantial, and inconclusive, serve to associate the two men,” he insists that “[p]erhaps common sense alone persuades that Brown, one of the best-read men of his day was acquainted with the leading practitioner of a popular genre” (203). Also, Brown’s friendship with Edwards’ disciples and descendents is well documented, not to mention the writer’s high regard for theology and his editorial career during which he published numerous sermons, including some by Jonathan Edwards’ son (203). Moreover, the critic invokes the striking similarities between “Brown’s fixation with sleepwalking and Edwards’ Great Awakening” (205) and rejects the possibility that they might be coincidental.⁶ Indeed, Brown seems to draw on the allegoric tradition in Edwards’ manner but rejects a Lockean epistemological framework.

The Enlightenment’s obsessive fears that there may exist in the self areas unknown to itself, was to result in Romantic fictions of the *doppelgänger* (Susan Manning 40). Significantly, Brown explores the implications of this obsession by interrogating the extreme case of double consciousness manifested in the somnambulic dream disorder. It is noteworthy that not only does “Somnambulism” anticipate the Gothic fictions of the double by portraying the protagonist’s split self, but it also complicates the pattern of doubling. After all, Nick Handyside, a disfigured idiot openly referred to as a monster, can be considered the protagonist’s material double.

He... merited the name of monster, if a projecting breast, a mis-shapen head, features horrid and distorted, and a voice that resembled nothing that was ever before heard, could entitle him to that appellation. This being, besides the natural deformity of his frame, wore looks and practiced gesticulations that were, in an inconceivable degree, uncouth and hideous. He was mischievous, but his freaks were subjects of little apprehension to those who were accustomed to them, though they were frequently occasions of alarm to strangers.... Entirely bereft of reason, his sole employment consisted in sleeping, and eating and roaming. (14-15)

According to the traditional, applied teratology, the deformed body of the mentally retarded wretch should de-monstrate his moral degeneration, and constitute a certain proof

⁵ Slater cites Ziff and points to the varied reactions to his argument. See note 8, Slater 200.

⁶ Slater further remarks that “it would be surprising indeed to find any man of Brown’s era totally insensitive to the religious dimension of sleeping/waking motifs”; 205.

of his guilt. The deformed creature in the story is in fact a harmless though mischievous being, whereas the young handsome and promising man is a nocturnal killer. The writer thus presents the applied teratology as void of epistemological significance. Nick's overt exteriority, pathologized medically as well as psychologically (as an idiot he has no interior, e.g. reason), doubles Althorpe's covert demonic interiority. Interestingly, rather than being an external counterpart of one side of Althorpe's split consciousness, Nick's monstrous morphology embodies no consciousness at all. It is worth noting that the attribution of complementary appearances and morphologies – respectable and monstrous – to the split parts of personality were to evolve in the nineteenth century, famously manifested in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

What seems to be objected in the juxtaposition of Nick and Althorpe as a pair of doubles is the lack of consciousness, understood as pathological mental disability, rationally comprehensible within a medical discourse, and thereby naturalized. It is, however, the impossibility of recognizing Althorpe's lack of consciousness that indeed inspires terror. The protagonist's serene lack of awareness of being an agent of crime and the absence of a sense of guilt on his part resulting from the complete independence of the unconscious from consciousness, render Brown's protagonist his own monstrous double unknown to himself and those around him. Thus, Althorpe's monstrosity is not simply "transgressive of the process of signification itself" (Williams 7) but it annihilates signification altogether by robbing signs – in applied teratology external deformation would function as such sign – of their ability to signify. Wilczyński emphasizes that in "Somnambulism" the "epistemological framework of the sublime" falls apart (103). After all, the monster capable of realizing neither its own state nor its epistemological status, which is identical with that of the abyss, can only remain dwelling in epistemological darkness.

Published in *The Literary Magazine and American Register* in 1805, the story was most likely written in 1797 as a fragment of Brown's by now lost novel, *Sky-Walk; or, The Man Unknown to Himself – an American Tale*, or perhaps as "a false start" (Weber 249, quoted in Hamelman) on *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*. If indeed a part of the lost *Sky-Walk*, "Somnambulism" can be construed as an explicitly bitter reflection on Crèvecoeur's question "What is an American?" Brown shows that an American is indeed a man unknown to himself, oblivious of his crime, who serenely, albeit not without an admixture of mystification and pity, views and comments on the havoc he himself has wreaked. The story paints a portrait of an American ignorant of his destructive force and sincerely interested in catching the culprit, unaware that he is pursuing himself.

Appositely, the principle of analogy operating in the story also invites a reading foregrounding the historical context of "Somnambulism." Althorpe's position in the text may

be interpreted as mirrored in that of the writer's vis-à-vis his political engagement. Brown was exploring the limits, or more accurately, limitlessness, of his American protagonist's oblivion in the political climate of the urgent need to define the national identity of Americans in order to exorcise from the nation menacing and treacherous aliens, in particular "un-American Americans" (Gardner 430). The writer's anxiety about the validity of the epistemological foundation on which such distinctions might rest manifests itself clearly in "Somnambulism." Ironically, written amid the "fiercely fought identity debates of the early national period" (Gardner 429) by the young republican novelist, the story was published by the "passionately Federalist pamphleteer" (Gardner 431). Reflecting, at the time of its writing, the republican's anxiety about epistemological validity of the terms later employed in the Alien and Sedition Acts, at the time of its publication the text betrays, in the spirit of the Sedition Act, which located the proof of sedition in the act of writing, the by then staunch federalist as a seditious un-American monster; a monster, who – like his compatriots and like the protagonist of his story – is unaware that he might be tracking himself.

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Joseph C. Schöpp

“Painting and Sculpture are Gymnastics of the Eye”: Emerson’s Search for a Democratic Concept of Art as Experience

Our America has a bad name for superficialness.

Emerson, “Fate”

In Emerson’s thinking the eye, corporeal as well as mental, is the most powerful human organ. It is, as James M. Cox argues, “in its way everything for Emerson” (57). As a physical organ it scans material surfaces and perceives the contours of objects, while the mental eye is capable of transcending the superficial; it sees beneath the surfaces and opens deeper dimensions in the world of objects. Sights and insights are, thus, intimately connected. Since his first publication *Nature*, a rhapsody of man’s visionary power, Emerson’s oeuvre has abounded with direct and indirect references to the eye. Eyes are retrospective or prospective, build on “the sepulchers of the fathers” or behold “God and nature face to face,” are either timid or bold. “To speak truly,” he says in *Nature*, “few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child.” The child’s innocent eye sees deeper; it enjoys, as it were, “an original relation” to things (EL 7, 10),¹ since it is still “unconquered” and unconditioned. As “infancy conforms to nobody” (EL 260), a child’s eye is a truly nonconformist eye.

On his third journey to Europe in the autumn of 1872, Emerson visited the Louvre and the Vatican Museum, a visit which Henry James, his traveling companion, remembers as follows:

[H]is perception of the objects contained in these collections was of the most general order. I was struck with the anomaly of a man so refined and intelligent being so little

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, Emerson’s *Essays and Lectures* will be abbreviated as EL, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* as JMN, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson* as L, and *Emerson’s Complete Works* as W.

spoken to by works of art. It would be more exact to say that certain chords were wholly absent... Emerson's eyes were thickly bandaged. (James 74f.)

A man whose thinking had so much been centered on seeing should suddenly walk around with thickly bandaged eyes? For Henry James, a passionate art aficionado, it seemed an anomaly that needs to be explained. Had Emerson's youthful eye-worship waned in his later years? Or was he perhaps just in an autumnal mood, since, as he noted in his journal, little "depends on the object, much on the mood, in art" (JMN 7: 46)?² Almost forty years separated *Nature* from his European journey of 1872, four decades in which an "endless seeker" like Emerson (EL 412) must have experienced many a change. Since "the soul is progressive," as he argued in his essay "Art," "it never quite repeats itself, but in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole" (EL 431). Why should not his conceptualization of art be subject to the same laws that he claimed for the production of art? Why should he not continuously seek a newer, fairer concept of art?

* * *

For the young Emerson, who had grown up in the richly verbal culture of New England, "visual art was a purely Old World phenomenon" (Hostetler 121). Reflections on art were extremely rare in his early journals. His initiation into the world of the fine arts he experienced during his Grand Tour of 1833 that lead him to Italy, France and England. Italy for every artist was practically synonymous with art. "The public gardens and private galleries," argues Paul R. Baker, "had a wealth of the greatest works of sculpture and painting from the past. Here he could study what those before him had succeeded in creating, perhaps deriving general principles of beauty from what he saw around him" (125). For someone like Emerson who, as so many fellow Americans, had been brought up on poor copies in portfolios or second-rate paintings in small municipal galleries where he saw works "done by I know not who" (JMN 7: 23), Italy's master-works of art kindled his enthusiasm. "O the marbles! & oh the pictures & oh the noble proportions," he rejoiced. Their sublimity literally overwhelmed him; he felt "so little & so elated" that he could only exclaim with great exhilaration: "O che bella veduta!" (JMN 4: 131, 133). In Rome and Florence he finally saw original Raphaels and Guidos, Michelangelos and Titians, Claude Lorrains and Salvatore Rosas, the Dying Gladiator and the statue of

² How important the mood, the "equipoise of mind" was to him for the appreciation of a work of art, the following journal note makes unmistakably clear: "I have enjoyed more from mediocre pictures," he writes, "casually seen when the mind was in equilibrium, & have reaped a true benefit of the art of painting... than from many masterpieces" (JMN 7: 46).

Moses, artists and art-works that would remain life-long points of reference in his writings. In the Sistine Chapel, during Holy Week, he heard “the monks chaunt the *Miserere*” (L 1: 368), a musical experience of the first order that could not be repeated anywhere else.³ When he visited St. Peter’s Cathedral, the overall experience was that of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*:

The music that is heard in it is always good & the eye is always charmed. It is an ornament of the earth. It is not grand, it is so rich & pleasing; it should rather be called the sublime of the beautiful... how faery beautiful! An Arabian night’s tale... (JMN 4: 156 f.)

His initial enthusiasm, however, began to wear off the longer his Italian sojourn lasted. A defensive attitude gained ground. He felt tempted “to refuse to admire. [But admire] you must in spite of yourself. It is magnificent,” he noted. Increasingly the museums “dazzled & glutted” his eyes (JMN 4: 150). What he regretted most was that he could not concentrate on one single painting; “the gallery will not permit this,” he would note in his journal. “The eye glances from picture to picture. Each interferes with the other” (JMN 7: 196). The unhappy traveler, he complained in a letter to his brother William, “revolves ever in a little eddy of an orbit through Museums & caffès & the society of his countrymen and the inner Italy he never sees” (L 1: 381). His eyes, it seems, were mostly gliding along surfaces while the deeper insights were missing. Only a few paintings, it seems, had a lasting impact on him: Andrea Sacchi’s *Vision of San Romualdo*, Guido Reni’s *Aurora*,⁴ two *Assumptions* by Titian and “the first picture in the world,” Raphael’s *Transfiguration* (JMN 4:150), paintings with a visionary quality and wholly in keeping with Emerson’s aesthetic ideal of a spiraling form that lead and lifted the viewer’s eye forever upward, as Vivian C. Hopkins has shown. What most of his favorite works of art had also in common was their strong emphasis of facial expression. “The sweet and sublime face of Jesus” in *The Transfiguration*, a “simple, home-speaking countenance,” he noted, “was painted for you, for such as had eyes capable of being touched by simplicity and lofty emotions” (EL 437). Faces are so important to him because they can speak; their eyes meet the viewer’s eyes and provoke, as it were, an

³ In his journal Emerson notes: “The famous Miserere was sung this afternoon in the Sistine Chapel. The saying at Rome, is, that it cannot be imitated not only by any other choir but in any other chapel in the world. The Emperor of Austria sent Mozart to Rome on purpose to have it sung at Vienna with like effect, but it failed.” It even failed, as Emerson remarks, in St. Peter’s where it was sung “with less effect” than on the previous day in the Sistine Chapel (JMN 4: 154 f.).

⁴ A copy of Guido Reni’s *Aurora* was given to Emerson by his friend Thomas Carlyle and is still hanging in the Emerson House in Concord.

original relation, a very individual response. Such paintings, he notes, not only “please they eye,” they first and foremost “reach the soul” (JMN 4: 154).⁵

Emerson’s art enthusiasm seems to have reached an absolute saturation point once he arrives in Paris. His visit to the Louvre is mentioned only in passing and his response to Leonardo da Vinci’s paintings is brief and unenthusiastic. Due to their “identity of the features” Leonardo’s pictures for him lack an individual expression (JMN 4: 197). Their eyes, it seems, do not speak nor do they reach his soul. The Cabinet of Natural History in the Jardin des Plantes, however, finds his undivided attention. There he is, all of a sudden, able to concentrate on individual objects. One parrot in particular, he says, “called *Psittacus erythropterus* from New Holland, deserves as special mention as a picture of Raphael in a Gallery.” The Ornithological Chambers are, as it were, Nature’s picture gallery; their richness of colors is inexhaustible and “the upheaving principle of life” (JMN 4: 199) to be felt everywhere. Nature now takes the role of the artist; her work by far exceeds man’s artistry. Homeward bound to a “Land without history.... Land of the forest” (JMN 4: 441f.), after the disappointing encounters with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle, the idols of his youth, he summarizes his European experiences as largely “deficient – in different degrees but all deficient – in insight and religious truth” (JMN IV: 79). Thus, the Grand Tour for Emerson ended as it had for many young Americans traveling to Germany “to find the German genius,” who mournfully realized that “America possessed more of that expansive inquisitive spirit” (“The Anglo-American” 201f.). The dazzled and gluttoned physical eye asked for wider circles to be drawn, for an expansion of the view.

* * *

Back home after the many *travails* of traveling, in his eyes merely “a fool’s paradise” (EL 278), Emerson could seriously devote his time to deeper inquiries. In his Concord study he could recollect his thoughts in tranquility and reflect upon a more expansive concept of art. Three essays and lectures resulted from this effort. In February 1835 he delivered a lecture titled “Michel Angelo Buonaroti [*sic*]” to be followed by an essay “Art,” completed in 1840, and “Thoughts on Art” published in *The Dial* in 1841. While he traveled his views on the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and literature were still largely Eurocentric. Rome was “the metropolis of the arts” and in Italy, where major and minor American artists studied, art was of “greater interest than any where else” (JMN 4: 159). He went even as far as to say that art was “born in Europe & will not

⁵ How important the face is for Emerson, is expressed in the following journal note: “I noticed in fine pictures that the head subordinated the limbs & gave them all the expression of the face. In poor pictures the limbs & the trunk degrade the face” (JMN 7: 50).

cross the ocean” (JMN 4: 139). American artists therefore played only a marginal role in his thinking. While he referred favorably to Claude Lorrain’s and Salvatore Rosa’s landscapes, there was no mention at all of Thomas Cole or Asher B. Durand, the two major Hudson River landscape painters. Horatio Greenough and Washington Allston were the two American artists mentioned most frequently, yet not so much for their artistic achievements as for their thoughts on art. Greenough’s “colossal” sculpture of Achilles that Emerson saw in Florence seemed to him “a poor subject” (Hopkins 94), whereas his essay “Remarks on American Art,” in which he advocated a functional theory of art, was much more to Emerson’s taste. Washington Allston, in his eyes, was a better writer than painter. In his journal he remarked that he had read “some lines [of Allston], very good and entirely self-taught, original not conventional (JMN 5: 377) while his work as a painter seemed to him “too picturesque,” (JMN 7: 223), too “*feminine* or receptive & not masculine or creative” (JMN 5: 195). Allston and Greenough’s works, he noted, should be seen in line with writers like William Cullen Bryant and Washington Irving whose literary achievements exhibited a “puny love of beauty” and an “imitative love of grace” (JMN 7: 24). American art, in his opinion, still lacked strength and boldness; it was still too timid, tame, and reliant on “the courtly muses of Europe,” as he phrased it in “The American Scholar” (EL 70). A true artist, he argued in “Art,” “must employ the symbols in use in his day and nation, he cannot wipe out of his work every trace of the thoughts amidst which it grew” (EL 431f). Though politically independent, America had still not reached its artistic maturity. His journey to Europe, though at first undertaken reluctantly, would nonetheless serve an important function for him; he went to Europe, he would say years later, “to be Americanized [and] to import what we can” (JMN 10: 161). What he imported, among other things, was a deeper conviction of the cultural importance of art, an awareness of the necessity of a new, more expansive American concept of art conforming with a new, expanding country, “a country of beginnings, of projects, of designs, and expectations,” as he would later characterize it in “The Young American” (EL 217).

Emerson began his thinking about art with art’s central organ, the eye, that was “the best of artists,” as he said in *Nature* (EL 14). He diagnosed an “important defect” in America: “the absence of a general education of the eye” (JMN 13: 437). The American eye, both physical and mental, was untrained to see deeper; it was blinded by work and the pursuit of wealth rather than beauty; it was unable to see the splendor, color, and opulence of things. It looked either timidly backward or restlessly forward, but it was not accustomed to *see* the beauty of the here and now. Painting and sculpture, Emerson argued, were the ideal training, the “gymnastics of the eye,” so that it could learn “the niceties and curiosities of its function” (EL 434). Great works of art can arrest the eye,

they can concentrate the view “around a single form,” a form of “an all-excluding fullness.” Art, in short, has “the power to fix the momentary eminency of an object” (EL 433). The eye is only “the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end” (EL 403). The eye tolerates no standstill; it draws circle after circle to see beyond and beneath the confines of the superficial. It has a truly transcending power. The eye “that never passes beyond outline and color,” he says in his lecture on Michelangelo, slights the object (104); it misses its deeper dimensions. The “animal eye” (EL 33), as it were, never learns to see fully. As “all works of the highest art” are of an all-excluding fullness and send out rays of “an aboriginal Power” (EL 434), the currents of this power begin to circulate through the viewer’s soul as Michelangelo in his paintings and sculptures “sought through the eye to reach the soul” (110). The art object gradually dissolves, it seems; it gives way to the viewer’s experience.

As early as 1832 in “The Lord’s Supper,” his valedictory sermon preached at Boston’s Second Church, in which he had articulated a severe critique of the encrusted forms of an institutionalized religion, Emerson envisaged forms that should be “as essential as bodies,” organic forms, that is, ceaselessly growing and outgrowing themselves. The adherence “to one form,” he argued, was not only “alien to the spirit of Christ” (W 11: 25), it was, above all, alien to Nature whose forms were fluid, fluxional, metamorphic. Nature had its etymological roots, he later said in “Works and Days,” in “our fine Latin word... *natura*, *about to be born*, or what German philosophy denotes as a *becoming*” (W 7: 164 f.). An organic form is always becoming, it always flows and transits from one form into another. “Any fixedness,” he notes in the essay “Beauty,” “is the reverse of the flowing, and therefore deformed” (EL 1105). The organic form derives its power from its ceaseless flow. “Power,” he says in “Self-Reliance,” is basically metamorphic, it “resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state” (EL 271). Since art is first and foremost form and since forms are conceived as organic, a true work of art should always be a work in progress, never fixed or finished, always fluxional, “vehicular and transitive” (EL 463). It should be able to carry the viewer’s eye beyond the merely colorful contours into other dimensions as the Christ figure in Raphael’s *Transfiguration* leads the viewer’s eye literally behind and beyond the limitations of canvas and frame into a space of infinite splendor. As transitive and vehicular forms artworks are, as he says in “The Poet,” ideal means of “conveyance” (EL 463). Their function is “merely initial” (EL 433) in the sense that they are mere carriers, that they merely initiate a viewing process and set the viewer’s eyes in motion. His eyes are opened not only to see the colorful opulence on the pictorial surface, but what is even more important, “the eternal picture which nature paints in the street with moving men

and children, beggars, and fine ladies, draped in red, and green, and blue, and grey” (EL 434). Again the art object begins to dissolve; its function is merely temporary and provisional. It merely functions as an eye-opener making the viewer aware of Nature that paints the truer, eternal picture. What is left behind, once a painting has done its work, is nothing less than a heap of “hypocritical rubbish.” “Away with your nonsense of oil and easels, of marble and chisels,” Emerson concludes, “except to open your eyes to the masteries of eternal art” (EL 434). In his essay “Experience” he writes how strongly he had once felt of paintings and that he “had good lessons from pictures which [he has] since seen without emotion or remark” (EL 474). The experience of art once again becomes more important than the art object. Tony Tanner in *The Reign of Wonder* interprets Emerson’s shift from work to spectator as the most significant break with the European concept of art:

[I]n emphasizing the responsibilities and creative powers of ‘the eye of the beholder’ he had a motive which the European romantics could not have had. For, as long as the interest of the locale was considered to be inherent in the place rather than the viewer, then Americans would be forever looking to Europe. (27)

The shift from the art object to the spectator would mean that America was finally able to declare its artistic independence; it would emancipate the individual viewer as a creative agent. Everybody was now, as it were, empowered to become an artist, since art’s “highest effect is to make new artists” (EL 437) – a truly democratic creed.

The first lecture on art that Emerson delivered after his return from Europe was devoted to Michelangelo, sculptor, painter, poet, architect and engineer who presented “the perfect image of the Artist” (100). He was Emerson’s representative artist figure who showed equal competence both as a manual and mental worker; he made “with his own hand not only the wimbles, the files, and the steps but also the [rasps] and the chisels and all other irons and instruments which he needed in sculpture; and in painting he not only mixed but ground colors himself trusting no one” (107). He was no idler, as artists were pejoratively characterized at the time,⁷ but a toiler, a man dedicated to manual work, who ceaselessly tinkered and never tired to perfect himself “step by step to the height of Art” (102). To a single figure he used to make “nine, ten, or twelve heads before he could satisfy himself” (107). People said, “the marble turned flexible in his hands” (110), the solid turned fluid and fluxional. Under his hands, art lost its artificial character and began to look like a perfect work of Nature. He was the true master of *ars celare*

⁷ Hawthorne’s narrator in “The Custom-House” hears his forefathers critiquing him as “an idler” (9) who is entirely oblivious of the Puritans’ work ethic. Yet, “one idle and rainy day” (23), he makes a crucial discovery that will lead to an idler’s work: *The Scarlet Letter*.

artem. Michelangelo, in Emerson's eyes, was no Romantic who worked "intuitively," but an assiduous experimenter, a technician working with great "dexterity in practical... contrivances," one who "learned by action and practice" (106f). Though "incessant in his creative labors," he knew well that perfection was never to be achieved in the here and now. His motto therefore was a more modest one, "not to utter but to suggest the unutterable" (116).

There are two more aspects that make Michelangelo such an exemplary artist figure. First, he was so assured of his work that not even a papal authority could get him off his course. As an artist he acknowledged no institutional authority above him. The people rather than the pope were the true patrons whom he wanted to serve with his art. His place was amidst rather than above the common man. And second, art for Michelangelo was a part of everyday life. As for the ancient Greeks art for him meant primarily *techné*; the term implied that art and labor were not mutually exclusive, that the fine and useful arts should no longer be treated separately. "Beauty must come back to the useful arts, and the distinction between the fine and the useful arts be forgotten," he said in "Art" (EL 439).⁸ Art, as Emerson understood it, was always more than just fine arts; it was mind objectified in matter, thought materialized in color, tone, stone, steel or language. It was, as he said in "Thoughts on Art," the "conscious utterance of thought, by speech or action, to any end" (*Dial* 367). Art's first and foremost end was that it would matter and make a difference, that it would intervene in the practices of everyday life as in ancient Greece a sculpture could make a difference and the *polis* of Athens could be "divided into political factions upon the merits of Phidias." Artworks should not be made for museums. The arts "languish" now, Emerson remarked, "because their purpose is merely exhibition.... They are mere flourish to please the eye" (*Dial* 378). Let not "the laborer, the accountant, the manufacturer, the mechanic, the farmer" turn away from the arts with indifference, he admonished his fellow Americans. Artworks should make a difference in all the people's lives; they should be more than "pretty subjects for an idle hour" (Michelangelo 100).

Since art should make a difference in the everyday life of a people and a country, famous for its "superficialness" (EL 944), it does not come as a surprise that Emerson embraces subjects and objects that, at first glance, seem superficial and common rather than uncommon such as "the railroad, the insurance office, the joint-stock company, our law, our primary assemblies, our commerce, the galvanic battery, the electric jar, the

⁸ George Ripley had invited Emerson to join Brook Farm, an institution that tried to combine manual and mental labor. Emerson declined Ripley's invitation, but in "Man the Reformer" he supported the idea "which the times give to the doctrine, that the manual labor of society ought to be shared among all the members" (EL 139).

prism, and the chemist’s retort.” As long as “only an economical use” (EL 440) is sought in these subjects and objects, America’s state of the arts will remain “but initial” (EL 437). The American artist will have to learn that banks, tariffs, newspapers, and caucuses are symbols of his day and nation and “rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, and the temple of Delphos.” Such objects are merely “flat and dull to dull people” (EL 465). Once again Emerson appeals to the eye of the beholder that makes all the difference. As long as he remains unaware of his country’s “proper glory,” it will remain “shrouded & unknown” (JMN 10: 161); as long as the American artist does not learn to appreciate the common things of the common man “in the field and road-side, in the shop and mill” (EL 440), he will not be able to let his country’s glory shine. A decade and a half later Walt Whitman would appear on the literary scene and realize in his poetry for the first time what Emerson had envisaged in his early essays and lectures. He dared to make “our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians” (EL 465) the symbols of his day and nation.

* * *

Emerson’s concept of the American artist and his art had not only appealed to Whitman. It initiated a distinct artistic practice in America that favored a representation of “the near, the low, the common,” as it had been envisaged in “The American Scholar” (EL 68). Though no direct influence can be traced, the *trompe l’oeil* still-life painters such as William Harnett, John Peto or John Haberle, portraitists of the quotidian, seem to have followed Emerson’s advice and “explored and poeticized” (EL 68) what was near, low and common. The demotic rather than the exotic object, which had been a characteristic feature of European still life painting, was what they privileged. Nails and hammers, Bowie knives and horseshoes, greenbacks, stamps, letters or photographs of historical figures like Lincoln were only a few of their American objects. The paintings bear traits of a truly democratic art not only because of the common things that they depict but also because of their mode of depiction. On a flat surface the objects are arranged in a non-hierarchical order that makes one object appear as important and unique as the other. In their austere simplicity they resist, as it were, the ostentatious show-off of their time commonly known as the Gilded Age. With their objects preferably chosen from their recent past they stand, as David M. Lubin has argued, “heroically separate from the world of mass production and consumption, the so-called commodity realm” which gives them a somewhat “nostalgic” touch (281). Their *trompe l’oeil* technique literally “tricks the eye” and generates the illusion of an actual presence. The objects assume, as it were, an almost haptic quality not unlike the painted grapes of Zeuxis in the ancient myth. On the one hand, the trickery deceives the eye while, on the other

hand, the eye sees through the trick and concentrates its full attention on the objects, for a long time “negligently trodden under foot,” as Emerson says, by those in search of a “sublime and beautiful” exoticism (EL 68). Beauty lies not in the object, but in the eye of the beholder, is the Emersonian lesson to be learned from the *trompe l’oeil* painters.

The near, the low, and the common in its American specificity also characterizes the work of a group of painters in the 1920s like Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler or poets like William Carlos Williams for whom Odol spray bottles, the figure 5 on a New York fire-truck, red Pennsylvania barns, automobile plants in Michigan were among the favored objects that they depicted or described with an utmost precision. So much depended, as Williams said in his poem “The Red Wheelbarrow,” upon such common objects as “a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens” (277). Much more, however, depended on the typographical arrangement of these objects which activates the reader’s eye and teaches him/her to see their unspectacular commonness as uniquely beautiful.

Nineteenth-century *trompe l’oeil* painters had their twentieth-century counterparts, as it were, in the Pop Artists of the 1960s with whom they not only shared a predilection for mundane objects but also the impersonal, almost machine-like mode of production that extinguished practically every subjective brushstroke. While the *trompe l’oeil* painters favored objects of a recent past, Pop Artists like Warhol, Lichtenstein or Rauschenberg embrace objects of their immediate present. They find their material primarily on billboards and the cans, bottles and boxes of consumer goods such as Campbell’s, Coca Cola and Brillo rather than in antique shops. The signs and signatures on these products seem to lose their consumerist function once they are transferred from the can to the canvas, from the store shelf to the museum to be exhibited before the viewer’s eyes. The consumer signs, however, are, as Lawrence Alloway argues, only “recontextualized by the artist” (9); both the consumer and the art contexts remain active. The artwork therefore takes on an ambivalent quality; it acts, as Robert Rauschenberg once said, “in the gap between” the two contexts. The viewer’s eye is thus perplexed. “The resulting ambiguity leaves [him] in an indeterminate state, confronted with an unanswerable question” (Wissmann 514, 516). Is it a can, a bottle, a box that he sees? Is it a painting? What is it really? Thus the Pop Artist like a *trompe l’oeil* still-life activates the viewer’s eyes; they are, as it were, “gymnastics of the eye” (EL 434).

In other art movements of the 1960s and 1970s such as Conceptual and Fluxus Art one may again detect Emerson’s handwriting, as George J. Leonard has convincingly argued. Both movements represent a radical position in the sense that they declare objects as irrelevant to art. “All art is,” says concept artist Joseph Kosuth, “finally conceptual;” all art objects are nothing more than a mere “physical residue” (Leonard 297).

Emerson had argued that “true art is never fixed, but always flowing;” it is, as he said, “but extempore performance” (EL 438). The function of the art object for both Emerson and the Concept artist is merely “initial” (EL 433). The viewer is initiated into a process of seeing, that is, “the perception of beauty” (EL 432). Once this process is set in motion, once the viewer’s eyes are activated and trained to see beyond or beneath the merely superficial, the art object will have done its work; it becomes, as it were, superfluous: Away then “with your nonsense of oil and easels, of marble and chisels: except to open your eyes to the mysteries of eternal art” (EL 434 f.).

John Dewey, with his theory of art as experience, may be seen as the one who thinks onward into the twentieth century what Emerson had initiated in the nineteenth. In his centennial essay (1903), Dewey declares Emerson the philosopher of democracy who “stands for the restoring to the common man that which in the name of religion, of philosophy, of art and of morality, has been embezzled from the common store and appropriated to sectarian and class use” (190). Dewey wants to make art accessible to the common man again by restoring “the continuity between... works of art and the everyday events,” as he says in *Art as Experience* (3). The “compartmental conception of fine arts... apart from the common life” (8), in his eyes, not only generates an elitist class of art specialists and connoisseurs, it also prevents art from intervening in the “normal processes of living” (10). Art kept in a state of repose, shut away in museums, loses its power. “Power,” says Emerson, “ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition” (EL 271) when art transits into life, when it merges with life in a continuous process. Though Emerson is mentioned only briefly in *Art as Experience*, the book is, as Richard Shusterman has convincingly demonstrated, greatly indebted to Emerson’s thinking. Both reject the notion of art as mere commodity; both believe in the transformative power of art. For both “not things, but the ways of things” are of primary interest, as Dewey says in his centennial essay (185 f.). Not the art object but the way it works and initiates processes of experience is of crucial importance to both, or as Dewey puts it in *Art as Experience*: “The *product* of art – temple, painting, statue, poem – is not the work of art. The work takes place when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties” (214). The actual work of art is what the art product does with the recipient. The work of art, strictly speaking, needs rephrasing. We should from now on speak of the *working* of art. “The work of art in its actuality,” that is, when it is in action, “is *perception*” (162). Art can therefore serve a vital function in America with its “bad name for superficialness” (EL 944) whose “important defect” was, as Emerson noted in his journal “the absence of a general education of the eye” (JMN 13: 437). Art works help educate the eye, they are true “gymnastics of the eye.”

Henry James's remark that Emerson's eyes seemed "thickly bandaged" when they both walked through the halls of the Louvre and the Vatican museum in 1872 now resonates with an additional meaning. We have to bear in mind, that these visits were, strictly speaking, revisits. The "good lessons from pictures," as he says in "Experience," he had learned way back in 1833; now he saw these pictures "without emotion or remark" (EL 476). For him they had done their work long ago when they had initiated a process of thinking that had eventually led him from the domains of art into philosophy and, above all, into life. The chord of art, one could therefore say with Henry James, had snapped, but "the tune was played, the tune of life and literature... on those [chords] that remained" (74).

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Joseph Kuhn

The Middle Ages of Late Brahmin New England: The Role of a Historical Figure in the Modernism of T.S. Eliot and Allen Tate

In the background of the works of the American modernists, T.S. Eliot and Allen Tate, hovers a curious historical hypothesis, that of the “perfect traditional society.” Tate admitted that this society had never actually existed and was only an “imperative of reference,” one that had always and would continue “to haunt the moral imagination of man” (“Liberalism and Tradition” 214). Nevertheless in such works as Tate’s “Religion and the Old South” (1930) and Eliot’s “Dante” (1929) the high Middle Ages is made the best approximation to this society. Eliot and Tate also drew upon the historical topos of the Renaissance or the moment of the disintegration of the medieval *ordo*, a moment whose “crossing of the ways” briefly flung off the intensely compressed recombinations found in Donne’s metaphysical conceits (an attempt to regain synthesis on the level of trope) but whose eventual outcome was dissociation (Tate, *Essays* 533). This schema of poetic history is perhaps most systematically at work in Eliot’s 1926 Clark lectures, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, in which Eliot sought to show that “[t]he *trecento* had an exact statement of intellectual disorder; the *seicento* had an exact statement of intellectual disorder; Shelley and Swinburne had a vague statement of intellectual disorder” (*Varieties* 174-75). But Eliot and Tate did not invent the *ordo* as a critical figure in American modernist literature: its creation as a historical image containing the notion of the fullness of the sensibility and of “moral unity” was the work of the late Brahmin writers of the 1870s and 1880s. In the field of Gothic architecture these works included Charles Eliot Norton’s *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860); *Historical Studies of Church Building in the Middle Ages: Venice, Siena and Florence* (1880); “The Building of the Cathedral at Chartres” and “The Building of the Church of St.-Denis” (both published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1889); Charles Herbert Moore’s *Development and Character of Gothic Architecture* (1890); and James Russell Lowell’s poem about Chartres, “The Cathedral” (1869). Henry Adams’ *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904) was only the last, if the most consummate, of these Brahmin works.

Harvard was also the center of the late-nineteenth-century outburst of Dante studies that predated T.S. Eliot’s discovery of the poet while studying at the university between the years 1907-1913. Longfellow, Norton and Lowell, all Harvard professors, set up the

Dante Society in 1881. Longfellow produced a translation of *The Divine Comedy* in verse in 1865-1867 and Norton a prose version in 1891-1892. Lowell wrote a long essay on Dante (1872) which, as the Italianist W.M. Thayer put it in 1909, once enjoyed the reputation of being “one of the best literary essays produced in America” (Norton, *Letters* 2: 105). Santayana brought this New England fascination to an idiosyncratic climax in his study of Dante in *Three Philosophical Poets* (1910), a book which Eliot praised as “one of the most brilliant of Mr. Santayana’s works” and which he probably heard in lecture form while attending Santayana’s courses at Harvard in 1909 (*Varieties* 48).

Slightly tangential to this New England revival of a “strong” or anti-romantic medievalism in Dante (which might be contrasted with the aesthetic nature of Ruskin’s version of the Middle Ages) is a regional recommitment in C.S. Peirce and Henry Adams to scholastic realism, partly in reaction to what Santayana called the “systematic subjectivism” of Concord (Henfrey 91).¹ This recommitment, for all of its technical grounding, was not unconnected with the other filiations of Brahmin medievalism. For example, Lowell introduced into his essay, with a sidelong glance at the “Oriental” Emerson, the comment that since Dante was “transcendentalist... by nature, so much so as to be in danger of lapsing into an Oriental mysticism,” it was fortunate for his art that “his habits of thought should have been made precise and his genius disciplined by a mind so severely logical as that of Aristotle” (46). In addition Peirce and Adams early made the comparison, which with Panofsky has since become commonplace, between Gothic architecture and scholasticism: there was, Peirce noted in “Critical Review of Berkeley’s Idealism” (1871), the same heroic totality of belief in each instance, the same impersonality in craftsman and philosopher, and the intricate linking up of parts in the “immensity” of either a *Summa* or cathedral (77-78). What the Brahmin interests in Gothic architecture, Dante and scholasticism had in common was a new preoccupation with objective form and with system. The social counterpart of this turn to the outward was what Peirce called “the community.”² The Peircean strain in postbellum New England philosophy, and its emphasis upon the catholicity of truth within a “community of interpretation” rather than on its origin within the individual Cartesian self, seems to have contributed – through Peirce’s disciple Josiah Royce – to Eliot’s slow gestation

¹ In his prefaces to an American edition of Ruskin’s works published in the early 1890s Norton gently made the point that his friend Ruskin confused art with religion (Roger G. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900*; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, 251).

² Peirce observed, “[t]he real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase in knowledge” (69).

over the 1910s of the modernist concepts of tradition and impersonality (as scholars such as Frank Lentricchia have noted). Lentricchia notices that “[t]he cardinal sin in Royce’s kind of world – Eliot teased out a career as a poet in meditation upon it – has come to be known, thanks to Eliot, as the cardinal modernist sin: the refusal of commitment, the sin of refusing together *to act*” (46). Eliot’s insight in “What the Thunder Said” that “[t]hinking of the key, each confirms a prison” feeds into Tate’s identification in his essay on “Ode to the Confederate Dead” of the “remarkable self consciousness of our age” with “solipsism, a philosophical doctrine which says that we create the world in the act of perceiving it” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 79; Tate, *Essays* 595). As Eliot was to write in his doctoral dissertation on the philosopher F.H. Bradley, solipsism is not defensible because “each centre of experience is unique, but is unique only with reference to a common meaning” (*Knowledge* 149).

It might seem that Brahmin New England was the stoniest ground for any germination of interest in the Middle Ages. Henry Adams said that as a boy he had never heard of the Virgin “except as idolatry” (*Education* 383). Charles Eliot Norton constantly had to disentangle his inborn anti-Catholicism from a recognition that it was this religion at its most “irrational, selfish, barbaric” which had supplied “motives of supreme power” in the building of Chartres cathedral (“Building” 947). Even Dante had to be understood differently from the way he was seen in the United States in the early and middle years of the nineteenth century. At this time, when Dante was read at all, he was largely viewed as a morning star of the Reformation (a view lingering in the last of Longfellow’s six sonnets on Dante, which were appended to his translation) or contrasted unfavorably with the more modern sensibility of Shakespeare (Lears 155-59).³ As late as 1867, Emerson was still claiming in his journal that Dante, unlike Shakespeare, lacked “a beneficent humanity.” Although Emerson admitted a certain awe at Dante’s ability to dream his pitiless dream while still awake, this dream struck Emerson as being “abnormal throughout,” “a curiosity like the mastodon,” and he concluded his entry with the judgment: “A man to be put in a museum, but not in your house. Indeed I never read him, nor regret that I do not” (Porte 545). But by the 1880s a definite shift in attitude was gathering momentum. Frances Sanborn could write in 1882 that “the intense reality of Dante’s faith is in refreshing contrast to the indifferent half-belief of the present day” (Lears 156).

Sanborn identifies the main reason for the late Brahmin turn towards Dante and his grasp of Latinate objective form. For this turn is surely not unconnected with a growing

³ A rare exception to the early neglect of Dante in the United States was George Ticknor’s class on the poet at Harvard in 1831. Ticknor was then a professor of French and Spanish languages.

dissatisfaction with “liberalism” in its theological sense, a phenomenon whose stylistic aspect was the relegation of the supernatural to diffuse metaphor and periphrasis. Adams gives uneasy testimony to this liberal impulse, its “habit of doubt” and its “tendency to regard every question as open,” in the first chapter of *The Education of Henry Adams* (6). The New England of Adams’ and Norton’s youth was dominated by sectional arguments between Unitarians, Transcendentalists and Deists, who often give the appearance of outvying one another in seeing how much of the historical and dogmatic element of Christianity they could discard in the name of Protestant inner illumination. Theodore Parker, exponent of the Deist position, even made the claim that Christianity would stand firm if the gospels were proved to be a fabrication and it were shown that Jesus had never existed. “Christianity is a simple thing, very simple,” Parker claimed. “It is absolute, pure morality, absolute pure religion – the love of man; the love of God acting without hindrance” (277). With the all too intimate insight of one raised on New England Unitarianism, Eliot explained in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) that “liberalism loses force after a series of rejections, and with nothing to destroy is left with nothing to uphold and nowhere to go” (*Christianity* 12). Thus Eliot’s “inside” portrait of Adams’ search for an education in his review (1919) of *The Education of Henry Adams* sees the undertaking vitiated by “scepticism,” “a product, or a cause, or a concomitant, of Unitarianism” (“Sceptical” 795). Eliot’s notorious depiction of Adams in “Gerontion” identifies the “nowhere to go” as the slippery historical consciousness and its “wilderness of mirrors” or what Lewis Simpson has called “the drama of the self’s internalization of history” (73). Gerontion even querulously addresses a personification called “History,” a pander who “deceives with whispering ambitions / Guides us by vanities” (*Collected Poems* 40). By 1901 even Norton, an old Know Nothing, was noting that “Protestantism as a religion has completely failed” because it has become “vacant of spiritual significance.... It has no spiritual influence with which to oppose the spirit of materialism.” Norton predicted that “[i]n spite of Roman obscurantism, its seems to me likely that Catholicism will gain strength among us” (*Letters* 2: 304-05). He here anticipates a similar comment that Eliot was to make in a review of a book of neoscholastic philosophy in 1917: “The non-catholic reader will be unable to avoid a tribute of grave respect to the only Church which can even pretend to maintain a philosophy of its own, a philosophy, as we are increasingly aware, which is succeeding in establishing a claim to be taken quite seriously” (Margolis 16).

The particular schema of the medieval used by T.S. Eliot, and then by Tate, emerges in Norton’s *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860), a record of the obligatory journey of the young Brahmin aesthete to the country (Norton was there just three years before the young Adams, who wrote of the eternal city in chapter six of *The Education of Henry*

Adams). Gothic architecture, Norton claimed, was the result of a supererogatory and quite unrepeatable focus of purpose. In building a cathedral “[n]o portion of their building was too minute, no portion too obscure, to be perfected with thorough and careful labor.” But Norton was not an admirer of the feudal as such, contending that the cathedrals were “essentially expressions of popular will” and not the work of “ecclesiastics” or “barons,” and he pointed out that in Rome there was “not one truly Gothic work” (*Notes* 102-06).⁴ Rather his stress falls on what Santayana and Tate afterwards were to call “moral unity” and the assertion that the supernatural is the “hypothesis” on which this “has best been attained in this world” (Santayana 91). Finally, in the concluding section of the book, Norton puts forward a Renaissance which is profoundly at variance with that of Jacob Burckhardt, published in the same year, and his vision of the breaking forth of the “spiritual *individual*” from the medieval constrictions of type (hitherto, Burckhardt explained, men knew themselves only through “some general category” such as race or family) (Burckhardt 81). This is important because it was Norton’s rather than Burckhardt’s Renaissance that Eliot and Tate followed.⁵ Thus for Norton the Renaissance marked the “birth of pseudo-classicism” and of a more “accommodating” human scale that had no need for theological “final terms”; the “intense moral consciousness of the works of the Middle Ages” was replaced by an indifferent, epicurean sway that would “find the things of this world all-sufficient for content.” “Living was both easier and more civilized than before,” Norton observes of fifteenth century Italy, before adding an Adornesque qualification: “But living is not life” (as Adorno was to observe in *Minima Moralia*, “Wrong life cannot be lived rightly”(39)) (*Notes* 308, 15, 07, 12). A spirit of “imitation” of the ancients spread so that despite “the extraordinary intellectual activity” in the fifteenth century there was a “deficiency of intellectual force” (Tate also sees imitation, even the corpse’s imitation of the body, as the rhetorical figure of the Renaissance: in “The Progress of Oenia” John Donne sleeps with a “sapphire corpse”) (Norton, *Notes* 316; Tate, *Collected Poems* 27). For Norton Dante’s work marked the end of an era – “not only the crown of the religious achievement of Italy, – but its close” – rather than, as in Burckhardt, the beginning of a new one (Norton, *Letters* 1: 451; Burckhardt 188).

⁴ Norton read his own austere version of democracy (not its Gilded Age manifestation) into his medieval studies. In a letter he wrote, “[d]emocracy, ideally, means universal public spirit” (*Letters* 2:244).

⁵ Norton’s is indeed a foreshadowing of T.E. Hulme’s critique of the Renaissance, a movement, which Hulme thought, had introduced into the human the perfection that belongs to the divine (Hulme 32). Eliot and Tate were both greatly influenced by Hulme’s work. Eliot welcomed the publication of *Speculations* and said that Hulme “appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the twentieth century mind” (*The Criterion* 2 (April 1924, 231). A fundamental presupposition of Tate’s essays and verse is Hulme’s theory of the discontinuity of the physical and spiritual realms (*Essays* 198).

Norton's studies of medieval architecture have been criticized because he did not show how exactly the homogeneous spirit of medieval society could be extrapolated from specific details of building or iconography.⁶ But it was rather the relationship in the abstract between the "moral unity" of that society and its forms of expression that Eliot and Tate took from New England medievalism. Brahmin "tourism" of the fine arts, it might be said, was neither instinctive to the author of "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" (1920) nor to the Tate of "Sonnet to Beauty" (1928). In this sonnet, written as it were in answer to the two chapters on the "legendary windows" in Adams' Chartres book, the aesthetic sublimation found in stained glass windows (the "familiar tale" of nineteenth century beauty) is redirected into the stony path of kenosis, a direction more in keeping not only with the "doctrine of the incorporate Word" but also with the modernist sense that the beautiful as radiant semblance is dead ("Mr. Rimbaud the Frenchman's apostasy"). Now, as the sonnet concludes, these windows of Adams' "twist and untwist / The mortal youth of Christ astride an ass." "Twist and untwist" binds and unbinds the two natures of Christ in such a way that ass-like physicality blocks Adams' temporary empathy with the Platonic "wonder of light" (*Collected Poems* 28). Instead of this submergence in a sense world, what Tate and Eliot valued in Brahmin medievalism was its recognition of the role of a homogeneous society in subconsciously ordering and purifying the images of the poet.⁷ In "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927) Eliot claimed that the business of the poet was not to do "any thinking on his own" and that one reason for Dante's "clear visual images" and instinctive architectonic is that he could rely upon "thought [that] was orderly and strong and beautiful, and... concentrated in one man of the highest genius [Saint Thomas Aquinas]." In this regard, Eliot could observe in his 1929 book on Dante, "Dante's advantages [over Shakespeare] are not due to greater genius, but to the fact that he wrote when Europe was still more or less one" – this was what Eliot called Dante's "luck" (*Selected Essays* 136, 42). Tate compressed the insight in an early letter to Davidson: "Minds are less important for literature than cultures; our minds are as good as they ever were, but our culture is dissolving" (Fain 166). This might seem like a restatement of Matthew Arnold's claim in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864) that the romantic poets "did not know enough" and that in literary work "the power of the man and the power of the moment" must concur (Ricks 95). But the exemplary periods

⁶ For example in John Tomsich, *A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971) 55; Robert Mane, *Henry Adams on the Road to Chartres* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) 129.

⁷ Kermit Vanderbilt stresses the importance of Norton's concept of a homogeneous culture as a legacy to twentieth century traditionalists such as Eliot and Tate in *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959) 231.

of this concurrence for Arnold were the Athens of Pericles and the England of Elizabeth whereas Eliot and Tate came closer to the view expressed in Norton's medieval studies that catholic religion was inseparable from a high culture. Indeed Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) is a very Norton-like and homiletic exposition of how culture and religion are "different aspects of the same thing" (*Christianity* 102).

One might summarize the historiographic figure of the high Middle Ages that the Brahmin writers introduced to American literature by saying that the period came to constitute a synthesis, while modernity, beginning in the Renaissance, was motivated by analysis, the breaking down of parts. This is the argument of John Crowe Ransom's "Poets Without Laurels" (1938), an essay which Allen Tate considered "the *locus classicus* for insight into the relation of the modern poet to industrial-technological society" (*Memoirs* 44-45). Ransom claims that pre-Reformation religion constituted a "synthetic institution" which was able to "hold together nearly all the fields of human experience" but that the puritan temper sought to "perfect the parts of experience separately or in their purity." In doing this "Puritanism" moved from one field to another, beginning, in the sixteenth century, with its "analysis" of religion at the apex of the synthesis and proceeding through other fields until, in the 1920s, it settled upon the distillation of a "pure" poetry, a dissociation of reference in favor of private meaning or aesthetic surface (his two examples of this poetry of "modernity," respectively, are Tate's "Death of Little Boys" and Stevens's "Sea Surface Full of Clouds") (58-61, 63-68). Eliot presented a similar kind of interpretation in the Clark lectures when he observed that "[i]n order to get the full flavour out of Donne, you must construe analytically and enjoy synthetically; you must hold the elements in suspension and contiguity in your mind, as he did himself" (*Varieties* 124). In fact this double motion brings the Renaissance poetry of Donne and the "Southern Renaissance" poetry of Tate into "contemporary" proximity. This may be illustrated in two poems of Tate and Donne about deathbed scenes. In Tate's "Death of Little Boys" there are abstruse compounds of a boy's death, a "peeled aster" that "extends a fear to you," a maelstrom and a sinking ship that have to be broken down so as to form a common tenor and then built up again into a more integrated statement (which never quite "completes" itself, as Ransom noted) about the relation of premature, ritual-less death to a nature of scientific quantity or magnitude. Donne's "The Funeral" opens with the starkly exact scene of a corpse and the discovery of a "subtile wreath of hair" on the arm, but then this clarity of presence is dispersed in a tangled conceit, as the wreath becomes a "viceroy" of the soul and the limbs "provinces." Although this diversion is, as Eliot put it, "pleasing" as metaphysical wit, it also constitutes "an inward chaos and dissection" (*Varieties* 124). Tate likewise identified the problem of the Renaissance poet when he noted in an early review that

“[t]he advantages the poet had in Dante’s time are obvious: his chief interest focused on his method, the ordered differentiation of his perceptions within a given scheme. The modern poet has to construct, besides his personal vision, the scheme itself” (“Revolt” 330).

What is the evidence that T.S. Eliot as a student at Harvard was influenced by the late New England writings on Dante? Eliot was too young to have studied under Norton, who retired as Professor of Fine Arts in December 1897, but an unexpected, perhaps partly tribal, confederacy of feeling seems to have existed between Eliot and his distant relative (Norton was the second cousin of Eliot’s grandfather). In Norton tentatively and in Eliot with a more trained literary sensibility there was the need to extend their Brahmin neurasthenia beyond private feeling and stamp it out in the discourse of modern life. When Eliot delivered the Charles Eliot Norton lectures on poetry, later published in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), he quoted, in the lecture on Arnold, from a letter of Norton’s in which he claimed that “[i]t looks as if the world were entering upon a new stage of experience, unlike anything heretofore, in which there must be a new discipline of suffering to fit men for the new conditions.” This observation was prompted by what Norton calls “the rise of democracy... of the uncivilised” in 1890s America and it was a call which in the course of the lecture Eliot found to touch upon that realm of experience denied to Arnold – namely, the “vision of the horror and the glory” (*Use* 103,06). In his introduction to his translation of *The Divine Comedy* Norton pointed to Dante’s “perpetual contemporaneousness”: in fact just before his death in 1908 his last words to the annual meeting of the American Dante Society were that Dante should be read “especially for his significance to us to-day” and these words could have been taken up as a challenge by the young Eliot (Norton, “Introduction”; Norton, *Letters* 2:104). This “significance” for Eliot meant incorporating Dante within his vision of the modern urban city, one that in moments of *visio* peered into “the horror and the glory.” As Eliot was to say much later, in “What Dante Means to Me” (1950), he alluded to Dante’s lines in such scenes as the city clerks crossing London bridge in “The Burial of the Dead” in order “to arouse in the reader’s mind the memory, of some Dantesque scene, and thus establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life” (in this case Eliot refers to “I had not thought death had undone so many” and “Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled” from Cantos III and IV of the *Inferno*, which describe those who refuse to be alive and hence are consigned to either to the vestibule of hell or to limbo) (“What Dante” 128). Norton claimed that Dante was a contemporary because he penetrates to “the permanent and unalterable elements of the soul of man”: these elements are etched all the more deeply in Dante’s characters just because of the change in society and loss of faith subsequent to Dante’s time – they are cut, as it were,

in inverse ratio to temporality. Dante's work, as Eliot was to observe later, "can only be understood by accustoming ourselves to find meaning in *final causes* rather than in origins" and for Norton this means that a single action of the souls in the afterlife – imprinted in "sensible types and images" – represents the fate of that person (In Canto XIV of the *Inferno* Capaneus says, "What I was living, that am I dead") (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 274; Norton, "Introduction"). What the Dante allusions intend in *The Waste Land* or in *Seasons of the Soul* are Baudelairean intersections of the "transient" and the "eternal": "symbolic" readings of fugitive modern tempo or naturalistic immanence. This is indeed the core of Santayana's reading of Dante, the assimilation of physical image to *theoria*, "a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth" (Henfrey 1: 149).

As a general proposition Eliot and Tate's is the theological and "rational" Dante of the Brahmin writers, the poet of the two sacred imperia of church and empire, rather than the heterodox Dante of Ernst Robert Curtius and Harold Bloom, prophet of a "gnostic" scheme of salvation through the intervention of Beatrice (Curtius 377; Bloom 38-50). Dante, one learns from Lowell, is "like all great minds... essentially conservative" and is distinguished, as is Eliot's Dante, by "the intense realism of his imagination" (Lowell 51, 124). When Lowell wrote of Dante that "[e]verything, the most supersensual, presented to his mind, not as abstract idea, but as visible type" he was as convinced as was Eliot that in Dante "a philosophic idea... has become almost a physical modification" (Lowell 124; Eliot, "Dante" 162).⁸ But it was Santayana's assessment of Dante as a "philosophical poet" which seemed to define crucial aspects of Eliot's and Tate's interpretation and therefore, because their criticism was what Tate called "programmatic," of their own poetic practice. In trying in the Clark lectures to define his own sense of "metaphysical poetry," particularly in the revived sense of the 1920s, Eliot observed that "[i]t is clear that for Mr. Santayana a philosophical poet is one with a scheme of the universe, who embodies that scheme in verse, and essays to realise his conception of man's part and place in the universe" (*Varieties* 48). Thus Eliot emphasizes Santayana's recognition of Dante's "architectonic ability" and he echoes his teacher in his first (1920) essay on Dante when he observed that the poet "does not analyze the emotion so much as he exhibits its relation to other emotions" and he delineates the "complete scale from negative to positive" (*Varieties* 58; "Dante" 169). In

⁸ There are other ways in which Lowell's essay foreshadows Eliot's first two essays on the poet. For example, Lowell prefers Dante's beatific vision at the conclusion of the *Paradiso* to the "Calvinistic Zeus" of Milton; he makes a distinction between religious and devotional poetry; and he introduces the concept of "provincialism" in describing deviation from the Latin center represented by Dante, a concept which – via T.S. Eliot – eventuated in Tate's essay on "The New Provincialism" (1945) (54, 132, 76).

Santayana the example of Dante as one who can order “all things in their order and worth” offers a rebuke to the tendency that Santayana saw in modernity towards “sensation,” the domination of the percept over the concept (thus, Eliot says at the end of his 1920 Dante essay, that the modern poet looks out upon “the odds and ends of still life and properties” and Tate sees “the thrust into sensation” as “responsible for the fragmentary quality of [Hart Crane’s] most ambitious work” (Eliot, “Dante” 170; Tate, *Essays* 321)).⁹ This impulse ran counter to Santayana’s primary insight that poetry “is itself a theoretic vision of things at arm’s length.” “Symbolism and literalness, in Dante’s time,” Santayana observed, “are simultaneous”: the “symbolical imagination” is active in the very configuration of the literal image. Its operation was an unconscious act by the medieval poet, an intuition whose parallel in scholastic metaphysics was the positing of universals prior to, in and after particulars (84, 62, 63). Tate, adopting Santayana’s phrase “symbolical imagination” in his title “The Symbolic Imagination: The Mirrors of Dante” (1951), says in that essay that this imagination has to “work with the body of this world”: “Nature offers to the symbolic poet clearly denotable objects in depth, and in the round, which yield the analogies to the higher syntheses” (*Essays* 430). It is this which explains the relative absence of poetic metaphor in Dante which is noticed by both Eliot and Tate: “As the whole poem of Dante is, if you like, one vast metaphor, there is hardly any place for metaphor in the detail of it” (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 244). Indeed it is part of Tate’s description of modern poetry, including his own, that it is a fall into an excess of local metaphor: it “spreads the clear visual image in a complex of metaphor, from one katachresis to another through Aristotle’s permutations of genus and species” (*Essays* 430).

For both Tate and Eliot the poet who initiates this dispersal into the complex of metaphor is Donne, of whom Eliot was noting, by 1926, a “*catabolic* tendency, the tendency toward dissolution.” This came about, Eliot believed, because although Donne was a scholastic in education, he was of the Renaissance in mind and sensibility (*Varieties* 76, 67n.1). Eliot saw Donne as a prodigious magpie, concerned not with thoughts as part of a medieval synthesis but as “floating” objects, which may be detached and subjected to legalistic improvisation. For this reason Donne is drawn to conceits since these represent “the extreme limit of simile and metaphor which is used for its own sake, and not to make clearer an idea or more definite an emotion” (*Varieties* 138). For Tate the key to the “modernism” of Donne is that he tears a term away from “a self-contained, objective system of truths” and uses it as “the vehicle... of heightened

⁹ This aspect of Santayana is recognized in Frank Lentricchia who argues that Santayana, James and Royce, the “philosophers of modernism at Harvard, circa 1900,” created “collaborative modernist texts” and the “original metapoetic idiom” of the young Eliot and Stevens (12-13, 4).

emotion in the poet's dramatization of his own personality." Unlike the terms of Dante or Milton, in Donne's case "the vocabulary is merely vocabulary and it lacks the ultimate, symbolic character of a myth." It is only a step from this position, argues Tate, to "the frustration of historical relativity" of the nineteenth century (*Essays* 245,46). This step has been taken in the "concentrated metaphors" of Crane and Stevens – and, with clear implication, Tate – poets whose "controlled disorder of perception" renders "a direct impression of the poet's historical situation" (*Essays* 241). An example might be the use that Tate makes of the bleeding tree of the suicide Pier delle Vigne found in Canto XIII of the *Inferno*, which in the "Winter" section of *Seasons of the Soul* becomes a "rigid madrepore" or phosphorescent coral tree. It is submerged in the "tossed anonymous sea," the element of a purely naturalistic Venus. The goddess has retreated from the now "burnt earth," where she once constituted a living myth, to the salt or chemical matrix of her origin. When the Tate persona, like Dante, breaks off a branch of the coral tree:

I heard the speaking blood
(From the livid wound of love)

Drip down upon my toe:
'We are the men who died
Of self-inflicted woe,
Lovers whose stratagem
Led to their suicide.'
I touched my sanguine hair
And felt it drip above
Their brother who, like them,
Was maimed and did not bear
The living wound of love. (*Collected Poems* 119-20)

The wound that afflicts the Tate persona is "livid" (purple) rather than "living." The paronomasia follows a Paterian melting of sound and of firmness of meaning: Christ's "living" sacrifice of his body in the Atonement has become the self-maiming of the merely corporeal or sexual life (shockingly depicted in the earlier image of the caged animal turning the "venereal awl" in this same "livid wound"). In the case of Dante's trees the stub, which bubbles with blood and words together, is an exact anagoge of the inability of the suicide ever to be resurrected in the body ("it is not just to have that of which one deprives himself" explains Dante). According to the fourfold medieval

scheme of exegesis, that is to say, this Ovidian metamorphosis into the wrong form of a plant points to the anagogic level of the future state of the soul of the suicide and its place in the ultimate scheme of salvation. But in the surreal imagery of Tate's "sea-conceited scop" (scop means bard in Anglo-Saxon) Dante's "clear, visual image" has undergone "katachresis" and the resulting complex strains at the limits of the dream-poem, threatening to make it collapse into absurdity. Thus in Tate's lines the "tree" grows underwater and, although it is described as an "oak," it is made of coral. Doubtless Tate wishes to intimate that, in the words of his poem "The Eye" (1948), the modern has become "the mineral man," but in the process he loses the physiological proximity of sap and blood that is retained in Dante's image (*Collected Poems* 124). It is also perhaps not too carping to say that a liquid moving within another liquid does not "drip." Dante's anagoge of the sin of violence to the body has been "spread" and this corresponds to the transition from Dante's "high dream" to the "low dream" of the more naturalistic, even psychoanalytic, imagination (to adopt Eliot's distinction made in his 1929 Dante book: Tate explains in an earlier stanza that to submerge under in this water is "[t]o plumb the lower mind" (*Selected Essays* 262)).¹⁰ In Tate's poem part of the perspective of the "low dream" is that the "I" persona no longer sees with a completely objective vision: he merges with the suicides and his own hair drips blood. The Aristotelian distinctions and co-dependencies between soul and body on which Dante (and Aquinas) based their doctrinal understandings of suicide are lost, as is the ordering and logic of metaphor which is bound up with these distinctions.¹¹ Yet the peculiar rigor of Tate's position is that the poem does not collapse into the immanent logic of the low dream; it is placed in relation, albeit broken relation, to a Latin tradition and it needs the fourfold way of reading visions (which can, for example, define the anagogy of the tree image) for its intelligibility.¹²

¹⁰ The foregoing analysis owes much to the stimulating comments of Frank Kermode in his short article on Tate in *Continuities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) 98-99.

¹¹ See for example Aquinas's statement in *Contra Gentiles* 4:79 that since the soul is the form of the body the immortality of souls seems to demand the future resurrection of bodies (quoted in F.C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955) 168). Eliot argued that one of the meanings that emerged after many readings of *The Divine Comedy* was that "the resurrection of the body has perhaps a deeper meaning than we understand," a meaning which he connected to Dante's depiction of the "state" of hell through "the projection of sensory images" (*Selected Essays* 250).

¹² One exposition, with extensive excerpts, of the fourfold method of exegesis is presented in a book which Tate much admired, William F. Lynch's *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960) (231-243). Tate revives the method in "The Symbolic Imagination": for example, in the observation that the modern poet such as Crane tries to move directly the anagogical meaning without going through the preparatory stages of letter, allegory and trope (*Essays* 430). In *Seasons of the Soul* Tate pursues Dante's claim, in his letter to Can Grande della Scala (partly reprinted in Lynch's book, 239), that a poetical work such as *The Divine Comedy* can also be interpreted by a method more usually applied to scripture. There is an allegory of the poets as well as an allegory of the theologians.

Tate believed that such tensions made him a Renaissance poet in a special and partly pejorative sense. By a process of transposition he applied the topos of the Renaissance to the troubled southern literary consciousness of the 1920s and 1930s in such essays as “The Profession of Letters in the South” (1935) while in such essays as “Religion and the Old South” (1930) and “What is a Traditional Society?” (1936) he was to make a limited identification of the pre-Civil War South and the Middle Ages. He adapts, for example, Santayana’s phrase “moral unity” to this supposedly “feudal” society: “Antebellum man, insofar as he achieved a unity between his moral nature and his livelihood, was a traditional man” (*Essays* 556). In referring to the “Southern Renaissance” as a Renaissance, Tate, as Michael O’Brien has pointed out, was employing a topos of romantic historiography found in such writers as Madame de Staël, Sismondi and, most trenchantly, Burckhardt (176). But in the celebrated conclusion of “The Profession of Letters in the South” he makes the Renaissance a much more ambiguous moment than they:

From the peculiarly historical consciousness of the Southern writer has come good work of a special order; but the focus of this consciousness is quite temporary. It has made possible the curious burst of intelligence that we get at a crossing of the ways, not unlike, on an infinitesimal stage, the outburst of poetic genius at the end of the sixteenth century when commercial England had already begun to crush feudal England. The Histories and Tragedies of Shakespeare record the death of the old régime, and Doctor Faustus gives up feudal order for world power. (*Essays* 533-34)

This “curious burst of intelligence” and its insidious admixture with “historical consciousness” are subject to the same qualifications that Norton made in his *Notes* about “the extraordinary intellectual activity” of the fifteenth century. The parallel Tate enjoins between these two manifestations of Renaissance seems to show that it was for him a historical topos before it was an inference from the facts, coming before its possible application to the South in the 1920s rather than the other way around (thus the Louisiana writers of the 1880s and 1890s such as G.W. Cable and Kate Chopin, who had as good a claim to “renaissance” as did Faulkner and the Fugitives, are not included in this “good work”). It would seem, too, that Tate’s understanding of this topos was actually quite dependent upon New England models of tradition and impersonality. It is not surprising therefore that in his critical essays Tate first applied this moveable Renaissance topos to mid-nineteenth century New England, several years before its use in his essay in *I’ll Take My Stand* in 1930.¹³ He wrote two articles – “Last Days of the

¹³ The feudal and Renaissance topoi, therefore, become extendable figures that may be applied to various historical periods. Eliot had a sense of this as well as Tate. He responded approvingly to *I’ll Take My Stand*,

Charming Lady" (1925) and "Emily Dickinson" (1928) – which expressed admiration for Puritan theocracy in giving a "final, definite meaning to life" before Emerson shifted the balance to "the personal and the unique in the interior sense." In Emily Dickinson's case it is her being balanced upon the fall of a "complete and homogenous society" that forms "the perfect literary situation": she is able to "probe" the "deficiencies of a tradition" (*Essays* 283, 84, 93, 94).

Of course, the claim that Eliot and Tate used late Brahmin topoi through which to understand the Middle Ages can be overstated. Yvor Winters' assertion that Adams' view of this period "has been adopted by Eliot and his followers" and "is merely a version of the Romantic Golden Age" is in danger of doing this (411). In fact Tate, one of these "followers," stated something like the opposite: he observes in one essay that the "medieval sense of mortality" survived in the work of the Elizabethan satirists, who used it "as a weapon of critical irony upon the vaunting romanticism of the Renaissance" and its Spenserian habit of ingenuous allegory (*Essays* 259, 185). Further Tate and Eliot both had shaded, even antipathetic, responses to Adams' work and its half-skeptical use of romantic historicism. It is quite true that Adams' belief that "he might use the century 1150-1250, expressed in Amiens Cathedral and the works of Thomas Aquinas, as the unit from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything true or untrue, except relation" can be seen as an earlier version of Eliot's technique of comparative synchronicity found in *The Waste Land* and in Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead," "Causerie" and "Horatian Epode to the Duchess of Malfi" (Adams, *Education* 435). R.P. Blackmur says of Adams' strategy: "It was as if he had to dream the same theme twice, in two worlds, before he could find out what the theme was" (30). But Adams locates his two points of measurement on a monistic scale, the scale of forces. As a consequence he has no way of distinguishing – in Tate's language – nature as an "open realm of Quality" from another understanding of nature which holds it off and judges experience of it by the criterion of "an objective religion, a universal scheme of reference" (Tate, *Memoirs* 190). Thus Adams, according to Tate, finds in the Virgin of Chartres an archaic embodiment of a nature that cannot be judged morally. She is, from the point of view of an objective religion, nature as "moral contingency." Thus Tate writes in a review of Phelps Putnam in 1933:

Henry Adams reconstructed the thirteenth century out of his impulse to find a rich world of sense, and the impulse carried with it the necessity to conduct his search in moral terms: when sensuousness and morality are added together (in New England)

saying that the Old South was "still in its way a spiritual entity" ("A Commentary" *The Criterion* 10 [April 1931] 40: 483-4).

the sum is woman, and we get from Adams the abstraction, Nature is moral contingency the perfect symbol of which, for his devious and snobbish intelligence, was the Virgin of Chartres. (Brown 159)

Eliot's response to the Chartres book seems even more dismissive, although more by fiat than argument. This response is apparently restricted to a passing comment made in Eliot's review of *The Education*: "Adams yearned for unity and found it, after a fashion, by writing a book on the thirteenth century" ("Sceptical" 795). "After a fashion": Eliot's feline qualification does not indicate much conviction in the sanctuary Adams supposedly found. Indeed the indefinite way Eliot mentions "a book on the thirteenth century" seems to show that he had not read *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*.¹⁴ But the core of Eliot and Tate's objection to Adams' and late Brahmin medievalism is that this approach is a complex product of the secularized New England imagination and its deployment of what Tate called "an aesthetic-historical mode of perception" (*Essays* 217). When Adams said he wished to rejoin the twelfth century by growing "prematurely young" and asked only "the right to see, or try to see, their thirteenth century with thirteenth century eyes" he reveals a connection with the historicism of early Romanticism and its partial continuation in nineteenth century German hermeneutic theory, for which empathy with expressive forms was the key to interpreting the past (*Mont* 7,80). In the language of Tate's "Three Types of Poetry" (1934) Adams' attitude could be seen as the projection of the "romantic will" into "a primitive world where scientific truth is not a fatal obstacle," a tacit concession of the case to positivism (*Essays* 184). Hans-Georg Gadamer provides an understanding of why the positivist and romantic approaches to history evident in Adams might interpenetrate with one another and constitute "the same break with the continuity of meaning in tradition." If the end result of pursuing the Enlightenment's critical understanding of the past was, by the end of the nineteenth century, to encounter "the frustration of historical relativity" (Tate) – and this is one lesson of Adams' "education" – then additional leverage is given to empathic understanding of this past "historically," that is by its own way of seeing itself

¹⁴ It is not mentioned in the first, and so far only, published volume of Eliot's letters, which cover the years until 1922 (i.e. after the review was written) (*The Letters of T.S. Eliot. Volume 1:1898-1922* ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1988)). Eliot's possible objection to Adams' book may be gauged by his reservation about Huysmans' book on Chartres (published in 1898 and cited in Adams' book). In "Baudelaire in our Time" (1927) Eliot writes with reference to *La Cathedrale* that "Huysmans... might have been much more in sympathy with the real spirit of the thirteenth century if he had thought less about it.... he is much more 'medieval' (and much more human) when he describes the visit of Madam Chantelouve [in *La-bas* where the visit replays the typist and the clerk in *The Waste Land*] than when he talks about his Cathedral" (quoted in *Varieties* 115).

(Gadamer 275). “For us,” says Adams of medieval Normandy, “the poetry is history, and the facts are false” (*Mont* 213). The literary sign in the Chartres book of this double kind of historical consciousness is a split in the narrator, who on the one hand merges with the “child-like” medieval worshipper and on the other hovers over the scene with the irony of the “old man,” that same “old man” who acts as the guide of the young niece as they cross the “*pons seclorum*, the bridge of ages” (*Mont* 11). Adams maintains the right to be on both sides of the bridge. That Adams’, Lowell’s (especially in “The Cathedral”) and Norton’s medievalism can be regarded as a peculiarly liberated form of secular historical thinking may be seen in contrasting their attitude towards the Middle Ages with that found in the principal Roman Catholic thinker of antebellum New England, Orestes Brownson. A more antithetical work to Adams’ *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* can hardly be imagined than Brownson’s “The Church in the Dark Ages” (1849). Brownson contends that Catholics are “indifferent” to medieval history, that they seek faith not in “the dead past, but in the living present,” and that the Oxford movement’s rehabilitation of Gothic art is a product of “the romantic school... of Protestant German origin” (254).

A change in language and sensibility was needed before late Brahmin medievalism could become the modernism of Eliot and Tate. The influence of T.E. Hulme upon these authors would shift the Middle Ages out of its historicist framework so that it could be seen as a period holding to “certain absolute values” and a conception of original sin. In *Speculations* (1924) T.E. Hulme observed:

I have none of the feelings of *nostalgia*, the reverence for tradition, the desire to recapture the sentiment of Fra Angelico, which seems to animate most modern defenders of religion. All that seems to me to be bosh. What is important, is what nobody seems to realise – the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. (9, 70-71)

In their poetry Eliot and Tate iterate the Hulmean sense of limit, of that which checks the romantic urge towards excess (for Hulme the Renaissance was essentially romantic). Tate’s verse is permeated by the sense of mortality and in Eliot’s, particularly in “Ash Wednesday,” there is the arduous climbing of the purgatorial stair. Unlike the Brahmin writers, Eliot and Tate explore the religious dimension in the “immediate experience,” that given of modernist verse. It would therefore seem an overstatement for Philip Rahv to claim that the “center of gravity of traditionalism is seldom in religious experience” and that what Eliot and others were attracted to was a *polis*, the social order of a past age in which religion played an integral part. It would appear too that Rahv’s claim that “traditionalism is really a form of perverted historicism, in the sense that it is fixated on

some period of the past idealized through the medium of the historical imagination, that uniquely modern product” is more apposite to the Brahmin writers than to Eliot and Tate (170-71). In *Four Quartets* and *Seasons of the Soul* there is an attempt to place the maze-like structure of historical relativism in relation to the final anagoges of “stillness” and “silence”: “to apprehend / The point of the intersection of the timeless / With time” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 212).

Although the late Brahmin writers showed unease with the drift of “liberalism” in its theological sense they were unable to bring this disquiet into decisive focus in the way that Eliot and Tate did. Eliot’s poetry marks a unique way of joining the two ends of the question – the “liberal” dispersal into disconnection and the need to render action in objective form and with some sense of its “final end.” Tate had a peculiar insight into the emergence of Eliot’s technique from the unraveling fabric of New England Unitarianism. In a case that he had been building up over forty years Tate argued in a late essay “Poetry Modern and Unmodern” (1968) that Eliot had adapted to verse the Jamesian method of assessment of character through indirect qualitative depiction. This method was applicable to what Tate had called, in a previous essay on “The Beast in the Jungle,” James’ discovery of “the great contemporary subject: the isolation and the frustration of the personality” (*Memoirs* 159). This very subject was a result of a regional and post-Protestant hemorrhaging of the sense of sin: in his Emily Dickinson essay Tate observed that there “lies an epoch” between Hawthorne and James. James was the hard-headed post-Emersonian who realized that there was left to him only the “historic role” of the Puritan “rejection” of the world, not *contemptus mundi* but its secularized simulacrum (*Essays* 287). In characters such as John Marcher and Gilbert Strether there is disavowal as an instinctive gesture, but no longer disavowal for a reason or an action. In “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “Gerontion,” Tate contends, Eliot took over James’ technique of rendering moral inaction “qualitatively by means of perception and sensibility” (*Essays* 234). This technique was called for because the characters are not defined in the Aristotelian manner by their acts (Gerontion says, for example, “I was neither at the hot gates / Nor fought in the warm rain” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 39)). But such a technique went against what Tate called “the way of the poet” for it is “the business of the symbolic poet to return to the order of temporal sequence – to *action*” (*Essays* 428). In the case of the poem of qualitative depiction this primary “tropological movement” had to be supplied by a “motion” through the poem that proceeded by the association of sensation or feeling rather than by a more logical cohesion or one based on narrative.

The occasion of “Poetry Modern and Unmodern” was to defend Eliot’s verse against Yvor Winters’ negative characterization in *Primitivism and Decadence: A Study of*

American Experimental Poetry (1937) of this “motion” as “qualitative progression” and his coupling it with what Winters called “pseudo-reference.” Winters categorizes these collectively under the name of “imitative form”: the notion, which he attributes first to a statement by Adams at the end of the Chartres book, that chaos must be expressed in a chaotic language. However Tate insists that in Eliot this technique of “qualitative progression” takes place in an “implicit rational order.” To illustrate imitative form Winters had quoted from a section of “Gerontion” where Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa and others are captured, after having eaten and drunk something “[a]mong whispers,” in a succession of enigmatic gestures of which Winters says that “the motivation, or meaning... is withheld.” But his quotation, Tate shows, is truncated and it removes the explanation of what it is that Mr. Silvero and his companions eat and drink among themselves. The preceding lines (actually the earlier part of the grammatical sentence) are: “In the juvescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger / In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas....” These lines identify the meal as a “secularized” or “anthropological” version of the Eucharist and carry the implication that “the renewal of nature in the spring, the renewal of human life through the Resurrection are now merely naturalistic phenomena.” Instead of uniting the communicants in one “Mystical Body,” however, this repast serves only to disperse them in scattered half-actions (*Essays* 232). One might go further: if Gerontion is a portrait of the Adams of Eliot’s review of *The Education*, an old plum in Eliot criticism, then this amoral nature begets that same “rich world of sense” out of which – in Tate’s view – Adams’ Virgin of Chartres emerges. Eliot in his review placed Adams’ skepticism, “wherever this man stepped the ground... flew into particles,” within an American history of theological liberalism that stretched back to Emerson’s refusal as a young minister to serve the communion, a refusal which Eliot suggests is “provincial” (“Sceptical” 795). “Gerontion” is, among other things, an arcane commentary on the history of the “dogma” of the Eucharist in New England: “modernism” in religion seeks out an expressive form in the aesthetic modernism of “qualitative progression.”

In Eliot’s verse the Unitarian and the Dantesque parts of the Brahmin inheritance are assimilated on the level of form, specifically modernist form. This joins up the two ends of this inheritance: the “isolation and frustration of the personality” found in John Marcher and Gerontion that needs to be rendered symptomatically in “imitative form” and the more Dante-like reaching out towards comprehensive objectification, in other words that assessment that, as Santayana noted of this poet, seeks “to value events and persons, not by casual personal impression or instinct, but according to their real nature and tendency” (66). Thus Tate says of Eliot’s depiction of Mr. Silvero and his

companions: “There is a stern moral judgment implicit in the way they are rendered.” Further Tate locates this principle of judgment actually within the qualitative progression: “Insofar as the people are judged, they judge themselves in what they cannot do” (there seems an echo of Capaneus’ self-judgment here) (*Essays* 234). The conjunction touches its nub in Tiresias’s observation of the seduction of the typist by the clerk in “The Fire Sermon,” where, according to Eliot’s notes, what Tiresias sees is “the substance of the poem” (*Collected Poems* 82). The seduction scene seems to rise spontaneously out of the qualitative montage of the city but it is fixed, evaluated in the judgment of Tiresias, an observer who has like Dante “walked among the lowest of the dead.” In words from the original draft of this section of the poem –lines which are bad Eliot, but which make explicit his purpose –Tiresias can

...trace the cryptogram that may be curled
Within these faint perceptions of the noise,
Of the movement, and the lights! (*Waste Land Facsimile* 31)

Tate in his essay on “Ash Wednesday” (1931) found the seduction scene “the most profound vision we have of modern man” and he meant “vision.” The distance between the seer and the clerk is that, Tate believes, of “classical irony” since “the seduction scene shows, not what man is, but what *for a moment* he thinks he is”: his identification with “overweening secular faith.” Such “classical irony,” grounded in a “center,” is at odds with the “romantic irony” Tate connects with romantic historicism, which is concerned with “fictitious alternatives” to “the total meanings of actual moral situations” (*Essays* 427, 66-67, 185).¹⁵ In Tate’s poetry too the speaker’s voice seeks out a “center” and cannot remain immanent to its apparent naturalistic scene.

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¹⁵ The opposition in Tate’s criticism between classic and romantic irony owes more to Irving Babbitt than to Schlegel. “Greek irony,” explains Babbitt, “always had a centre. The ironical contrast is between this centre and something that is less than central.” The romantic ironist, however, seeks evasion of any center because holding to a center implies an acceptance of limit (*Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 242-243).

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Noel Polk

How Shreve Gets in to Quentin's Pants

The occasion for my title occurs in *The Sound and the Fury* just after Gerald Bland, his mother, Spoade, Shreve, and two veiled young ladies encounter Quentin Compson in the clutches of the law and of an angry brother who wants Quentin pilloried for molesting his sister, whom Quentin has ostensibly been helping to find her way home. Julio, the brother, is as certain of Quentin's intentions toward his sister as Quentin is certain of Dalton Ames's intentions toward his sister.

It's part of an extended tumultuous episode of two or three pages of which we haven't yet taken the full measure. When Shreve hears that Quentin is under arrest, he starts climbing out of Mrs. Bland's automobile, and Quentin notices that he is wearing "a pair of my flannel trousers, like a glove" (141). The final detail, the glove, argues pretty certainly how Quentin's tight flannels mould and magnify Shreve's genitals, and how conscious Quentin is of them. Quentin claims that he doesn't "remember forgetting the pants" when he packed his clothes earlier in the day for shipment home – "I didn't remember forgetting them" is an extremely curious, even paradoxical, way of describing his packing: it's almost a double negative which, like double negatives, always mean grammatically the opposite of what a user is trying to say. Quentin may thus mean that he remembers very well that Shreve has his pants, and in any case the phrasing seems to be a rhetorical ploy by means of which he can distance himself from the trousers and what they now contain, and from the question why they seem to be on Shreve and not on their way to Jefferson. We can also tell something of the pants' impact on Quentin at this moment by his almost instantaneous deflection to Mrs Bland's double chins, which he also claims to have forgotten, and, more importantly, to the two pretty girls also in the car who, though they are veiled, he believes regard him "with a kind of delicate horror" (141). Quentin forces his attention from exposed male sexuality to the double chins of a voyeuristic and pandering mother and then, finally, to the veiled heterosexual threat that the two girls represent. He may, of course, feel that they look on him with horror simply because they know that he's under arrest, but the impact on him, at this moment, of Shreve in his pants allows us to speculate that their horror, delicate or not, is, in Quentin's imagination, grounded in his fear that they somehow intuitively know he is queer – maybe, he thinks, they have caught him looking at Shreve's genitals – and that their "delicate horror" is more nearly disgust. The girls' names – Miss Holmes and Miss

Daingerfield – resonate thematically, indicting Quentin’s own home and, by implication, heterosexual union: home, as Quentin has reason to know, is a dangerous place.

From a view outside his head, the ensuing scene is a broadly comic one, a kind of antic slapstick, a parade worthy of *The Keystone Cops* or Fellini. Looked at through Quentin’s eyes, however, the scene is a dark tableau of all the sexual baggage he has brought to Cambridge from Mississippi. Quentin drags with him to the Squire who is to decide his case a network of characters who represent the array of his pathologies: Gerald and his mother, in an oedipal relationship that grotesquely parodies the murky oedipal issues in his own family; Miss Holmes and Miss Daingerfield; Shreve, whom Spoade calls his “husband”; an astonishing group of naked and half-naked boys who emerge from the surrounding shrubbery and woods almost like an hallucination; an angry brother who also wants to defend and control his sister’s virginity; and, finally, the little girl herself, whom Quentin calls “little Sister,” and who may be, in some way, Caddy’s own young unsexual, pre-sexual, self, the Caddy that Quentin claims to want to preserve. Quentin drags all of these horrors to the judgment seat with him – a temporal judgment seat that foreshadows that ultimate Judgment Seat, which he anticipates seeing in the not very distant future.

This portion of the scene follows a complex narrative orchestration of Quentin’s past and present which braids together three different plots: the one involving Quentin and the little Italian girl; the one in which Quentin at first alone and then with the lost girl in tow, encounters the boys first when they are fishing and then at the mill where they are skinny-dipping; woven throughout the scene is Quentin’s simultaneous memory of his sexual play as a child with Natalie in the barn in the rain, which Caddy interrupts. Quentin and Natalie are playing something like doctor in the barn, touching each other. Caddy’s intervention turns the scene into a tempest of guilt and shame and retribution that ends when Quentin throws himself into the pig’s wallow and then smears it all over Caddy. Fuguing in and out of that powerful memory of childhood innocence turned corrupt are Quentin’s two encounters with the boys. Does the intertwining of the memory of Natalie with his attempts to help the little Italian girl find her way home allow us to wonder how pure Quentin’s motives are – one aborted, perhaps abortive, youthful heterosexual encounter to be replaced by another with perhaps different results by which Quentin could establish his heterosexuality? Does he want, at any level, to play doctor with his present little sister? Perhaps. He is interrupted this time too – not by Caddy but by the girl’s brother, who stops him from what Spoade later jokingly calls Quentin’s “nefarious purposes.”

At the first encounter, Quentin and the fishing boys banter pleasantly enough. They aren’t catching anything, though, and Quentin overhears one propose that they go to the

mill to go swimming (122). I think it no accident of Quentin's peregrinations that he heads directly for the mill, with the little girl in tow, whose presence at the mill pond spoils the boys' homosocial eden, though Quentin tries to assure them that "she's just a girl. She can't hurt you." Perhaps Quentin drags her there to veil his truly nefarious purposes, to get a look at the naked bodies of these boys. He is, recall, throughout, hyper-conscious of male bodies. Perhaps, too, he drags her there precisely to grant himself the interruption that Caddy had provided in the earlier scene.

If Quentin follows the boys to the pond to see them naked, he sees more than he bargains for. As the scene nears its climax, Quentin suddenly sees "*him* coming up the path running" (139, my italics) but does not identify the "him." Then he sees "*another* man, an oldish man running heavily, clutching a stick, and a boy naked from the waist up, clutching his pants as he ran." "There's Julio," says the little girl, but we don't know which male she is referring to. The initial "him" that Quentin sees might of course be Julio, but we would expect Julio to be with the sheriff, who is clearly the other man. The other "boy, naked from the waist up and clutching his pants" as he runs, is clearly not Julio, since when Julio jumps on Quentin, the "half naked boy" begins "darting and jumping up and down... clutching his trousers." Further, the appearance of the sheriff and the "boy" in the same sentence may suggest that they are or have been "together" while the boy was naked. In the same sentence Quentin also notes and juxtaposes with the boy and the sheriff another astonishing figure: he sees "another stark naked figure come around the tranquil bend in the path running and change direction in midstride and leap into the woods, a couple of garments rigid as boards behind it." Apparently the half-naked boys are the fishing, skinny-dipping boys just out of the mill pond: Julio has queried them about his sister, been told which direction she and Quentin went, and taken off with Anse in pursuit; they get out, grab their clothes and try to dress while running so as not to miss anything; some don't quite get fully dressed. These boys, then, are avenging homoerotic furies, interrupting Quentin's heterosexual idyll with the Italian girl as Caddy had interrupted his play with Natalie; both Caddy and the boys and Julio and the sheriff may drastically overestimate what Quentin's nefarious purposes are: but they may not. What's important, it seems to me, is what registers most potently on Quentin as this astonishing series of events takes place, including Anse's twice-noted phallic "stick" and the phallic "garments rigid as boards" which follow the latest naked boy into the woods. At the very least, if Quentin goes to the mill to see the boys skinny-dipping, he gets what he wants, in spades. These boys represent Quentin's suppressed homoerotic desires chasing him relentlessly and even bringing with them, as if to remind him how dangerous they are, the sheriff – the superego, the simultaneous agent of repression of that forbidden desire. The scene is a maelstrom of the homoerotic and of its possible

consequences: Miss Holmes and Miss Daingerfield, veiled, look on him with a kind of “delicate horror,” but that’s certainly mild compared to the horror and loathing with which he certainly regards himself in such moments when the homoerotic descends upon him so publicly and so menacingly – and, given the police and the judge, so judgmentally.

During the scene that leads to Quentin’s pathetic fight with Gerald Bland Quentin twice turns, shifts so as to repudiate Shreve’s hand so publicly upon his knee. Moments like these provide us with a slightly different context against which to view two or three other passages in Quentin’s section. The first occurs in the section’s earliest pages. Looking out the window of his Harvard dormitory room, Quentin watches the helter-skelter rushing of students on their way to class. Spoade emerges from the crowd and disrupts Quentin’s meditations, throws his poetic description of the scene, his elegant parallel structures and his compound and complex sentences, into a syntactical and sexual chaos: “...and Spoade. Calling Shreve my husband. Ah let him alone, Shreve said, if he’s got better sense than to chase after the little dirty sluts, whose business?” Quentin immediately deflects his thoughts toward the problem of his virginity as a heterosexual, about which he agonizes much throughout the day. At the end of the paragraph, however, he reverts to the homoerotic, repeating again Shreve’s suggestion that homosexuality is better than “chasing after the little dirty sluts,” before remembering his response: “Did you ever have a sister? Did you? Did you?” (78). Since these words later precede Quentin’s attack on Gerald Bland, we may suppose that Quentin’s defense of Caddy’s maidenhead is at least in part a denial of the homosexual: he is angry because Gerald can get laid in the right and proper normal way and he, Quentin, cannot.

Several things interest us here. First is the absolute crumbling of Quentin’s syntax here and elsewhere, especially when the twin stalkers of the homoerotic and the heterosexual collide and unmoor him from the grammar by which he maintains control over his disintegrating psyche. When he is most in control, his syntax is elegant, complex, beautiful; when he loses control of his thoughts, syntax more or less goes out the window and his thoughts turn to chaos; you will remember that toward the end of his section, he loses complete control even of capitalization and punctuation, and in the penultimate paragraph of his section, the final conversation with his father, he loses even the capitalized “I,” which has been a kind of totem ego for him. The syntactical breakdown when Spoade emerges into his vision suggests that Spoade really emerges from some undeniable claim on his deepest desires. Quentin immediately connects Spoade with what is so obviously a problematic relationship with Shreve. The recalled scene, especially Spoade’s banter with Shreve about the dirty little sluts, might argue that there is something relatively open, at least among them, about the homoerotic (perhaps they live in a sort of homosexual com-

munity), but we can't tell how much of a wife Quentin is to Shreve, and of course Shreve and Spoade may be merely teasing Quentin about his inability to lose his virginity, which a real man would have lost long before reaching Quentin's age – or he would at least lie about it. Quentin seems to have been unable either to lose it or to lie.

Other scenes, briefly: watching Gerald Bland row the skull, Quentin meditates on Gerald's mother's braggadocio about Gerald's success with women. Mrs. Bland likes him, Quentin, he thinks, because he is at least a Southerner, but she doesn't like Spoade, "since she met [him] coming out of chapel one He said she couldn't be a lady no lady would be out at that hour" (91). Again Quentin's syntax breaks down. Most authors would have put a dash between "one" and "He" to indicate an interrupted thought, but not Faulkner; the lack of such punctuation may indicate how smoothly Quentin corrects his thoughts as they head in that forbidden direction, which would reveal why Spoade was in fact in the chapel at such a late hour, and perhaps why Mrs. Bland is out so late. I suspect neither was there to worship. University chapels have always been notorious as homosexual gathering places, and that I suspect is what Quentin refuses to acknowledge; if Spoade has been there for a homosexual tryst, we may easily imagine a ménage-a-trois of Spoade, Shreve, and Quentin. Why Mrs. Bland is out that late at night is not clear either, but it's easy to speculate that she is checking up on the boys that Gerald is hanging out with; perhaps she's suspicious of Gerald's sexual preferences and that is why she all but pimps for him with girls. What Quentin suppresses here may also help explain why Mrs. Bland goes to the proctor to have Quentin moved out of Shreve's quarters (106): she wants to protect Quentin – and Gerald – from that homosexual element.

One final passage is worth a word or two. Quentin's remembered discussion with his father about women, which occurs just after he and the little Italian girl leave the bread shop, and a garbled memory of his discussion with Caddy about her pregnancy, her "sickness":

Because women so delicate so mysterious Father said. Delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside outside of them always but. Yellow. Feet soles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those mysterious and imperious concealed. With all that inside of them shapes an outward suavity waiting for a touch to. Liquid putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odor of honeysuckles all mixed up. (128)

This passage, one of the several most oft-quoted and uneasily commented upon in all of Faulkner, may lie at the root of all Quentin's problems. Recall that Quentin reports on

two or three occasions arguments during which his father accuses his mother of setting Jason to spy on Caddy and Dalton Ames. Quentin gets accused of spying too, but denies it vehemently; this passage gives us reason to doubt those denials. I propose that here Quentin remembers seeing Caddy and Dalton Ames having sex. Again syntax fails him: but we may make some sense of the passage – the vision of “feet soles with walking like” suggest that he watched from a position where he could see their feet, Caddy’s pointing upward, Dalton’s between them pointing downward, and all four sort of walking and moving “like” – Quentin begins a simile, but words, comparisons, simply fail him. Father has filled him with disgust for sex, women, the monthly cycle of “periodical filth.” Female genitals shaped “suavely” need only a touch to turn them to putrefied liquid; men are always “outside outside” but always want to get inside inside. His final vision combines a semen-filled condom – “drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled [with semen]” – and the honeysuckle, which connection is why he forever is suffocated by the smell of honeysuckle.

This is a Freudian primal scene, a child’s first vision of parental intercourse, and the beginning of Oedipal dynamics in a child’s development, presented here with substitutions as such scenes nearly always are in Faulkner. In Freud, the Oedipus complex always involves an element of the homoerotic – the viewing child wants to replace both mom and dad in coitus, but associates the act with shame and, if discovered watching, with increased guilt that demands punishment. Dalton dominates Quentin’s voyeuristic memory of Caddy and Dalton together, not Caddy. In his quieter, more intimate moments, he allows himself to fondle Dalton’s name, repeating it several times in triads, almost like a chant, a love song, caressing his face as much as words can: “‘Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Shirts. I thought all the time they were khaki, army issue khaki, until I saw they were of heavy Chinese silk or finest flannel because they made his face so brown his eyes so blue. Dalton Ames’” (92). He’s got a crush on Dalton Ames that he cannot claim: and incest, horrible as it is, is more acceptable than homosexuality. Quentin’s pathologies in his family are clear: his father’s lugubrious, viscous attitudes toward women; his constant whining about his weak position in his family vis-à-vis his brother-in-law; Quentin’s mother’s whining about everything, while appearing always so seductively in or ready for bed: nothing in Quentin’s home can have given him a very healthy model for marriage or heterosexual union; the only models are indeed quite terrifying ones. But neither has anything given him permission to pursue the homosexual. He is a man without a sexual option to give him the identity that he so clearly craves.

I hasten to add, in closing, that nothing I’ve said here today purports to argue that Quentin is a practicing homosexual; there is no such evidence, but only this galaxy of troubling evidence that at very least suggests how deeply the homoerotic urge and the

fear of homosexuality have attached themselves to his sensibilities and sensitivities, and how awful it is to feel pulled in that direction when his culture and his family assumes heterosexuality, problematic though it be, as the right and proper end of a man. I'd suggest too the ontological dimensions of Quentin's dilemma: the possibility that he is homosexual and that he sees that as his only option works toward his decision to commit suicide much more profoundly than anything else that has been suggested. He wants desperately to *not* be a heterosexual virgin, but simply can't do it, as he puts it in this anguished passage:

...and I thought about how I'd thought about I could not be a virgin, with so many of them walking along in the shadows and whispering with their soft girlvoices lingering in the shadowy places and the words coming out and perfume and eyes you could feel not see, but if it was that simple to do it wouldn't be anything and if it wasn't anything what was I... (147)

In his mind, in his culture, a boy who can't get properly laid with so many available girls around, is just plain queer: and he cannot be that – or, as it turns out, anything else.

To a certain extent, of course, Shreve's literally wearing Quentin's pants is a Faulknerian joke, of a piece with the one that drives the present-day narrative of the Benjy section: Luster's dogged determination to find a golf ball that he can sell to a golfer for a quarter and go to the show. My friend Tom McHaney suggested long ago that not just Luster but all males in *The Sound and the Fury* are searching for lost balls. But neither joke is really as funny as it seems, is it? Shreve might not be in Quentin's pants, but he's surely in his head – a far more terrifying place for him to be.

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A Rose for Eurydice: The Nocturne and Melancholia in William Faulkner's "Pantaloon in Black" and "A Rose for Emily"

In his study of the sublime, Edmund Burke notes that "all general privations are great, because they are terrible: Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence" (149). The nocturne focuses on the privations of the night, recognizing both its boundlessness and limitations. The night mutes and disfigures the material experience and the physical boundaries of our being, simultaneously bringing forward the inwardness of the mind, which, when deprived of the comfortable familiarity of the sunlit objects, turns upon memory, intuition and imagination to counter and overcome the otherness of the nocturnal world. As Susan Stewart argues, the nocturne is primarily a study in "absence, darkness, death; things that are not" (257). Stewart traces the history of the whole nocturnal tradition to the Orphic myth and its rhetoric of loss. Defying time and death, Orpheus reversed the course of life, plunged into the world of the dead, and with his imploring and passionate song pleaded for the release of Eurydice. His act of defiance and love symbolically represents the power of poetry, and at the same time it is a statement of inevitable loss; Eurydice died the second time and receded into darkness as Orpheus turned back too early to see her, shattering forever the chance for their reunion. Orpheus's desire to make Eurydice's presence more palpable and true stemmed from his need for recognition, for breaking through and transcending the darkness and nothingness of death, and converting this nothingness into meaning. In his last gaze he brought Eurydice back from the realm of the shadow and uncertainty, but at the same moment, he lost her. This last gaze – a moment of suspension between life and death, between finitude and infinity, between seeing and unseeing – becomes an expression of human longing for fulfillment and truth.

The metaphorical suggestiveness of Orpheus' last gaze, which simultaneously implies regaining the object of love and its loss, acquires special significance within the realm of Faulkner's mythic imagination. For Faulkner, art is the nocturnal voice of the ineffable: of loss and absence shaped into language; of truth which realizes itself in its elusiveness and the impossibility of knowing. It is also a constant longing and an irresistible urge to look back toward the remembered and the imagined past, the act of searching in the

often terrifying darkness of the mind and history, a quest which is its own justification since its ultimate meaning is often concealed from the reader.

Faulkner himself admits that the theme of loss is central to his fiction: "I try by main strength to recreate between the covers of a book the world as I was already preparing to lose and regret" (quoted in Cox 7). Indeed, one of the dominant features of his prose is the emphasis on the unfulfilled and the missing, and the way their stories unfold through fragments, memories, evasions, indefinite meanings and the multiple voices of the past. His fictional world is heavy with the atmosphere of death and often opens and closes with funerals and deaths. His characters, notes Gail Mortimer in her study of Faulkner's rhetoric of loss, always destroy what they love and cherish most; the protagonists central to the story are often its absent and elusive centers, his best plots fail as they advance towards the full and conclusive truth and leave us only with a possibility of meaning or a multitude of distorted meanings (7-9). As Mortimer further affirms, "Faulkner's world is a world sustained among tensions about loss" (7).

There are at least several dimensions of loss dramatized in Faulkner's fiction: the most tangible of them being the loss of reliability of language, deepened by a discovery that "every memory is already the inscription of loss, that imagination can represent only what is not present" (Matthews 34). Writing and storytelling are not capable of restoring or preserving the vanishing world that Faulkner's narrators struggle to commemorate so desperately. As a result, the protagonists of those narratives never gain real substance. Instead, they resemble nocturnal shadows and blurred traces in the shifting landscape of the mind, shadows and traces which have originated somewhere between memory distortion and the infinite possibilities of tale-telling. Faulkner's legends and stories seem to dematerialize in the daylight, as they come from the conjunction of memory, imagination and the past which weaves them into "a broken fabric of multiple and oblique plots," defeated by a frustration that "any expression of memory inscribes ineradicable absence and loss" (Matthews 35).

The nocturnal myth and its rhetoric of inconsolable loss and suffering receives another interpretative dimension when related to the psychoanalytical concept of melancholia defined by Sigmund Freud in his "Mourning and Melancholia" of 1917. Freud distinguishes here between two psychological reactions to privation: mourning, in which grieving is natural, conscious and resolved through the traditional gestures of ritualized loss; and melancholy, in which mourning remains unresolved, and the real meaning of loss is internalized and buried in the realm of the unconscious. The object of loss is not perceived as a separate being but as the extension of the melancholiac's own ego which cannot be relinquished. In melancholy, a person experiences a process named by Freud as "a regress to narcissism" (170) and which consists of three basic stages: removing the

gap between the self and the other, absorbing the other into the self, and preserving him or her alive as a part of the ego. In the case of healthy mourning, such rituals as prayers, memorial services, visits to the grave and openly manifested and expressed suffering, help the mourner to accept the absence and separateness of the dead, acknowledge their finality and resume his life. Freud puts it in the following way: "Each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists.... When this work has been accomplished the ego will have succeeded in freeing its libido from the lost object" (166). Melancholia, in turn, keeps the wound open and sore, incapacitates the sufferer, dissolving his connection with everything that is not related to the thoughts of his loss. "The distinguishing mental features of melancholia," according to Freud, "are a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings" (165). This repressed grief, can have very harmful effects on the melancholic as it prevents him from forming new personal and social connections and often pulls him towards self-destruction.

Freud's melancholia and the nocturnal myth of Orpheus and Eurydice share their attachment not only to the theme of loss, but above all, to the denial of loss. Privation, both in nocturne and in melancholia, is inconsolable – the grieving of Orpheus, as that of a melancholiac, cannot cease: instead, it is kept alive through repetition in his songs and entombment in memory or the unconscious. Both melancholia and nocturne grapple with a similar paradox as they made absence palpable and real, but at the same time – as impossible to accept as Orpheus' loss of Eurydice.

The nocturne and melancholia serve well to define Faulkner's conceptions of history and writing which are strongly nocturnal and ultimately melancholic as they exist and realize themselves in the intra-psychic space of memory and the imagination – Faulkner-Orpheus' "suspended gaze" filled to the brim with a deep sense of loss. For Faulkner, fiction is a reliving of the past with a melancholic strain to it which allows for the temporary suspension of loss but ultimately makes this loss even more poignant. Just like Orpheus and Freud's pathological mourner, Faulkner is haunted by a dream that threatens to rule out the present, as his writing is both painful and loving backward-looking at his already fading Eurydice.

Many of Faulkner's stories and novels can be dubbed "melancholic nocturnes," because they combine the problem of a repressed and unrelinquished loss with the orphic plot of the nocturne. "Pantaloon in Black" from *Go Down, Moses* is perhaps the best example of these two themes interweave. As Matthews aptly notes in his chapter on the rituals of mourning in *Go Down Moses*, the whole collection is

buckling under the grief of the losses it sustains... As it displays the moribund self-delusion of the Old South, as it stumbles across Indian burial mounds or the corpses of Old Ben, as it hoists Sam Fathers onto his platform and discovers Ike in a deathly attitude on his camp cot, the entire novel becomes the bearer of bodies, a catafalque. (216-218)

“Pantaloone in Black” is indeed a story of mourning, in which the main hero vainly tries to assuage his grief over the death of his wife. The story opens with a very nocturnal passage – a picture of a grave at twilight and the main protagonist’s furious and lonely grave-digging “so that the mound seemed to be rising of its own volition” (*Go Down, Moses* 132).¹ Rider’s anger and refusal of help offered by his friends shows his inability to find the adequate way of articulating his pain and his rage against the loss. Since his loss cannot find expression either in language nor in the symbolic rituals of mourning,² it becomes, to use Freudian terms, introjected into his psyche. The story beautifully renders the process of melancholiac incorporation of loss as it almost immediately takes the reader into the nocturnal sphere of memory, the space of Rider’s mind in which he tries to resuscitate the existence of the lost love. Like Freud’s melancholic, the character becomes “a prisoner of grief” (Matthews 242) and devotes himself exclusively to mourning, “which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interests” (Freud 165). His world after the funeral loses substantiality, filling up with shadows of the past and references to his happy marriage with Mannie – a static and timeless vision of the road

blotted by the strolling and unhurried Sunday shoes, with somewhere beneath them, vanished but not gone, fixed and held in the annealing dust, the narrow, splay-toed prints of his wife’s bare feet... his body breasting the air her body vacated... his eyes touching the objects-post and tree and field and house and hill-her eyes had lost. (CS 133)

¹ All the quotations from Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* and *Collected Stories* will be hereafter abbreviated respectively as GDM and CS.

² Faulkner’s critics point to the racial causes of Rider’s internalized and wordless grieving. In his study of Faulkner’s performative use of language, Matthews argues that “social and racial disenfranchisements conspire against his voice” (241). Silenced and excluded by his blackness from the signifying discourse of grief, he lacks the right language that will “console and substitute”. Similarly Moreland notes: “Faulkner will write at the edge of what his white discourse and these blacks’ revisionary ‘signifyings’ on that discourse would allow him to recognize both in the successive social forms that Rider tries to fit to his grief and also in that grief and rage which –unfit, unarticulated, apparently insignificant and hysterical – are only exacerbated by the inadequacies of those available forms” (172). Walter Taylor, in his essay “‘Pantaloone’: The Negro Anomaly at the Heart of *Go Down Moses*,” observes that Rider’s suppressed articulation and violence after the funeral express his growing frustration with the whites identified as the cause of all his misfortunes (64).

“Each single one of the memories and hopes which bound libido to the object is brought up,” argues Freud (166), and his observation applies well to Rider, for whom even the air, the road dust, and the footprints are read as a text telling a story of his unbearable loss. Similarly, the rented house in which they lived is filled with an almost palpable sense of his beloved’s absence: “now even the new planks and sills and shingles, the hearth and stove and bed, were all a part of the memory of somebody else” (CS 135). Both fragments show Rider’s melancholic identification with the object of love, whom the protagonist from the beginning perceived as a better part of his own identity, a promise of freedom and meaning realized in the domestic stability and rituals of their marital life. The passages are filled with the figures of Freudian incorporation of loss as Mannie takes up the whole space of Rider’s memory: the world she saw, the objects she touched and even the air she breathed become Rider’s own, blinding him to everything that falls outside their shared and now lost experience. Although warned by his aunt against returning home, and thus keeping his pain alive, Rider feels compelled to go there, and just like Orpheus will his love back to life out of the emptiness and darkness which had swallowed her. His return is an orphic gesture against the finality of death and irreversibility of time. It is also a melancholic urge sustaining his suicidal drive towards self-torment and self-destruction. His journey towards death and descent into the psychic space of loss and suffering are marked symbolically by an almost breathtaking congestion of images of enclosure, inwardness, oppression and suffocation, enhanced further by the tortured and embedded structure of the sentence, suggesting “lost plenitude” (Matthews 239) of the domestic bliss:

all those six months were now crammed and crowded into one instant of time until there was no space left for air to breathe, crammed and crowded about the hearth where the fire which was to have lasted to the end of them, before which in the days before he was able to by the stove he would enter after a five-mile walk from the mill and find her, the shape of her narrow back and haunches squatting, one narrow spread hand shielding her face from the blaze over which the other hand held the skillet, had already fallen to a dry, light soilure of dead ashes when the sun rose yesterday— and himself standing there while the last of light died about the strong and indomitable beating of his heart and the deep steady arch of collapse of his chest which walking fast over the rough going of woods and fields had not increased and standing still in the quiet and fading room had not slowed down. (CS 135-136)

The falling dusk, the lack of room and air to breathe and the infinitely postponed closure of the sentence show Rider’s gradual turning away from reality and immersion in suffering, which climaxes in his nocturnal attempt to imagine Mannie back into life:

...an then he saw her too. She was standing in the kitchen door, looking at him... Then he took a step toward her, slow, not even raising his hand yet, and stopped. Then he took another step. But this time as soon as he moved she began to fade. He stopped at once, not breathing again, motionless, willing his eyes to see that she had stopped too. But she had not stopped. She was fading, going. (GDM 136)

Eurydice receded back into darkness before the anguished eyes of Orpheus, and Mannie's ghost similarly vanishes into nothingness the more Rider wants to make her corporeal and tangible. Faulkner skillfully renders the split between the physical world and the world of the spirit as he makes Rider reach out to Mannie from the dimension of vitality, life and physical strength:

She was going fast now, he could actually feel between them the insuperable barrier of that very strength which could handle alone a log which would have taken any two other men to handle, of the blood and bones and flesh too strong, invincible for life, having learned at least once with his own eyes how tough, even in sudden and violent death, not a young man's bones and flesh perhaps but the will of that bone and flesh to remain alive, actually was. (GDM 137)

The need of the flesh to hold on to life struggles with Rider's spirit's drive towards death. Just like the melancholiac, who, according to Freud, overthrows "that instinct which contains every living thing to cling to life" (167), Rider sees suffering as intolerable and tries to find a way to defeat the life-sustaining urge in his body and rejoin Mannie in death. Surrendering to a self-destructive impulse of melancholia, the protagonist cannot invent any "reasons for his breathing" and cuts all ties with his previous life: he refuses to sleep, rejects the consolation of God and family; he scorns the rituals of mourning and loses himself in his work; he turns to whiskey and dice, and finally kills a white gambler, Birdsong, who has been cheating the Negroes at dice, knowing he will be lynched for it. Freud identifies sleeplessness, refusal to eat and self-torment as characteristic of the melancholic grief (167). "Hit look lack Ah just cant quit thinking. Look lack Ah just cant quit" (GDM 154) – these words insistently repeated by Rider after the murder show his inconsolable and narcissistic immersion in mourning and its complete internalization. Rider's inescapable awareness of loss and his inability to quit turning back and remembering the past reinforces also the Orphic plot of the story – like Orpheus, Rider feels compelled to face the terror of darkness and emptiness, and his rage derives also from a similar passion of longing, of suffering, and of defeat.

The same nocturnal myth is given an interesting twist in Faulkner's most famous story, "A Rose for Emily," in which the main focus is not Orpheus and his drama of loss,

but Faulkner's Eurydice, a Southern belle, Emily Grierson, who refuses to yield to darkness and death and desperately clings to the unreality of her own dream. Just like Rider from "Pantaloon in Black," the protagonist of "A Rose for Emily" is nocturnally locked up in the past, in the melancholic "vanished but not gone," and entrapped by a desire to arrest the time and freeze the world that no longer exists. Her entrapment is intimated early in the story by Emily's tomb-like and inaccessible house "filled with dust and shadows" (CS 120), with its atmosphere "close and dunk" (CS 120), as well as by her lonely silhouetted figure suspended in the window or door frames in which the woman is frequently seen at night, "the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol" (CS 123). The images of arrestment, isolation and entombment enhance melancholic overtones of the story, as they point to Emily's willful retreat into unreality devoid of change and loss. Even in the memory of her townsfolk Emily serves as a symbol of arrested change, and statue-like permanence: "she passed from generation to generation – dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse" (CS 128). She rejects all signs of transience: not only does she refuse to pay the new taxes and collect her post, but she also denies the fact of her father's death or her own need for mourning and burial, and appears in front of the mourners "dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face" (CS 129). Finally, she murders her own lover and preserves his body in the house to prevent the most painful of privations, namely the loss of love. The bridal bedroom in which she kept his body well testifies to her melancholic need to incorporate and entomb the lost object of her love:

A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent of dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks. (CS 125)

The bridal decorations in the chamber, the folded clothes as if "they had just been removed," the lover's body and passion rotten in "the attitude of an embrace," "inextricable from the bed in which he lay" (CS 125), and the indentation of Emily's head upon the second pillow all show that her life was, in Freud's terms, an arrested longing of the melancholiac, sadistically attached to loss through its repeated denials. The very rhythm of the passage, fixed around the insistent repetition of the sentence pattern starting with the "upon" and the twice repeated words such as "silver" and "tarnished," further reinforces the effect of the suspension of time. The futility of Emily's attempts to freeze the

wedding night into infinity and thus perpetuate the love which she is not willing to relinquish is suggested by the abundance of traces of the passing time in the quoted fragments: the faded colors of the curtains, the tarnished silver, the obscured monogram, “a pale crescent of dust” on the lifted objects (CS 125). The mummified embrace of Emily’s lover and the indentation of her head on the pillow is Faulkner’s Eurydice’s grim and a perverse response to Orpheus’ last gaze, her will to come back to life even if only in a figure of absence – a trace which is painfully present and frozen into a poised moment of loss. The nocturnal myth is skillfully reversed here; and it is actually this reversal that lends Faulkner’s story its disquieting dimension and force. What the reversal implies is the possibility and the threat of Eurydice’s revenge on her lover for summoning her into presence and loosing her again to the realm of darkness and silence. Unlike Mannie from “Pantaloons in Black,” who obediently retreats away into darkness under Orpheus’ anguished gaze, Emily Grierson fights back as she struggles not to become the story’s absent center and a representation of the ephemeral and elusive ideal. The less tangible imprint of her head on the pillow is upheld by a more substantial and corporeal symbol of her absence: “a long strand of iron-gray hair” (CS 125), which literally and metaphorically closes the story, leaving a ghastly indentation in the reader’s mind. Emily’s murder of Homer and the enclosing embrace into which she has molded his body suggest her strong desire to master and resist her loss, to translate it into the self-deluding fiction of the perpetually suspended bridal night. Appalling as it may seem, it is also Emily’s ultimate escape from time into which she willingly pulls her reluctant lover.

The subtly self-reflexive title of the story betrays its final “melancholic” link: a rose for Emily is the story itself, which paradoxically enables Faulkner to keep his protagonist alive continually and perpetuate her death in the story’s subsequent re-readings. What enhances such interpretation is also the choice of a flower for Emily, since rose can be read both as an expression of love, (and there is a strongly felt veil of the narrator’s sympathy for Emily’s grotesque life throughout the whole narrative); and as a funereal rose from Faulkner’s Orphic mourner, who tries to articulate and come to grips with the loss of his Emily-Eurydice in this ritual gesture of ceaseless remembrance. As an incurable melancholic, however, who defiantly chooses fragile and quickly fading roses over more enduring funeral flowers, he fails again, yet in his failure lives on in the narrative compulsion to summon the “outraged baffled ghosts” (Faulkner, *Absalom* 11) of the past and to perform the mourning rites of speech by telling more “stories-roses” of loss.

The nocturnal myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the Freudian concept of melancholia can be employed as useful tools for explaining Faulkner’s concept of writing as loss.

The unresolved and unexpressed grieving of Rider from “Pantaloone in Black,” and the self-perpetuating loss realized in the plot and in the title of “A Rose for Emily” for Faulkner have both a human and a larger, historical sense as they show not only man’s grapple with mortality and privation, but also the South’s problematic attitude towards history which keeps the wounds of loss and defeat forever open and bleeding. Faulkner’s narrators, of whom the most touching and melancholic is Quentin Compson, probe and pierce through these wounds and reach out of darkness towards their fading Eurydice until nothing remains but suffering which can be resolved only in death. As shown by Peter Brooks in his study of Faulkner’s narrative patterns, “the attempted recovery of the past makes known the continuing history of past desire as it persists in the present” (311). “This tortured utopia of unending narrative dialogue,” to use Brooks’ words, helps us comprehend the South’s historical traumas and uncovers the dream of a more ordered world beneath the nightmares of Faulkner’s melancholic tales (312).

Just like the death song from the Orphic myth which lies at the core of the nocturnal tradition, the imaginative impact of Faulkner’s works comes out of the Burkean darkness, the darkness of human suffering, the blackness of the past and of the self. This effort of probing and piercing through the dark and loss turns his writing into a melancholic struggle against the amorphous flow of life and time, and becomes a way of saying no to death, emptiness, and human failure. Through multiple retellings and fabrications of the past, the suspended endings of his tales, his relentless backward-looking and the ever elusive truths of his creations, Faulkner tries to stop the South-as-Eurydice from vanishing, to arrest the flow of time, and to prevent, even if only in the volatile and destabilized space of his nocturnal imagination, a dissolution of the world and myth he loved.

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Jerzy Sobieraj

America, the South, and the Literature of Reconstruction: Uniqueness of “Another Land”

Though it is essentially believed that it was the mid-years of the nineteenth century that cemented the South as one solid entity, the nature of Southern distinctiveness and separatism is more complex and certainly should be traced into colonial times. On the one hand, long before the times of the Civil War the North and the South could be described as, to a certain degree, similar:

...there once had been a moral perspective that embraced both North and South. That ethical unity, a mixture of traditional Protestantism and folk tradition, made possible a united front against the crown in the American Revolution. A common heritage from Great Britain – devotion to common law and the rights of free men, commitment to familial styles of patriarchy, common language and literary culture – assured a harmony of political interests. (Wyatt-Brown 19)

On the other hand, as long ago as in the colonial period, churchgoing in the South was far from the seriousness and piety of the North, the towns almost absent on the maps of the South whereas Southern plantations were turning into profit-seeking institutions in comparison to the local consumption farming of the North, not to mention the slave-based economy of the Dixie Land. Those Southern settlers who were of British origin came basically from the “more conservative, rustic and wilder areas and households” of the Isles. And slowly but significantly, especially in the decades of the Industrial Revolution, the difference between the agrarian, conservative South and the urban, progressive North became much more visible.¹ Southerners tended to idealize the original Union of 1787, calling it nostalgically the “good Old Union” in comparison with the state of the Union some decades later. The abolitionist movement, the 1860 Lincoln – Hamlin campaign with slavery as one of its main issues and the final choice of Lincoln as President could only widen the already unbridgeable gap – as many Southerners would say – between the North and the South. It must also be noted that some distinguished Northern-

¹ For the differences between the North and the South mentioned above see Wyatt-Brown 18-19.

ers might have added some to set both regions apart, expressing publicly their opinions about the South. Ralph Waldo Emerson himself, during his speech delivered in 1862, spoke about the South with a feeling of open superiority: “Why cannot the best civilization be extended over the whole country, since the disorder of the less-civilized portion menaces the existence of the country?” (Vann Woodward 142). Soon after the 1860 presidential election the *Daily Constitutionalist*, published in Augusta, Georgia announced in its editorial:

The differences between North and South have been growing more marked for years, and the mutual repulsion more radical, until not a single sympathy is left between the dominant influences in each section. Not even the banner of the stars and stripes excites the same thrill of patriotic emotion, alike in the heart of the northern Republican and the southern secessionist. (quoted in Potter 448)

The Civil War itself, as David M. Potter emphasizes, plays the catalyst role of Southern nationalism. The war invokes in the Southerners a sense of enormous unity as a group: “It gives them new things to share – common danger, common efforts against the adversary, common sacrifice, and perhaps a common triumph” (quoted in Potter 450). Louis D. Rubin, Jr., commenting on the final loss of the war by the South, can still emphasize its force of unifying the Southerners:

Yet in defeat the South not only retained its sense of identity, but added to it its mythos of a lost cause, a sense of ancestral pieties and loyalties bequeathed through suffering, and a unity that comes through common deprivation and shared hatred and adversity. This was not exactly what those who favored secession had in mind, but if their object was to preserve Southern identity, there can be no doubt that it worked. (5)

The period that followed – Reconstruction – though technically bringing the South back to the Union, practically caused the “chasm” between Southerners and Northerners to grow even bigger. To borrow a simple statement, “Confederate white supremacy... became increasingly difficult to reconcile with Revolutionary idealism or Federal anti-slavery actions” (Willis 142). White people of the South remembered the war loss extraordinarily well and interpreted any attempts of the North to help the South during Reconstruction as intervention of foreign forces into the crucial matters of the South. And the word “carpetbagger,” that became so popular after the Civil War, had in the South only one, pejorative, meaning. Carpetbaggers, among all the possible evils they tried to implement in the South, on the ideological level, epitomized the prime danger,

the loss of Southern agrarian identity as attacked by the foreign industrial civilization of the North. And though Reconstruction in its original design aimed to put an end to the "house divided," its final result "was actually to widen and deepen the disparity between the revolutionized society and the rest of the Union" (Woodward 110-111). Many Southerners accentuated the existence of two different civilizations within the United States of America, that of the South and that of the North. In 1880, three years after the formal Reconstruction had been over, Edwin L. Godkin, examining the state of affairs concerning both sections of America, wrote: "The South in its structure of society, in its manners and social traditions, differs nearly as much from the North as Ireland does, or Hungary, or Turkey" (quoted in Woodward 142).

In the era of the New South the factual and historical grounds of Southern uniqueness are additionally enriched by myth-making sentimentalism: planting Confederate monuments across and along the South, celebrating Confederate heroism in Southern papers and commemorating anniversaries of the War, arousing interest in genealogy, idealizing the aristocratic heritage of the region including various expressions of nostalgia for the "good ole times." The workings and interplay of all these factors remained not without influence upon the condition of Southern letters and must have shaped the vision and standing of its literature in the last decades of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the one that followed.

The conflict between the two regions of America was often emphasized as a clash between the South and America itself or between the South and the Nation, the distinction explored after the Civil War by journalists, political activists, and writers in the South but occasionally also in the North. Many of them examined all possible historical, cultural, and civilizational aspects of both sections emphasizing their entire separation from each other, and justifying calling them two distinct "civilizations," a word popular towards the end of the nineteenth century, often standing for culture or nation. One compared the difference between Alabama and the states beyond the deep South to the difference between "[t]he Congo... [and] Massachusetts or Kansas or California" (Cash VII). A Southern farmer, exposing the Southern attachment to the local and regional, when showing the gradation of territorial and cultural importance, might, after the Civil War, say "I go first for Greenville, then for Greenville District, then for the up-country, then for South Carolina, then for the South, then for the United States; and after that I don't go for a thing" (quoted in Light 82). Alexander H. Stephens once wrote: "My native land, my country, the only one that is country to me, is Georgia" (quoted in Potter 463). It must be emphasized that his kind of "localism" did not exclude one's attachment to the South as such. Thus on some other occasion the same Alexander H. Stephens could also write: "I must confess that all my feelings of attachment are most ardent

towards that with which all my interests and associations are identified.... The South is my home – my fatherland” (quoted in Potter 474).

The history of the relationship between the two regions almost produced a new academic specialization: the study on the sectional conflict and the differences between the North and the South. The examination of these differences is reflected, among others, in the famous *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930), in which the outstanding Southern intellectuals “tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way” (XIX) and, about a decade later, W. J. Cash opened the introduction to his *The Mind of the South* writing: “There exists among us by ordinary – both North and South – a profound conviction that the South is another land, sharply differentiated from the rest of the American nation, and exhibiting within itself a remarkable homogeneity” (VII), and thus once again pitting the South against “the American nation.” Among the writers who focused on the sharp distinction between the North and the South in their post-Civil War fiction were Southerners George W. Cable (1844-1925), Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922), and Thomas Dixon (1864-1946), and Northerners William Albion Tourgee (1837-1905) and John William De Forest (1826-1906).

Like many other writers Cable, a Southerner with Northern roots, developed the topic of the North and the South in stories set in the post-Civil War Dixie. In *John March, Southerner*, published in 1895, Cable put the sectional hatred in the lines of the poem of a Southern poetess, who expressed it in the tone of pathos, writing:

O! hide me from the Northron's eye!
Let me not hear his fawning voice,
I heard the Southland matron sigh
And saw the piteous tear... (107)

In another part of the novel he uses a joke told by the heroine's maid, Johanna, to expose the chasm between the nature and mentality of the “Dixie man” and “Yankee”:

Dixie man say, Fine daay, seh! Yankee say, You think it a-gwine fo' to rain? Dixie man – Oh, no, seh! hit jiss cayn't rain to-day, seh! Den if it jiss po' down Yankee say, Don't this – yeh look somepm like raain? An' Dixie man – Yass, seh, hit do; hit look like raim but Law'! hit ain't rain. You Yankees can't un' stan' ow Southe'n weatheh, she! (136-137)

The distinction between the Dixieland and the “Yankee land” seems to be the core of the definition of the South itself. The South appears as better, warmer, nicer than the

North. It also possesses a unique romantic dimension, set against the ordinary, materialistic North.

'Our South isn't a matter of boundaries, or skies, or landscapes.... It's not... a South of climate, like Yankee's Florida. It's a certain ungeographical South – within – the South – as portable and intangible as – as'

'As our souls in our bodies,' interposed Barbara.... 'Its a sort o'something – social, civil, political, economic –'

'Romantic?'

'Yes, romantic! Something that makes –'

'No land like Dixie in all the wider world over.' (327)

In Thomas Nelson Page's *Red Rock* (1898) the conflict is rather between Southern gentlemen and rascals. Though not all the Yankees are rascals, those who are usually have power and influence. Southerners are still "good guys" who treat the Yankee officers "politely, but not warmly, of course, only just so civilly as to show that Southerners knew what was due to guests even when they were enemies" (I, 272). Paradoxically but, in a sense, also therapeutically, despite the times of slavery, the lost war, social ostracism, and the ruining of the region, Southerners are shown by Page and some other writers as the victors, the victors in the field of spirit, dignity, and mental superiority. As F. Garvin-Davenport claims, "defeats and frustration are usually better remembered" than victories, and, quoting William R. Taylor, he adds that the Southerners "persisted in seeing themselves as different and, increasingly, they tended to reshape this acknowledged difference into a claim of superiority" (4-5). This is also the way, sometimes camouflaged, to emphasize the otherness of the Southerners as people, culturally and socially entirely different from the rest of the Americans, a distinct civilization. One of the possible strategies to achieve that sense of being distinct is to compare the situation of the South to other states or nations. Poland is one of such states that the Southern writers refer to as in a similar situation to the Dixie. Dr. Cary, a character in *Red Rock*, is aware of the actions of Reconstruction aimed at destroying the South. He compares the South during Reconstruction to "the greatest Revolution since the time of Poland" (I, 322)² meaning probably the 1863 uprising.

Interestingly, Thomas Dixon, another Southern author, uses the example of Poland in his 1904 novel *The Clansman*. The advocates of radical Reconstruction "swear to make the South a second Poland. Their watchwords are vengeance and confiscation" (9).

² For an introductory note on the literature of Reconstruction see Sobieraj 135-143.

Dixon describes the post-war North often by contrasting it with the South. In *The Leopard's Spots*, the North is "beautiful homes, with their rich carpets and handsome furniture... beautiful carriages in the parks" (141). The post-Civil War South is "the agony of universal ruin" (142), "the cry of the widow and orphan, the hungry and the dying" (143), "the land of ashes and tombs and tears" (410). It is probably too much to say that certain Southern writers of those times display a kind of neurosis in their works while emphasizing the superiority of the South over the North since certain exaggerations of feelings they present are justified by historical experience. Yet, of course, converting "emotion into an image," they construct and protest the traditional myth of the coexistence of two, often conflicting elements, that of culture and that of nature. The Southern writer puts the myth into actual historical context. The South stands for nature, whereas the traditional North of democracy. The America of innocence, is often transformed in the process of industrialization, the development of the city, and the growing settlement of newcomers, into the land of corruption. As a matter of fact, these writers report the cultural crisis of nineteenth-century America, and of the nineteenth-century world, the crisis that Leo Marx later examined in his book *The Machine and the Garden*.

The Northern writer focuses on quite the opposite. The South is responsible for slavery, for the Civil War, and thus any ethical evaluation often makes the South the evil land set against the better North. William Tourgee, a leading Northern voice in the fiction of Reconstruction, describing the conflict between the two regions, "confronted a humanitarian of the North with the South's hostility" (87). This conviction was developed in Tourgee's fiction and in his non-fictional account of the Ku Klux Klan, *The Invisible Empire* (1880). In the Preface to his less popular two short novels, *John Eax* and *Mamelon or the South Without the Shadow* (1882), Tourgee provides the reader with an evaluation of both regions which stands in opposition to that of such Southern authors as Page or Dixon. In the Preface he prepares his audience for his judgments concerning the North and South with the following statement loaded with an allegorical dimension: "The shadow was over all – the shadow of Slavery and of its children, Ignorance and Wars and Poverty. In the shadow I wrote, contrasting it with the light. It came to me then, almost as a revelation, that the North and the South were two families in one house – two peoples under one government" (6).

The theory expressed in the Preface finds its application later in the very text of the *Mamelon*. A character in the novel, a Southerner, receives Captain Dixon, a Yankee, with

a sort of embarrassed feeling that he [Dixon] was of another people. This has always been true of North and South; they have always been two peoples. Touching in terri-

tory, identical in language and united in governmental forms, but distinct and separate in habits of life and thought. I felt that Captain Dixon was on his guard as a stranger and I was also on guard towards him. (207)

In *Bricks Without Straw* (1880), Tourgee's most famous novel, the gulf between the civilization of the North and that of the South is "deep and impassable" and the contrast between both regions is extended to that between an American and a Confederate (312). Tourgee's characters are the spokesmen for the North to such an extent that a reviewer found *Bricks Without Straw* to be one of those novels which "tend to keep alive sectional strife to inflame Northern bitterness against the South" (Kirkland 367).

But Tourgee's criticism of the South and his appreciation of the North is not simplified or primitive. He does not simply show terrible Southerners as opposed to kind and righteous Northerners. His method displays a great deal of skill and even cunning in showing the North as "good and right." In *Bricks Without Straw* he invents a white Southern aristocrat, Hesden Le Moyne, who is able to pick out and understand the roots of Southern evil, and to appreciate the Northern mission to make the South decent after the Civil War. This mission is embodied in the character of Mollie, an idealized Yankee, who has a peaceful life in the North but comes to the South to teach in a school for black children. Thus the Northern writer provides the reader with the criticism of the South and appreciation of the North through the Southern character who

had felt naturally the distrust of the man of Northern birth which a century of hostility and suspicion had bred in the air of the South. He had grown up in it. He had been taught to regard the 'Yankees'... as a distinct people – sometimes generous and brave, but normally envious, mean, low-spirited, treacherous, and malignant. He admitted the exceptions, but they only proved the rule. As a class, he considered them cold, calculating, selfish, greedy for power and wealth, and regardless of the means by which these were acquired. Above all things, had been thought to regard them as animated by hatred of the South. Knowing that this had been his own bias, he could readily excuse his neighbors for the same. (367)

When Hesden supports the black education organized in the South by the Yankees, the influential Southerners condemn him as the one who betrayed the ideals of the South. In the *Southern Clarion*, a county newspaper, he is considered as a man whom

[e]very true Southern man or woman should refuse to recognize as a gentleman.... Hesden Le Moyne has chosen to degrade an honored name. He has elected to go with the niggers, nigger teachers and nigger preachers; but let him forever be an outcast

among the respectable and high minded white people of Horsford, whom he has betrayed and disgraced! (369)

The sectional conflict is perhaps best referred to by the Northern writer, John William De Forest, in his novel, significantly entitled *The Bloody Chasm*, published in 1880. The novel reveals the chasm between both civilizations, that of the North and that of the South, but it also discloses the possibilities for reconciling both regions.

The conflict between the North and South, which reaches its climax during the Civil War and gets to a dangerous stage during Reconstruction and the New South, also enters into the world of literature. The writers, through their literary spokesmen, i.e. their fiction's characters, continue the fight, the fight to convince the opponent that he is wrong in his judgments about his own region.

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Sylvia Kuźma-Markowska

Race and Gender Intersected. The Hill/Thomas Controversy

1. Introduction

Jezebel, the black castrating matriarch, the black rapist lynched by a white mob – all these characters from myths and stereotypes from the racial history of the United States paraded in front of the American public in October 1991. The accusation of sexual harassment that was brought against a candidate to the Supreme Court by his former assistant provoked one of the most excitedly debated controversies of the last decades. “Washington soap opera,” as the testimony was frequently referred to, took place from the 11th until the 13th of October 1991. The leading actors of the drama projected on TV screens in American houses were: an affluent black candidate to the Supreme Court of the United States – Clarence Thomas and an ambitious and pious African-American lawyer – Anita Hill. The drama that took place in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the whole America was even more captivating as it was played by actors whose race and gender, two intersectionally operative categories in American political and social life, mattered.

As I intend to claim, the interconnectedness of race and gender was revealed during the hearings in two focal debates. The first one concentrated around myths and stereotypes concerning black people, such as Jezebel, a black castrating matriarch, or a black rapist. The second one raised the issues of silence and loyalty of women to men in African American communities and evoked the issues of race solidarity and race/gender priority. The debates are analyzed with the application of the intersectionality of various categories of identity and methods from cultural studies, political science, and social studies.

2. Hill/Thomas hearings

The hearings of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas by the Senate Judiciary Committee were an event widely covered by the media. It drew close attention of millions of astounded Americans. Due to the retirement of the first African American Justice Thurgood Marshall in July 1991, President George Bush nominated Clarence Thomas Justice of the Supreme Court. Thomas, a federal appeal court judge of African American de-

scent, was known for his anti-affirmative action and anti-abortion stances (Marable 93-94). His nomination was put on the verge of collapse by the testimony of Anita Hill, who accused her former boss of sexual harassment.

At the time of the hearings Anita Hill was a law professor at the University of Oklahoma. Soon after her graduation from Yale University, she was hired as an assistant to Clarence Thomas, chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She worked for him from 1981 to 1983. As Hill testified a number of years later, during the time she worked as Thomas's assistant, she was, despite her refusals, repeatedly asked by her supervisor to go out socially together. According to Hill, Thomas frequently used the work situation to initiate discussions about sex, speaking about sexual acts he saw in pornographic films and graphically describing his own prowess. During her testimony Hill talked about a number of instances when Thomas, by referring to sexual matters, made her feel uncomfortable and embarrassed in his presence. In testifying Hill recollected:

One of the oddest episodes I remember was an occasion in which Thomas was drinking a Coke in his office. He got up from the table at which we were working, went over to his desk to get the Coke, looked at the can and asked, 'Who has pubic hair on my Coke?' On other occasions, he referred to the size of his own penis as being larger than normal and he also spoke on some occasions of the pleasures he had given to women with oral sex. (38)

Hill's testimony was a traumatic moment in the so far smoothly running hearings. The whole situation was so disturbing because two main actors – embodiments of American success – were African Americans. Both were conservative Republicans. Hill was a devout Baptist. She would probably not have testified if not asked to do so, because it was not her intention to bring to light an issue associated with women's liberation. However, guided by her understanding of righteousness, she did make accusations against her fellow African American conservative. The Senate Judiciary Committee split 7 to 7 on whether to endorse Thomas but no mention was made by the Committee members of Hill's accusations and the only objection to Thomas nomination was his conservatism. As a result, the nomination went to the Senate without recommendation. In the end, despite Hill's charges, Thomas was confirmed as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. But it is what happened beforehand that matters most to us. The whole melodrama took place in front of an all-white and all-male Senate committee. Thomas's nomination was backed up by the Senate. Significantly, out of 100 Senate members only two were women, both of them white (Allen and Chrisman 3-6).

The events of October 1991 provoked a variety of opinions among white and black Americans. Undeniably, the hearings drew their attention to sexual harassment and the position and the participation of women in American public life. At the same time, Thomas's naming the hearings as "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks" (157) evoked a range of racial stereotypes present in American society: the myth of black rapist, and those of Jezebel and matriarch as stereotypes of black women. The set of prejudices that emerged into light during the hearings has its roots in the times of slavery, as well as in the post-Civil War period. The hearings and their result revealed the interconnection of racism and sexism, which was bluntly embodied in the treatment of Anita Hill.

3. The lynched black man and the castrating Jezebel

According to many commentators, Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court because of his successful manipulation of myths and stereotypes connected to black people that have been a part of the collective consciousness of Americans. Importantly, Thomas used several distinct scenarios (the myth of the black rapist, the myth of a black castrating matriarch, the strategy of de-racing Hill, the stereotype of Jezebel) that might seem to be self-contradictory but brought him success and support of the majority of African Americans. Primarily, Thomas naming the hearings as the "lynching for *uppity* blacks" (emphasis mine) referred to his status of a black man, who due to hard work was able to climb the ladder of American success. Thomas, similarly to Hill, was born in a working-class family, and his professional position and middle-class status were the results of his efforts. Portraying himself as an advancing black man, Thomas maneuvered Hill into the position of a black matriarch – a powerful black woman whose strength was seen as castrating. Within the universe of racial stereotypes, the black matriarch (the evil side of Mammy) is held responsible for the failure and emasculation of black men. Michele Wallace, African American author of the book *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, writes about the feeling of guilt that black women internalize due to the myth of the black matriarch, whom she also calls "superwoman": "We had not allowed the black man to be a man in his own house. We had driven him to alcohol, to drugs, to crime, to every bad thing he had ever done to harm himself or his family because our eyes had not reflected his manhood" (299). The myth of the black matriarch has been used as a guilt trigger for women and as an explanation of black men's failures. The fact that skillful manipulation of the image worked so well for Thomas suggests that the myth is still alive. Putting Hill into the position of matriarch, he presented himself as an ambitious black man, whose attempts to gain success are hampered by the castrating female – Anita Hill.

Another set of stereotypes evoked by Thomas was connected to the myth of the black rapist. This myth was conjured up in the after-Civil War period, specifically in the late 1880s. According to it, black men had insatiable desire for white women and would employ any means, including rape, to sexually possess a female of the white race (Bederman 46). The popular justification for lynching at the end of the nineteenth century stated that it was performed in order to protect the honor of white Southern women sexually abused by insatiable and savage black men. In fact, lynching was a tool of control of freed blacks. Similarly to flogging in the times of slavery, it provided a horrifying example of what happened to these who were disobedient. Moreover, as it was demonstrated by such people as Ida B. Wells (an African American woman who began a crusade against lynching at the end of the nineteenth century), in many cases interracial relationships between black men and white women were consensual, and sometimes white women even initiated them. All this is well known today, mainly due to the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

Thomas could not have manipulated the myth of the black rapist had it not already been dismantled by American society at large, mainly due to the civil rights movement. Presenting himself as a black man being lynched by a white mob, namely the all-white male Senate committee, Thomas deliberately victimized himself and took advantage of white guilt (Morrison xxiii). Portraying himself as a lynch victim, Thomas also explicitly reduced Hill to the role of a white female, de-raced her, so to speak. Such a manipulation was easy to undertake, as Hill was already stereotypically depicted by her critics and American media as a mentally unstable, ultra-emotional female, who, despite her professional position and education, was determined by sexual desire (Allen 25; Brownmiller 292). Due to her alleged harassment by a black man, Hill was in a sense denied her race, because it is white women who are stereotypically sexually abused by black men and who wrongly accuse blacks of attacking them (James 112; Jackson-Leslie 107). Thus, Anita Hill seemed to have behaved like a white woman accusing a black man of a sexual offence and provoking his victimization. To conclude, Thomas, who presented himself as a victim of lynching, occupied the position of race. On the other hand, Hill was reduced to pure gender.

Due to the successful manipulation of prejudices against black people, Thomas was able to maneuver Hill into two roles, neither of which was workable: she was a black castrating matriarch and white female falsely accusing a black man of sexual abuse. In fact, his suggestion that he was being lynched in front of the American public was irrelevant, as no black man had been ever lynched for the alleged rape of a black woman (Allen 27). Nonetheless, Thomas successfully associated himself with the victims of white violence against black men: this helped him undermine Hill's accusations and won

him the compassion of both black and white audiences. Consequently, by referring to lynching, Thomas racially empowered himself and made the accusations of a *black* woman irrelevant. In short, he managed to play both the race and the gender card right.

Another fact that contributed to Thomas's success in manipulation of myths and stereotypes about black people was the fact that the candidate for the Supreme Court was married to a white woman. As Toni Morrison argues, Thomas, having a white wife at his side, yearned for race transcendence (xxi). The ostentatious presence of Thomas's wife during the hearings helped Thomas to escape the association with a black rapist. As it has been argued, the myth of the black rapist has been set to rest in American culture, mainly owing to the civil rights movement (Davis; Whitfield). Fewer and fewer Americans believed that black men were lynched because they had sexually abused white women. It may be argued that it was the Thomas hearings that contributed largely to debunking the myth. Due to his successful manipulation, the fact that Thomas had a white wife did not put him in the position of a black savage rapist. On the contrary, it helped him to appear as a successful raceless professional, who, due to his position and prestige, was able to attract a good-looking white female. Clarence Thomas could appear with a white woman at his side and expect admiration rather than anger from white men. He was able to take advantage of the guilt and the shame left over from the past.

Thomas's strategy to present himself as raceless proved successful. At the same time, depicting himself as a man, he maneuvered Anita Hill into the position of Jezebel, an openly seductive, licentious black woman – the embodiment of lust. The application of the myth of Jezebel to black women may be traced back to the times of slavery, when it helped to justify the sexual exploitation of black women by slave owners. If black women were Jezebels, they were always ready for sex. Hence, Anita Hill, put by Thomas in the position of Jezebel, could not have been sexually abused as she was supposed to be always willing to undertake a sexual relationship (Painter 212). Susan Bordo, a feminist philosopher and cultural critic, argues that sexual abuse such as rape “implies the invasion of a personal space of modesty and reserve that the black woman has not been imagined as having” (9). Moreover, the association of Hill with Jezebel resulted in people's believing that she was lying because, historically, a black woman's word was not taken as truth, due to the association between lack of chastity and lack of veracity (Crenshaw 414). Thomas's strategy to present himself as a raceless man with a white woman at his side proved to be successful. Thanks to it, he maneuvered Hill into the position of Jezebel – seductive black woman, whom one should not trust.

Due to the shrewd and thoughtful manipulations of myths and stereotypes about black people, Thomas became Marshall's successor. The candidate to the Supreme Court succeeded in presenting himself, according to need, as an African American, whose ad-

vancement is hampered by a black castrating matriarch, as a raceless man, seduced by promiscuous Jezebel, and as a decent and innocent lynch victim, falsely accused by a white woman. Anita Hill became a screen on which myth and assumptions about sex and gender present in American society were projected one by one. Thomas played with a number of myths and stereotypes, especially with the myth of black rapist. He succeeded because the myth had been already debunked in mainstream culture. Such a strategy would not have been fruitful just a few decades before when the vestiges of the myth of black rapist were still present, especially among white Southerners.

4. Silence and loyalty in black communities

In the introduction to her anthology devoted to the Hill/Thomas controversy, Morrison argues that one of the salient issues during the hearings was silence, and specifically Anita Hill's inability to remain silent (xxiii), to abstain from speaking about being sexually harassed by a black man in front of an all-white male Senate committee. According to Carol Swain, a professor of law and political science, Hill was dismissed by African Americans because she was seen as "a person who had violated the code of censorship which mandates that blacks should not criticize, let alone accuse, each other in front of whites" (225). This "unwritten code of silence" is mandated by a fear of white people using black's stories and words against them (Lawrance 137).

The word "silence" appears with significant frequency in commentaries about the Hill/Thomas hearings and is inseparably connected with the issue of loyalty of black women to black men (Guy-Sheftal 75; Hill Collins 40-41). The requirement that black women remain silent about "the devils in the camp" (Boyd 44) is based on the belief that black women should give priority to their race above their sex. A black woman cannot be loyal to both, but she has to choose either her race or her sex (Hernton 87). According to Black Nationalist ideology it is impossible to reconcile the two. A black woman is compelled to give priority to her race; otherwise, she is labeled a traitor. In short, according to a majority of African Americans, Hill should have remained silent: due to her testimony she violated a code of racial loyalty and exposed male chauvinism and sexual violence within the black community. During the hearings African Americans tended to take the side of Thomas (as a fellow black man) against Hill, as a woman, whose blackness was irrelevant (Mansbridge and Tate 488-492).

The issue of black loyalty becomes problematic when we realize that prioritizing race by African American women implies accepting violence and abuse within black communities. The acceptance of exploitation is to be based on the paradigm of self-sacrifice

that was created in African American communities and which assumes that black women should sacrifice their lives and interests for the benefit of black communities and specifically black men. True to this paradigm, Hill should have devoted her energy to fighting racism and done nothing about black or white sexism. As Guy-Sheftal states, a black woman raising issues of sexism becomes associated with a man-hating feminist (75). That is why Hill gained support mainly among white middle-class women, who are more prone to identify with feminism, than black women (Mansbridge and Tate 488-492). Moreover, the notions of loyalty and self-sacrifice are used within black communities as a means of control of women by men (Bray 49). These factors help explain why so many African Americans, and especially black women, dismissed Anita Hill. She did not remain silent but revealed “dirt” in her “camp” in front of an all-white male committee and, even more importantly, in front of white America. Moreover, sexual harassment and abuse were associated as feminist issues, and feminism for many black women was equal to man-hating.

The problem of crossgender loyalty seems not to relate to black men; they are not required to show solidarity with black women. This fact was bluntly revealed during the Hill/Thomas hearings in the way that the candidate for the Supreme Court Justice prioritized gaining approval of an “old boys club” of the Senate Judiciary Committee to loyalty and solidarity with a woman of his own race. As Evelyn M. Hammonds soundly states, “[n]o mention was made of how Clarence Thomas had failed in his duty... to Black women” (quoted in Guy-Sheftal 75-76). As she claims, African American men are allowed to have duty only to themselves, whereas black women have a duty to the race. Such an ethic implies priority of male experiences and interests within black communities and validates black women’s inferior position.

The issues of loyalty and silence are inextricably connected with violence within black communities, black male chauvinism, and scapegoating black women for all the misfortunes of African Americans. All these problems were bluntly revealed during the Clarence Thomas confirmation. The hearings prompted a number of African Americans to acknowledge the sexism within the black communities and to seek its roots. There is a general tendency to look for the causes of black misogyny in the legacy of slavery and the inability of the black slave to provide for his family and to exercise the functions of father and husband. Consequently, slaves were not able to test and prove their masculinity and to assume their patriarchal family roles (Genovese 491). As a result, the reason for black sexism is said to have its roots in racism and in maltreatment of black men. Moreover, it was argued that African Americans have internalized racist stereotypes and myths, which stemmed from white supremacist ideology (Lawrence 137). Thus, just like white men, they tended to “view all black women as bitches, skeezers, and hoes”

(Jackson-Leslie 107), who are promiscuous, loose, and always ready for sex, so that they cannot be sexually abused or raped.

Seeking the roots of black misogyny in white racism, black men tend to create a ladder of oppression with white men at the top, they themselves in the middle, and black women at the bottom. This way of thinking does not contribute to ending oppression within black communities. The Hill/Thomas hearings prompted some African Americans to acknowledge this fact. For instance, Charles Lawrence highlights that loyalty and solidarity among blacks cannot mean silence and that “[i]t will not serve us to fight racism by tolerating sexism within our own community” (138). Similarly, Barbara Ransby, an African American historian, points out that black people “cannot regress... to a point... when black women were told that it was our duty to assume subordinate roles so that brothers could redeem their manhood” (171). With this comment, Ransby again seeks the roots of black sexism in the legacy of slavery. However, as bell hooks states, it is a cliché that the cruelest impact of slavery was denial of black men’s masculinity. Such an assumption is based on the belief that men’s experience is more important than women’s. In her view, such an idea stems from the perception that “the worst that can happen to a man is that he be made to assume the social status of woman” (hooks quoted in Willis 107). hooks also rejects the statement that black men had learned sexism from white men. In fact, African Americans came from patriarchal cultures where women were not equal to men. Hence, hooks does not excuse black men for their misogyny, as many other African Americans tend to do. She argues that black sexism cannot be traced back to times of slavery and denies the sole responsibility of white racism for black chauvinism.

Nancy Fraser, a professor of philosophy and women’s studies, argues that one of the most striking features of the Hill/Thomas controversy was absence of the black feminist voice in the debate (604). Such voices were raised only after the hearings ended. The two most audible were those of Rebecca Walker and a group called the African American Women in Defense of Ourselves.

Rebecca Walker, the daughter of the author of *Color Purple*, heralded in her manifesto the emergence of the new wave of American feminism that takes the interconnected categories of race and gender into account. “Becoming the Third Wave” depicts the outrage of a young African American woman who becomes aware that in the United States, a few decades after the outburst of the feminist movement, “women are negated, violated, devaluated, ignored” (211), that their space is invaded, their rights are taken away, their voice is not heard. In her manifesto, Walker makes a connection to a number of issues revealed during the hearings. One of them is the cultural mandatory requirement for women to remain silent. As has been argued, such an obligation is particularly

stringent in the case of black women who are bound to silence due to their presupposed loyalty to male members of their community. Furthermore, the young feminist discusses the problem of black chauvinism or women's solidarity. She addresses the issue of black men equating their interests with the interests of the black race and their refusal to acknowledge women's oppression within African American communities. Bearing in mind black men, she asks: "When will they stop talking so damn much about 'race' as if it revolved exclusively around them?" (212).

Rebecca Walker was not the only black woman who protested against the negation of women's voice during Thomas's confirmation. The hearings mobilized more than 1,600 black women, who in defense of themselves wrote a public protest against the public castigation of Hill as well as against the Thomas nomination. Similarly to Walker, these women of African American descent, most of them academics, claimed that they would not be silenced. They argued that many voices of African Americans were ignored in the debate about Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court, and they implied that these were especially the voices of black women. They spoke about sexual abuse of black women and the fact that this was never taken seriously in the United States. Underlining that "black women have been sexually stereotyped as immoral, insatiable, perverse; the initiators in all sexual contacts," they alluded to Thomas maneuvering Hill into the position of seductive Jezebel. They highlighted that the allegations against Thomas were not an issue of either gender or sex, but of both. Hence, they acknowledged the interconnectedness between racism and sexism that was embodied in the treatment of Anita Hill. They also opposed the popular conception that "all blacks are men," emphasizing that "[n]o one will speak for us but ourselves" (273-74). Concluding, the African American Women in Defense of Ourselves openly spoke about the influence of both racism and sexism on their lives and on Hill's testimony. They did not hesitate to reveal the fact that black women were treated instrumentally by Americans, both black and white.

5. Conclusion

As Morrison states, after the Hill/Thomas hearings it became possible to speak about sex and gender "without the barriers, the silences, the embarrassing gaps in discourses" (xxx). Even more importantly, the Thomas testimony made Americans realize that it is impossible to separate racism and sexism and that "the politics of sex and the politics of race are one and the same politics" (Hernton 87). As I argued, the testimony proved that sexism and racism are interconnected and it is infeasible to separate them while addressing social and cultural issues concerning American society. The intersectionality of race

and gender was revealed during the hearings and in the debates focusing on the myths and stereotypes concerning black men and women and the issue of silence, loyalty and race/gender priority in African American communities.

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Joanna Durczak

Sherman Alexie's "Armani Indians" and the New Range of Native American Fiction

Two years after the publication of James Welch's *The Indian Lawyer* (1990), Fritz Scholder, the most acclaimed of contemporary Native American painters, exhibited an extraordinary painting which could serve as the cover illustration for Welch's novel. The painting was titled *Indian Contemplating Columbus*, and it relied for some of its effect on a verbal and pictorial pun. Executed in black, blue, white and yellow acrylics, it shows the back view of a man dressed in western clothing, sitting in a chair on a high-rise apartment porch and contemplating Columbus, or, to be more precise, the dimly suggested skyline of a city, apparently – Columbus, Ohio. The pictorial pun is on the viewer's expectations. The almost automatic visual association Scholder's title triggers is with "the view from the shore" – of natives watching the Genoese and his companions set foot on an American beach. Conditioned by centuries of visual stereotyping to think that "Indian" equals naked torsos and feathers, the momentarily disoriented viewer scans the picture for the evidently missing indigenous observer of Columbus. It is usually then that he spots a moccasin on the man's right foot, a small splotch of red, green, and white that looks ill-fitting in the overall color scheme of the picture. Once noticed, however, that small detail begins to usurp the viewer's attention until the moccasin eventually becomes the composition's center. Many long seconds later we begin to discern also something like a suggestion of a white feather in the man's hair. The apparently missing Indian has been there all along, except that he is an Indian whose existence the white world has been slow to acknowledge – the urban, acculturated, white-collar Indian professional of the kind James Welch made the protagonist of his novel.

The process of bringing to American awareness this particular category of Indian – the "Armani Indian," as another painter, Michael Furlow, humorously labeled him – has been remarkably slow despite the fact that within the last two decades he has become a familiar figure in the media, in the arts, on university campuses, and in some business circles. It is noteworthy how, even though the majority of contemporary Native American authors clearly have been aware of his existence (as they have themselves lived the privileged lives of fairly well-paid and assimilated university professors), they have on the whole refrained from representing in their fiction this ideologically troublesome kind of Indian experience. Instead, they have explored – often brilliantly – the historical as

well as the modern indigenous world, populating their fiction with an array of characters who – if they live in the twentieth century – are usually poor to very poor reservation or urban Native Americans, struggling to survive and to preserve their aboriginal identity in the confusing world of cultural options. As a rule, in what Lawrence Buell has termed the “ethno-essentialist denouement” typical of contemporary ethnic fiction (239), these Indian characters, having briefly sought assimilation, eventually choose to reject the racist urban America and to embrace the traditional world of tribal values. Only in a handful of novels do we see Native Americans who have gained a secure foothold in the world outside the reservation: the anthropology professor in Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris’s *The Crown of Columbus* (1991), the Toronto photographer in Tom King’s *Medicine River* (1989), the lawyer and well-nigh runner for the Congress in James Welch’s *The Indian Lawyer* (1990). One could mention also several aspiring students, such as appear in Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* (1984) and *Bingo Palace* (1994), Louis Owens’ *Wolfsong* (1995), and Linda Hogan’s *Power* (1998), yet they do not belong entirely in the same category. They are only beginning their climb up the American social ladder, testing an option that, as happens in the case of Owens’ Joseph or Hogan’s Omishto, may yet be rejected.

Against this background of fiction which exhibits little interest in assimilated Indians, Sherman Alexie’s two recent collections of stories, *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and *Ten Little Indians* (2003) stand as a deliberate and sustained effort to bring that particular group of Native Americans into the awareness of literature readers. Alexie’s turn towards the educated, prosperous, urban Indian professional may be explained as a reflection of the writer’s personal situation; his phenomenal artistic success jettisoned him within one decade into the world of wealth as well as Indian and non-Indian human variety. In a recent interview, he commented on the relation between his new situation and his writing: “A few years ago, at my oldest son’s birthday... I looked around the room and I realized there were 2 gay couples, 2 lesbian couples, 7 countries, 12 states, senior citizens – all hues and shades – and I thought, ‘Well, this is my life,’ and my art wasn’t representing that” (*Publisher’s* 1). But one senses also another impulse behind the writer’s effort to catch up with his changing circumstances. Early on, Alexie made his reputation as an irreverent, defiant polemicist, in serious disagreement with the writers of what might be called the First Wave of Native American Renaissance – N.Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louis Owens, and to some extent also Louise Erdrich. From his first novel – *Reservation Blues* (1995) – on, he has argued that contemporary Indian life is far less traditional or spiritual than they claim it to be, that far from being rooted in tribal mythology and ritual, the traditional sense of the sanctity of the earth, or the tribal vision of history, Indian life at the end of the twentieth century

is marked by cultural dislocation and shaped primarily by the American mass media. He has thus objected to representing the reservation as a pocket of cultural resistance, focusing instead (in the manner of James Welch, a less orthodox representative of the First Wave) on its crushing material poverty and the debilitating effects of alcoholism and violence. In other words, Alexie has consistently tried to redefine the meaning of "Indian experience" as it came to be understood in the eighties due to the imaginative impact of the First Wave writers. Therefore, his more recent choice to write of the well-to-do and assimilated Indians can be seen as only another step in his ongoing polemical project. What his literary seniors have ignored or only barely acknowledged (again, except for Welch, who explored the problem in *The Indian Lawyer*) Alexie brings to focus with the intention of complicating the picture and derailing certainties. By writing about Indians who are emphatically different in every conceivable way from Momaday's Abel, Silko's Tayo, Owens' Joseph, or Erdrich's Fleur or June or even Lipsha, Alexie challenges the popular notions about what it means to be an Indian at the turn of the centuries, as well as about what makes a novel or a story distinctly, unmistakably Native American.

Even a cursory look at the stories in *The Toughest Indian in the World* and *Ten Little Indians* reveals how deliberately Alexie zeroes in on one particular type of Indian characters. The cast of *The Toughest Indian* includes a Coeur d'Alene woman working for Microsoft and married to a white chemical engineer; a Spokane lawyer whose "monthly salary exceeds [his] mother's yearly income" (*Toughest* 40); a half-blood Coeur d'Alene fiction writer who brags to a friend: "I make shitloads of money. I make so much money that white people think I'm white" (*Toughest* 144). In *Ten Little Indians*, several protagonists move even higher up the economic and social ladder. One, a Spokane, contributes to a think tank, selling ideas – a product so insubstantial he is troubled by a fear that "his job... [isn't] a real job at all" (*Ten* 116); another, working for the Governor of Washington, contemplates running for the Senate. Even more interestingly, several of those characters are not the first but second generation rich. The Apache protagonist of "Do You Know Where I Am?" was born to two acclaimed Indian architects known for the Seattle skyscrapers they designed. She and her equally privileged Spokane husband can say of themselves: "[We] were Native American royalty, the aboriginal prince and princess of western Washington" (*Ten* 151). Without exception, Alexie's rich protagonists hold university diplomas, live in gentrified neighborhoods of Seattle or Spokane, (the architect couple in a posh house they designed themselves and painted turquoise), drive Saabs and BMWs, hold several credit cards, exercise regularly, "take vitamins, eat free-range chicken and smoke cigarettes rolled together and marketed by six odiferous white liberals in Northern California" (*Toughest* 7). There is a tremendous social and economic distance separating these prosperous-to-very-wealthy individuals from the key

characters in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993) and *Reservation Blues* (1995) – most of whom are frustrated, jobless, often alcoholic drifters, unable to take control of their lives. When towards the end of *Ten Little Indians*, having prepared the reader to expect only more stories of assimilated life, Alexie unexpectedly makes his protagonist in “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” a homeless Spokane wino, his intention appears transparent: the drunk’s happy-go-lucky inertia provides a measure for the seemingly more fortunate characters’ accomplishment. At the same time, the fact that the story is likely to be responded to as more recognizably “Indian” than the tales of successful, white-collar Native Americans serves to problematize the concept of “Indian fiction.”

With remarkable persistence, in one story after another, Alexie specifies each character’s tribal identity. Even in those texts which are primarily studies in human psychology (“Can I Get a Witness?” or “Do You Know Where I Am?”), he never fails to mention their Spokane or Coeur d’Alene or Crow descent. Most often the characters are full bloods, though some have a white or a black parent. Their genealogical Indianness is asserted beyond doubt, in a manner clearly provocative, if one considers the ample evidence of their thorough acculturation. This, however, seems to be the writer’s way of addressing the issue which has preoccupied him ever since he became a “white-collar American Indian writer” (*Guardian* 5). In brief, the nature of the issue is this: how does one categorize an individual who is unmistakably genealogically Indian and fully aware of his racial identity, yet at the same time has had an experience from which many if not most of the elements traditionally associated with Indian livelihood are missing? Can anybody, and on what grounds, decide that such a person is not an Indian? “One Good Man,” a story collected in *The Toughest Indian*, lists half in earnest several such essential, defining elements of Indian experience; when its narrator is pressed by his skeptical white teacher to say if he’s an Indian, he muses:

Of course I was. (Jesus, my hair hung down past my ass and I was dark as a pecan!) I’d grown up on my reservation with my tribe. I understood most of the Spokane language, though I’d always spoken it like a Jesuit priest. Hell, I’d been in three car wrecks! And most important, every member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians could tell you the exact place and time where I’d lost my virginity. Why? Because I’d told each and every one of them. I mean, I knew the real names, nicknames, and secret names of every dog that had lived on my reservation during the last twenty years. (224-225)

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Besides physical features, then, what makes an Indian as understood here is his reservation background, some command of the tribal language, a communal sense, an insider’s

knowledge of the tribe's secrets, and a set of defining experiences, such as, for instance, the proverbial Indian reckless driving. But what if several such constitutive elements are missing in an individual's biography? What if a *fullblood* has grown up in the city, maintains only loose contacts with the reservation, speaks only English, does not drink, and religiously can best be described as an agnostic – does this mean that such a person is not an Indian or is not Indian enough? These are the questions that Alexie teases the reader with in one story after another.

The answer implicitly articulated in his two collections is that there are many ways to be Indian, none of them more genuine than the other, and that these ways are evolving all the time. Alexie's urban, educated, wealthy Indian characters are forging such new ways and creating new definitions of Indianness. That Indians must change in the changing world has been obvious for writers of Native American Renaissance. N. Scott Momaday, for example, has spoken about evolution and change as the only alternative to extinction: "When we talk about preserving a heritage or a culture, this is not exclusive of change by any means. Quite the reverse. The last thing, the most dangerous thing that the Indian can do is to remain static, become a museum piece" (Isernhagen, 40-41). The notion that change is not irreconcilable with continuity was memorably articulated in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* in the figure of Old Betonie, a Navajo medicine man, who makes use of old telephone directories in his ancient healing rituals. However, Betonie appears traditional through and through, despite that extravagant concession to modernity, when compared with Alexie's disturbingly assimilated characters. Yet the fact that Alexie's protagonists' "modernity" is likely to be found excessive, provoking questions about who they really are culturally, reveals that some tacit agreement exists about how change must not affect some unspecified fundamentals. While telephone directories, cars, cowboy boots, and Miss Indian World Pageant may still be viewed as reconcilable with the spirit of Indian culture, religious skepticism or ambitious individualism or neglect of tribal ties and responsibilities will be interpreted by many as disqualifying. This is not, however, Alexie's standpoint.

There is much more than mere financial security that separates Alexie's characters in the two collections from the "genuine" Indians as they are defined in the passage from "One Good Man." Their ties with the reservation are usually loose and facile. For those who grew up on one, like Mary Lynn of "Assimilation," the reservation is a place where she had been happy; even so she "left it without regrets" (*Toughest* 2) and feels no urge to return. More critical than her, the writer of "Indian Country" remembers his childhood without nostalgia and refuses to romanticize his birthplace. "He believed Coeur d'Alene Reservation to be a monotonous place," Alexie writes, "a wet kind of monotony that white tourists saw as spiritual and magic" (*Toughest* 122). Even Corliss of "Search

Engine,” who is only taking her first steps away from home as a university student, already feels estranged from her reservation relatives by her passion for literature, which they cannot share or comprehend. Unlike most First Wave Indian fiction, Alexie’s stories do not present such separation from the ancestral locus as essentially impoverishing or tragic. And this is not a new position for the Spokane writer. As early as *The Lone Ranger* (1993), he refused to mythologize the reservation, portraying it as ridden with violence, frustration and anger. In “Do You Know Where I Am?” written a decade later, he sounds less harsh, but here the reservation has already receded into the background as a feeble force no longer jeopardizing the main character’s survival or offering to him much sustenance. This character, regularly sent by his white mother to spend summers with his Indian father’s parents in order to keep in touch with his heritage, remembers only reading crime stories to his grandfather and going to garage sales with his grandmother. His wry observation that “for many Indians garage sales and trashy novels are highly traditional and sacred” (*Ten* 150-151) only restates Alexie’s long familiar argument that the reservation, considerably acculturated despite much wishful thinking and popular belief, offers little in the way of traditional spiritual nourishment. Thus, for many characters in *The Toughest Indian* and *Ten Little Indians*, home is already (and unremorsefully) elsewhere. This is poignantly so for William Loman of “Flight Patterns,” whose handsome house in residential Seattle, “surrounded by gray water and gray fog and gray skies and gray mountains and gray sun” makes him reflect that “he couldn’t imagine living anywhere else... or in any other time” (*Ten* 108).

Away from tribal enclaves, William Loman and others like him begin to reexamine and reassess the nature of the ties that bind them with their tribes. Quick as they may be to introduce themselves as enrolled members, several of them begin to wonder about the actual significance of what they are saying. Grace Atwater of “Saint Junior,” for example, half-Mohawk but living and working across the continent from her ancestral homeland, realizes one day that to speak about the Mohawks as “her people” is in fact to mindlessly mouth a cliché. “Her people,” she reflects, “what an arrogant concept! They didn’t belong to her and she didn’t belong to them” (*Toughest* 162). While Grace begins to doubt the reality of her tribal ties, the Coeur d’Alene heroine of “Assimilation” realizes that they are actually more significant to the white people she associates with than to herself. In fact, she finds being categorized as a Coeur d’Alene an encroachment on her sense of individuality and uniqueness. In the eyes of others, her being Indian, instantly frames her, she complains, becoming “an excuse, reason, prescription, placebo, prediction, or diminutive,” while what she wants is “to be understood as eccentric and complicated” (*Toughest* 2). Endowed with individualistic self-consciousness, Alexie’s upwardly mobile characters, who see themselves as victims of racial stereotyping – even if

it is stereotyping of the favorable kind – attempt to disassociate themselves from the native community. For beginning climbers such disassociation may additionally entail some practical benefits; this is especially evident in the case of the highly individualistic and highly motivated Corliss, who decides to live alone in Spokane, despite the extravagance of her decision and despite the loneliness it sentences her to. Yet, as the narrator explains,

She didn't want to live with another Indian because she understood Indians too well... If she took an Indian roommate, Corliss knew she'd soon be taking in the roommate's cousin, little brother, half uncle, and the long lost dog, and none of them would be contributing anything toward the rent other than wispy apologies. Indians were used to sharing and called it tribalism, but Corliss suspected it was yet another failed form of communism. (*Ten* 9-10)

In all three cases – Corliss's, Grace's and William's – tribal bonds are found to be either illusory or burdensome, and so the characters neglect to sustain them or deliberately work to disentangle themselves from their grip.

What goes hand in hand with this weakening of tribal ties is often a realization that there are other "tribes" one has meanwhile unwittingly joined. They may be social or professional or intellectual, and they join people across racial divisions. Corliss begins to drift away from her people because she becomes progressively involved in the world of books, discovering that she belongs more passionately and wholeheartedly in the community of poets than on the reservation. In her life, the process is only beginning, but in William Loman's it has already brought about crucial changes in his self-perception. Sure enough, Loman is "an enrolled member of the Spokane tribe." But he is also a businessman, introduced to the reader on his routine business day as he is taking an early morning taxi to the airport. And it is with thousands of other businessmen like himself, who are doing exactly the same thing at the same moment, that he feels a kinship. Alexie describes them all as "capitalistic foot soldiers" (*Ten* 109), making up together an unrecognized "notebook-computer tribe and the security-checkpoint tribe and the rental-car tribe and the hotel-shuttle-bus tribe and the cell-phone-roaming tribe" (*Ten* 109). They are a group of people sharing a lifestyle, a set of experiences, and a mindset. Apparently, there is more that Loman has in common with any one of them than with some racially defined community.

Despite Alexie's urban characters' separation from their tribal homebase, and despite their middle class lifestyle, they do retain – different characters to a different degree – some very basic sense of indigenous tradition and ritual. However, as may be expected from people who, like the lawyer of "Class," go to opera performances and art shows

rather than to powwows, and who, like William Loman, are “bemused and slightly embarrassed owner[s] of twenty-first century mind[s]” (*Ten* 103), they are self-conscious about their relation to that tradition, and they freely adapt the old rituals to meet their new situation, needs and means. And so Alexie presents them going on “vision quests” and experiencing “visions,” staging “dead-honoring ceremonies” or drumming and singing to affect change with their magic. However, the circumstances for these ceremonies and the props employed are usually so freely transplanted from a non-Indian cultural system and seem so incongruous with traditional spiritual practices, that the reader is confounded and bemused to see old conceptual shells claimed for actions apparently so unspiritual and ordinary. Adding to this, Alexie often sounds comically irreverent when he writes about traditional pieties, as when, for instance, he grants his very secular-minded protagonist in “Whatever Happened to Frank Snake Church?” a vision so inaccurate in every detail and so far off mark about the time of the death it predicts that the exasperated Frank cannot help concluding “there must be an expiration date for the ESP” (*Ten* 201). Despite their often comic nature, the customized ceremonies, remotely based on old forms, do help the urban Indians in the stories to meet the challenges of the new circumstances. William Loman, scared of flying after September 11, resorts to his own version of magic to control reality: before every flight he listens to a home-made tape of music by rock musicians who died in plane crashes to ward off bad luck, terrorists, and his own fear. In a Seattle hospital, the desperate mother of a comatose baby in “Do Not Go Gently” chants to wrestle her boy from death’s grip, beating the drum with a huge battery-powered vibrator her husband bought when in his grief he wandered into a sex-shop, mistaking it for a toy store. She makes the crude gadget of mechanical pleasure a magic-working tool in a personalized ritual of healing and restoring order. Remarkably, her magic not only saves her baby, but also sustains the parents of other sick and dying children in the ward. In a similar appropriation of whatever means are available, Frank Snake Church decides to honor his dead mother by giving up his promising basketball career, a source of his pride and hope for the future. Many years later, this time to honor his dead father, he decides to return to playing, because returning means a murderous, body-mortifying training program and humiliating competition with the much younger. Thus, a basketball, a tape of rock tunes, a vibrator become new means with which ancient rituals are made to serve new realities. However, this does not mean that they are practiced with the traditional unselfconsciousness or abandon. A comment by the narrator of “Do You Know Where I Am?” leaves no doubt about how self-conscious and often skeptical Alexie’s urban Indians are about their spiritual practices: “We practiced our tribal religions like we practiced Catholicism: we loved all the ceremonies but thought they were pitiful cries to a disinterested god” (*Ten* 150).

Alexie's Indians' occasional bows to tradition do not make them any less twentieth-century or American. The majority of characters in *The Toughest Indian* and in *Ten Little Indians* navigate skillfully the waters of contemporary America because they have learned and espoused mainstream American ways and skills. Often remarkably individualistic and ambitious (for their own sake rather than for the sake of any community), they know their own value and crave appropriate recognition. The Black Indian narrator of "Lawyer's League" advertises himself in an assertive, recognizably American (or Black) manner: "I am one of the best and brightest Native Americans, and I am one of the best and brightest African Americans, and I am ambitious, so I plan on becoming the first half-black and half-Indian US senator. After three or four years in the Senate, I'll go for the White House" (*Ten* 55). If this phenomenally successful and motivated young man eventually fails to accomplish either of his goals, it is not because he is ignorant of the system's workings or because he naively underestimates white America's suppressed racism, but because, having assaulted in a fit of anger an influential white lawyer during a game of basketball, he can easily calculate the odds against him, and sees no alternative to backing out. The fact that Alexie's educated and worldly-wise Indians are not intimidated by the intricacies of the American system or ignorant of white America's mentality allows them to skillfully manipulate both to their advantage, by for example, benefiting from the late twentieth century positive ethnic stereotypes and Indianophilia. Estelle Walks Above, a full-blood Spokane in a story titled "The Life and Times of Estelle Walks Above," starts in her student days a long climb up to art professorship, not only by working hard, but also by "becoming more Indian" in the presence of liberal white women. What this means is dropping her original, insufficiently Indian-sounding last name (Miller), becoming Walks Above, and dispensing half-feminist, half-Indian wisdom to her white friends and followers so effectively that they "start running around Seattle, speaking with singsong reservation accent" (*Ten* 136).

The story which addresses the question of the white-collar Indian's Americanness most directly is "Flight Patterns." The protagonist, William Loman, is introduced as "the bemused and slightly embarrassed owner of the 21st century American mind" (*Ten* 102). He is a wealthy liberal, uncomfortable in the liberal way about class distinctions, investing his money in companies which claim making profit only through ethical means, and regularly disciplining himself to entertain proper feminist attitudes – in other words, a white-collar professional, sharing mental inflections and knee-jerk reactions with the people of his social class. It is interesting how Alexie characterizes Loman's mind by mentioning a handful of names and titles: Donna Fargo, Yvonne Vaughan, Elizabeth Taylor and her seven husbands, Ernie Hemingway, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Righteous Brothers, Pat Benetar, *The Declaration of Independence* and Smokey Robinson.

The list suggests the mind of an average educated American, shaped in a rather unequal measure by American educational system and popular culture. Spicing the list, there are two Indian names – Crazy Horse and Chief Dan George – but the context in which they appear is significant. Loman, Alexie writes, “didn’t want to choose between Ernie Hemingway and the Spokane tribal elders, between Mia Hamm and Crazy Horse, between *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Chief Dan George” (*Ten* 102). Clearly, Loman rebels against such rigid dichotomies, and what he sees as parochialism for which being Indian may sentence an individual, should he or she choose to live *exclusively* in the tribal world, while the non-Indian traditions are available to him or her as well. Loman does not deny his Spokane heritage, but will not disclaim what he has absorbed from the American or generally western culture either. Nor does he see any reason to privilege one heritage over the other. Moreover, in this respect, he is not at all unique in *Ten Little Indians*. In contrast with Alexie’s earlier books, limited in their range of reference only to figures from the Indian-American past and from contemporary popular culture, this collection swarms with names of personages from western history and American and English literatures. In an almost ostentatious name-dropping spree, he mentions in the book Alexander the Great, Thor Heyerdal, Elizabeth Bishop, Mme. Curie, Edmund Hillary, (Antoni?) Pawlak, Gerald Manley Hopkins, and Andy Warhol, thus to communicate his protagonists’ cosmopolitan rather than tribal frame of mind.

Yet it takes the conversation between Loman and the immigrant Ethiopian taxi driver to reveal to the reader and to Loman himself the thoroughness of his assimilation. First, he is surprised to be taken for a Jewish-American businessman, which suggests that, despite his indigenous braids, he clearly does not *look like* a member of any suppressed and exploited minority. He is recognized by the taxi driver for what he is – a prosperous American liberal, aware of his privileged situation and feeling faintly guilty about it, whose compassion and generosity can be easily stirred with stories of immigrant misfortunes, especially ones that imply the extent of the listener’s American luck. So Loman is told such a story of a refugee separated from his family, language, culture, and country. It cannot be said with certainty if the driver’s story is true or merely a well-rehearsed lie told to entice a good tip, but the question of its authenticity is irrelevant. What matters is that the story reveals to Loman how, though historically speaking he is also an individual displaced and dispossessed, the parallel between himself and the taxi-driver is illusory. It would be outrageous to claim otherwise when Loman reaps all the benefits of living in the country which dispossessed his Indian ancestors. Personally, he is not a victim. He has a comfortable home, a well-paying job, and a loving family he can provide for. His talents are appreciated and he is not an object of racial prejudice. He may be pulled over for random security checks at airports because his skin is dark (the irony of his being

targeted as a potential Arab terrorist amuses him; evidently, as an Indian he is believed to have no conceivable motif for resorting to terrorism), but he half-welcomes such measures as the price for the privilege to feel secure. The immigrant taxi-driver seems to guess all of this and so, undecieved by decorative details, he drops Loman off at the airport, saying "Goodbye, William American" (*Ten* 123).

There is an interesting shift in how Alexie's characters respond to the fact of their assimilation that becomes evident when *The Toughest Indian* and *Ten Little Indians* are studied together. In the earlier collection, three stories out of nine are directly concerned with an assimilated protagonist's efforts to assert his or her Indian identity. Mary Lynn of "Assimilation," the lawyer of "Class," and, in a somewhat different way, the journalist of "The Toughest Indian in the World" – all act motivated by some sort of anxiety about whether, after many years of living in the white environment, they are still Indians. In the first two cases of people married to white spouses, it is the crisis in their marriages that becomes the catalyst of their fear. Should their marriages break up, they will lose some of that secure sense of who they are and where they belong. So they find it necessary to make sure that at least their racial identity is unthreatened. Mary Lynn tries to do it by having sex with an Indian. She selects a complete stranger, solely on the virtue of his dark skin, and their quick encounter in a seedy motel is nothing but a sad, humiliating affair for both. The lawyer, in turn, goes to a cheap Indian bar, in the hope he will be reembraced and consoled there. He gets beaten up instead, and is advised by the barmaid to never come back and, more importantly, to stop deceiving himself about the bar Indians being "his people." To the unemployed, homeless patrons of the bar, she mercilessly illuminates him, he stands for everything they would like to be and to have, but never will. So they cannot comprehend his misery or sympathize with it; they find it pathetic, and can only hate him. The unbridgeable chasm between them and the lawyer is symbolized in the story by the clothes the latter is wearing on the night of his attempted reunion – the GAP corduroys and loafers – which are instantly read by the bar Indians as signs of his non-belonging. What both the lawyer and Mary Lynn discover as a result of their painfully failed encounters with "their own people" is that the true constants in their lives are their white spouses and their white-Indian families, whom they penitently rejoin soon after.

The third story of an assimilated Spokane Indian seeking to reassert his Indian identity describes an equally harrowing experience, yet this time the outcome is different. The journalist-narrator, who out of nostalgia for his childhood always picks up (like his father used to) Indian hitchhikers, consents to sex with a man he has given a ride to, although he (the journalist) is not a homosexual. Again, the encounter is described as unenjoyable and embarrassing, but unlike the other two cases, it stirs in the journalist

a dormant sense of connection with and longing for his tribe. As the story ends, he leaves the motel, abandons his car and the assignment he was traveling on, to start barefoot on a long trip along the highway “upriver, toward the place I was born and will someday die.” “At that moment,” he says, “if you had broken my heart, you could have looked inside and seen white skeletons of one thousand salmon” (*Toughest* 34). The metaphor is transparent. Like the salmon (Spokanes, Alexie never tires of reminding his readers, are the Salmon People), he yields to an urge in the blood which the encounter with the salmon-smelling hitchhiker stirred in him. His Indian identity, which has shrunk to bare bones, reasserts itself, takes control of him again, and he chooses to nourish it by returning home, presumably to the reservation. Thus, while Mary Lynn’s and the lawyer’s stories suggest that urbanity combined with prosperity constitute together an assimilationist Rubicon which, once crossed, cannot be recrossed, the story of the journalist expresses a hope to the contrary.

However this anxiety about not being “Indian enough” becomes far less pronounced in *Ten Little Indians*. Here, Alexie’s protagonists lose interest in proving to the world what they apparently feel quite secure about. One exception is Harlan Atwater in “The Search Engine,” a Spokane who was adopted and raised by white parents. Like the lawyer of “Class,” he tries once, and once only, to fraternize with bar Indians. This time the result is less disastrous, primarily because everybody, including Harlan, passes out on the drinks he is buying. Even so, when he sobers up, he realizes “his people” care for him not a whit more than they do for his books of poetry, which he gave out to them the night before and which he finds in the morning littering the pavements in the bar’s vicinity. But other Indian characters in this collection seem untroubled by any urge to prove they are Indians. Moreover, there is a note of defiance in the way they (or Alexie) speak about their nontraditional, individual manner of being indigenous. Having drawn Corliss as a person with a passion for western poetry, Alexie’s narrator asks a predictable, stereotype-tapping question: “What kind of Indian loses her mind over a book of poems?” And he instantly answers the question: “She was that kind of Indian, she was exactly that kind of Indian, and it was the only kind of Indian she knew how to be” (*Ten* 9). What else but a witty defiance can be heard also in the words of Estelle Walks Above’s son, who remarks about himself:

I rarely look in the mirror and think I’m an Indian. I don’t necessarily know what an Indian is supposed to be. After all, I don’t speak my tribal language and I’m allergic to earth. If it grows, it makes me sneeze. In Salish, Spokane means ‘Children of the Sun,’ but I’m slightly allergic to the sun. If I spend too much time outside, I get a nasty rash. (*Ten* 134)

The comedy of an Indian allergic to the sun and earth in a howling rebuttal of the enduring "Nature's Man" stereotype serves to articulate only more poignantly the point Alexie seems to be making throughout the book: that there is no limit to the number of ways one can be Indian, no ready made pattern, no single model preferable to other models. The ways to be indigenous in the twenty-first century have yet to be devised by every Indian for himself. This is exactly what his characters are doing, as they are moving – some of them confidently, others hesitantly – wherever their personal guiding spirits are prompting them to go, often in defiance of stereotypes and the expectations of those who claim to know better.

Yet, there *is* a discernible direction in which Alexie's white-collar Indians seem to be moving. That direction is identified by Estelle's son, who allows himself two sets of goals. One is to "let go of the worst of Indian: 1. low self-esteem, 2. alcoholism, 3. misogyny, 4. lateral violence." The other is to hold on to the best: "1. the cheerful acceptance of eccentricity, 2. the loving embrace of artistic expression, 3. the communistic sense of community" (*Ten* 135). Several key characters in the two collections of stories conform remarkably to these guidelines. Ambitious, witty, capable of auto-irony, they don't drink and they shun violence. They are sympathetic to women's aspirations and show no trace of homophobia. In a clear movement away from the Indians in *Indian Killer*, they are not racists either. If there is one trait they miss rather obviously, it is the communal spirit. Their aggressive individualism, concern primarily with their own goals, sets them apart from such memorable figures in Alexie's earlier books as Thomas Builds-the-Fire or Marie Polatkin, those tireless, dauntless community helpers and healers.

Alexie speaks eloquently in his recent fiction for revising all entrenched notions of the Indian, including the ones formed in the last three decades, so that middle class, acculturated Indian Americans are not excluded from the category. However, this does not mean that he propagandizes for or uncritically glamorizes urban Indian life or accomplishment. There is a subtle undertow in his rich Indians' stories that moderates the impression of affirmation and sympathy. The new urban Indianness has its costs. Alienation seems to be the most obvious of them – alienation from the community, often from work and family. A sense of faint, unspecified dissatisfaction hovers over several stories of success in both books. Even Loman, described in one place as perfectly happy with where, when, and how he lives, in another is characterized, somewhat incongruously, as a person who "no matter where he lived... always felt uncomfortable" (*Ten* 111). For reasons not entirely clear, he sleeps poorly, and is obsessed with a fear he might lose his wife and daughter. Nostalgia for his happy childhood, in turn, consumes Frank Snake Church, a man lonely and emotionally deprived, who is characterized as "suffering from a quiet sickness, a sort of emotional tumor that never grew or diminished, but prevented

him from living a full and messy life” (*Ten* 205). Even the apparently happiest couple in *Ten Little Indians*, the protagonists of “Do You Know Where I Am?” who survive because they learn to forgive the disappointments they have caused each other, come to realize in their old age that their “contentment was always running *only slightly ahead* of their dissatisfaction” (*Ten* 167, emphasis added).

If Alexie’s recent stories are approached in the way Andrew Macdonald argues in his study *Shape-Shifting* that all Indian stories should be approached, that is as weaving jointly a web of significances and commenting on one another “until little flashes of insight illuminate the connections that are presently just beyond view” (66), then perhaps the key text in *Ten Little Indians* is “Can I Get a Witness?” It is in this story that signals only faintly audible in the other ones are amplified to communicate a misery that nullifies all accomplishment. The story’s protagonist is a middle aged Indian woman going through a mid-life crisis. She is disappointed with her marriage to her Indian husband, a flag-waving patriot, and estranged from her two sons, whom she hates and is hated by. Crushed furthermore by the boredom of her white-collar job, she feels so utterly defeated that when on September 11 the first news of the terrorist attack cause panic in the Seattle office building where she works, she is the only person who does not run but stays in the window-walled conference room on the sixtieth floor, *hoping* for another plane to come crashing in. When several months later, a suicide bomber enters a restaurant in which she is having lunch, she greets him with a smile. She survives the bombing, but when she emerges unhurt from the rubble, her only hope is that, found missing, she will be presumed dead, which will give her a chance to start as somebody else all over again. The reasons for the woman’s misery are strictly personal, yet amplified in her experience are all the problems – emotional coldness, disappointment, loneliness, alienation, exhaustion – that more or less deeply taint the privileged lives of all Alexie’s urban Indians.

The latest collection’s title, *Ten Little Indians*, may be contributing to that undertow as well. Evoking as it does the second stanza of the children’s song, in which the number of Indians decreases one by one with every line, the title may be suggesting that something is being lost after all as Indians turn Native *Americans* and let themselves be “thoroughly defeated by white culture... conquered and assimilated” (*Ten* 151). Knowing Alexie’s love of punning, does not the title “Flight Patterns” beg to be read not only literally, as “flying schedules,” but also as “escape patterns,” where the “escape” need not be an act of liberation but of desertion? If one entertains all these possibilities, one may begin to see the only story in the collection that does *not* feature a rich Indian but a homeless wino as not entirely marginal to the book’s message. Down and out Jackson Jackson, the protagonist of “What You Pawn I Will Redeem,” possesses all the traits which are missing in the lives of the other characters – a natural, instinctive sympathy

with the needy, a sharing spirit that is stronger than any wish to possess, a freedom that is known only to those who do not plan or yield to ambition, and a sense of direct, personal connection to the past. Obviously, Alexie is the last person to suspect of trying to romanticize the life of squalor and deprivation or the psychologies such a life produces. Yet while Jackson Jackson's poverty, recklessness, and dependence on white people's sense of decency become a measure of his more fortunate tribesmen's advancement, his virtues provide a yardstick with which to measure the cost they have paid for moving up economically and socially.

Alexie's recent collections will probably once again rekindle the old debate concerning the significance of the term "Native American fiction." In the eighties and nineties that debate led to identifying a set of traits regarded as unique to the Native American variety of ethnic writing. Addressing the problem in a book of extensive interviews conducted by Hartwig Isernhagen, N. Scott Momaday and Gerald Vizenor have described those traits in relatively inclusive terms. According to Momaday,

Native American literature... is distinguished from other literatures.... It has its own experience and its own language, its own rhythms.... It represents a particular kind of experience, and a particular viewpoint, a particular world view.... Native Americans... see the world as possessed of spirit, for one thing. They have a great respect for the earth and for the physical world.... [Furthermore,] Native Americans have a very highly developed sense of language and a very rich oral tradition, and I think they tend to take language more seriously than most other people. They have a very highly developed sense of humor, which is not easily accessible to other people.... [T]he artistic expression of the Native American world is very special. (30-31)

Momaday's list is amended by Vizenor with the observation that Indian writers make active use of mythic material and that they communicate a unique sense of the relationship between man and landscape. They don't "make it a safe place or a Mother Earth, but... a powerful source of imagination and mystery in character" (99).

By the standards specified here, the key texts of the Native American Renaissance – *House Made of Dawn*, *Ceremony*, *Fools Crow*, and to a considerable extent also Alexie's early stories – are representative of Indian fiction. However, *The Toughest Indian* and *Ten Little Indians*, like Welch's *The Indian Lawyer*, fit the description only erratically. Therefore they either have to be classified as not belonging in the category, or seen as modifying the existing definitions. Like Welch's novel, catalogued by MacDonald in *Shape-Shifting* as detective fiction and described by Owens in *Other Destinies* as "the common domestic human drama rather than anything particularly Indian" (26),

Alexie's two books of stories push radically outward the boundaries of what Momaday refers to as "a particular kind of [Indian] experience." Like Welch, Alexie insists his characters *are* Indians. They *know* it at some deepest, elemental level, they are recognized as Indians by others, and they fashion their lives sometimes in defiance of the existing stereotypes of Indianness, and sometimes by exploiting the opportunities which those stereotypes offer. At the same time, they live assimilated American lives away from their ancestral homelands, in urban isolation from the natural world, and in ignorance of the traditional world view, ways, and values, the last vestiges of which survive only in their customized, secular rituals. Their "particular kind of [Indian] experience," except for an occasional identity crisis or an attempt to resist being framed by the concepts of others, is not essentially different from the experience of millions of Americans of the same class – white, Asian, or Black – and is marked by general human problems, such as a sense of disillusionment or exhaustion, loss of love or sexual interest, nostalgia for the past, fear for the loved ones, anxiety about terrorism, and the like. Furthermore, these characters are interpreted by an authorial consciousness that is not traditional either. Their espousal of American ways is not viewed critically as betrayal of Indian cultural identity (the way, for instance Emo and the other veterans are viewed by the authorial consciousness in *Ceremony*) but as an inevitable development when a people have been sentenced by history to survive in a sea of aggressive culture irreconcilable with and inimical to their own. The fact that Alexie's characters are not necessarily happy is not the author's way of indirectly condemning their existential choices, but rather of concluding about the condition of the modern man in general. To blame their unhappiness upon their distance from traditional Indian roots would mean committing the romantic fallacy of equating bliss with the past and the non-western.

It is also clear that Alexie's fiction published in the twenty-first century advances an agenda distinct from that proposed by the First Wave of Native American Renaissance writers. Their principal goals were to revise history and to reveal how colonialist mentality and practices survive in the present. They denounced America for its destruction of the Indian world, and rejected American racism, materialism, and spiritual degradation, pointing at the same time to the reservation as a bastion of resistance, capable – despite its deprivations – of nourishing individuals strong enough in their traditional wisdom and vision to face the challenges of modernity. Their collective message was: we suffered and we continue to suffer, but we survived and, braced with our ancient heritage, we can fashion a new life for ourselves, not entirely traditional because life moves on, but built on solid traditional foundations. By contrast, Alexie's two recent collections ignore or question his predecessors' goals in a manner almost ostentatious. Except for one story in *The Toughest*, "Sin Eaters" – a metaphor of Indian fate in the last 400 years derived from

science-fiction – history is absent in the two books. It offers no keys to interpreting the fates of the characters. The historical victimization of Native Americans has some indirect bearing upon their present day privileged lives only inasmuch as they benefit from white sense of guilt turned into political correctness or Indianophilia. One or two of them, as they climb up, may hit their heads against the glass roof of racism incomparably more subtle than an explicit racist slur or the refusal to serve Indians, but generally they are shown as living in a world surprisingly free of racial hostility. What a reader familiar with Alexie's *Indian Killer* will find most unexpected is the number of decent, unprejudiced whites featured in his recent stories. As for the importance of the reservation and tradition, Alexie had written about the pathologies of the former and the demise of the latter long before he published *The Toughest Indian in the World*. In the concluding story of *Ten Little Indians*, "Whatever Happened to Frank Snake Church," the theme returns: the protagonist's nostalgia, literally for his happy childhood but metaphorically for all things past, is denounced as corrosive of spirit. "Nostalgia is cancer. Nostalgia will fill your heart with tumors" (*Ten* 228), a Black man called Preacher warns Frank, who will not let go of his memories of the better past. Thus Alexie, who is very aware of the extraordinary power he wields as "a literary writer [with] a semi-pop image" (*Publisher's* 1), articulates a different message for his Indian readers. The message is: the traditional way of being Indian is an option no longer available to many contemporary Native Americans. At the same time, the world outside the reservation has become less than ever hostile to Indian efforts to break away from the cycle of poverty and degradation. Those who can overcome inertia, alcoholism, and the discouragements of their tribal environment stand a chance of constructing their own future. Some degree of assimilation is the inevitable cost, but assimilation is not necessarily synonymous with sell out, nor does it completely obliterate Indianness. It entails an entirely new way of being Indian.

This is a defiant message, explosive of the older axiom that assimilation equals surrender. But Alexie is a writer who has never been saying the things expected of him. His policy in *The Toughest Indian* and *Ten Little Indians* is the policy of the woman in "Can I Get a Witness" who, knowing that she is upsetting her listener with her stories, only calmly informs him: "I'm going to tell you everything, and you're going to listen... Nobody wants to hear these things, but I'm thinking them and I have to say them." (*Ten* 90). Evidently, very much like her, Alexie needs to unburden his mind of what he sees as the truth of the contemporary Indian's situation, regardless of how disturbing that truth may sound to his compatriots and to his readers. Perhaps an indication of how unwelcome it must sound to many of them is the conspicuous absence of any contribution by Alexie to MariJo Moore's *Genocide of the Mind* (2003), a recent anthology of texts by

contemporary Native American writers, critics and public personages, concerned focally with Indian urban experience. That a prominent author most outspoken on precisely this topic either has not been invited, or has declined the invitation to contribute to the book, suggests that irreconcilable differences exist between his and the other contributors' understanding of the problem. Indeed, the anthology communicates faith that, as Vine Deloria, Jr. has written in the Foreword, urbanity entails only "adaptation, not accommodation" (xiv), let alone assimilation. In the hopeful words of the book's editor, "those of us who choose to live in two worlds are doing what we can to keep the fires of our ancestral knowledge burning. Though a difficult task, we will not let these fires be extinguished... We hold fast to what we know, try to teach our children to respect and understand ancestral values" (1). Evidently, Alexie is skeptical about such wishful pronouncements as misrepresenting the experience of those increasingly numerous urban Indians who have successfully and permanently established themselves in the American world. And so he shares his skepticism with his readers, having chosen to reveal life's confusing, often sad complexity, rather than tell hopeful stories meant to fortify and uplift the spirits.

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Kate Delaney

Earth Into Art

The earth moved – more than 240,000 tons of sandstone and rhyolite in the case of Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (Kaster 29) and over 6,650 tons of material in the case of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, a work that took 292 truck hours and 625 man hours to construct (Kaster 58). The Earth Art or Land Art movement fits well into the theme of this volume as it allows us to see how some artists of the late-20th century dealt with questions of the natural and the artificial – in earth art can one separate the natural from the artificial? In this essay I will situate the Earth Art movement in its historical time period, present and discuss some of the major artists and works, and make some connections to related cultural developments, especially in postmodern literature.

The Earth Art movement arose in the United States in the 1960s among a group of sculptors and conceptual artists who were disenchanted with high modernism and – like participants in other movements of the time that rejected institutions and consumerism – rebelled against the museum, the gallery and the commodification of art those institutions represented. Among the other aspects of the *Zeitgeist* at work here we can cite the increased consciousness regarding the environment, the back-to-the-land movement, a heightened interest in spiritualism and alternative religions, and even the changing view of the earth provided by the photos of it shot by astronauts from space – by which the earth itself could be seen as a sculptural object.

Michael Heizer perhaps most strongly articulated both the rejection of commodification and the attraction to spiritualism. Born in California in 1944, the son of an archaeologist, Heizer grew up with an appreciation of the spaces of the American Southwest and the cultures of the native peoples. His *Double Negative* which I have mentioned above was created in 1969-70. Two chasms 50 feet deep, 40 feet wide and over 1200 feet long were cut in the Nevada desert – a sculpture created by removing rather than accumulating material. The viewer walks through the trench, through the void, the negative of the title, but is unable to view the work as a whole. In 1972-76 also in the Nevada desert Heizer created *Complex City*, a work on an equally large scale as *Double Negative*, but this time above ground and weighing over 9,000 tons, measuring 140 feet in length, 24 feet in height. *Complex City* evokes associations with the pyramids of Egypt as well as with the great pre-Columbian pyramids. Heizer was explicitly aware of the spiritual aspects of this work and its relation to the great religious monuments of past

civilizations like Stonehenge in England and the Mayan pyramids. He also was among the artists most specifically linking his preference for creating earthworks with his revolt against the gallery system and the commodification of art. “One aspect of earth orientation,” he said, “is that the works circumvent the galleries and the artist has no sense of the commercial or the utilitarian.... One of the implications of earth art might be to remove completely the commodity-status of a work of art and to allow a return to the idea of art as.... more of a religion” (Smithson 246-247).

Heizer’s work, on the other hand, also can be seen as illustrating some of the contradictions of earth art. In spite of his rejection of museums and galleries and art as a commodity he exhibited photographs from the work at the Virginia Dwan Gallery, and of course the creation of massive earth works takes even more financial backing than does the creation of easel paintings. Some did not find Heizer’s work compatible with “the spirit of the 60s.” It was criticized as violating the very earth and space it claimed to revere. Some saw the work as an attack on the environment, others used gendered language to decry the rape of Mother Earth by macho male artists (Kastner 29).

I’d like to move now to the work which perhaps more than any other has come to symbolize for many the Earth Art movement. Robert Smithson’s 1970 work *Spiral Jetty* is probably the best-known earth artwork for many reasons. One is the work itself: a simple, elegant form that is instantly recognizable from photographs. Another reason is the film Smithson made with the same title which documents the creation of the jetty in the Great Salt Lake. The film has been seen by many more people than have ever seen the work itself. It was included in the Whitney Museum’s major survey of the art of the twentieth century. A third reason is Smithson himself: he was a charismatic figure, a prolific writer, and died an early and dramatic death in a plane crash while viewing the site of his 1973 work *Amarillo Ramp*.

If Heizer illustrates the sacred aspects of earth art, Smithson may be classed with the more profane issues--especially that of recycling waste. Entropy (the tendency of all things to tend towards disintegration) and the irreversible de-differentiation of matter were key concepts in Smithson’s writings and art work. He read and admired the works of J.G. Ballard. Smithson sought damaged sites for his work. “The best sites for ‘earth art’ are sites that have been disrupted by industry, reckless urbanization or nature’s own destruction,” he maintained. The Great Salt Lake attracted him as a site for his jetty because of the red color of the algae – which reminded him of blood – as well as for the unstable nature of the salt reef and the disruption of nature caused by the lake’s salinity. Smithson also was drawn by the man-made damage to the site: the work of the oil drillers and miners in the area. “The Salt Lake piece is right near a disused oil drilling operation and the whole northern part of the lake is completely useless. I am interested in

bringing a landscape with low profile up, rather than bringing one with high profile down” (Smithson 297). Looking at the work itself, we can note it is a spiral of black basalt rocks, limestone and earth curling in on itself, measuring 1500 feet in length. The work was completed in 1970 and by 1973 had completely disappeared from view because of the rising waters of the lake. For 20 years the work existed only in films and photographs until it re-emerged in 1993 and 1994, only to disappear again until 2002 when drought in the region returned the *Spiral Jetty* – encrusted with salt crystals – to view. This contingent nature of the work has also contributed to its legend. If one wishes to know whether the *Spiral Jetty* is visible at any particular time one needs to check the water levels posted for the Great Salt Lake on the U.S. Geological Service web site. When Smithson constructed the work the water level was at 4195 feet. If the posted water level is below this, *Spiral Jetty* is visible.

After *Spiral Jetty* Smithson created *Spiral Hill/Broken Circle* in a sand quarry in Emmen, the Netherlands in 1971. He then entered into talks with mining companies in the U.S. for projects that would reclaim land devastated by strip mines and turn it into land art. He saw this as recycling land that could not be restored or cultivated. Unlike other land artists Smithson chose to work not in wilderness or pristine sites but in industrial or damaged sites or even urban sites. One of his most famous pieces is “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic New Jersey.” Smithson himself was born in New Jersey (William Carlos Williams was his pediatrician), a fact which also sets him apart from the other earth artists I will be discussing in this paper as they were all born in California. On his tour of Passaic (on a bus from the Port Authority terminal in New York) Smithson used an Instamatic camera to photograph such “monuments” as a bridge over the Passaic River, a bulldozed road, pipes gushing water into the river, and a sand box. In another piece on an urban site, Smithson named Frederick Law Olmsted “America’s first ‘earthwork artist’”(164) for his transformation of a rubbish-strewn site on Manhattan into Central Park. Smithson remarked that the “before” pictures of Central Park reminded him of strip-mined regions he had seen in Ohio (158).

Smithson’s tragic early death kept him from realizing these mining recycling projects. However, his wife and others completed *Amarillo Ramp*, and Smithson’s influence lives on in other ways as well. In postmodern writers like Pynchon and DeLillo we can see similar interests in entropy and waste. Pynchon was writing *Gravity’s Rainbow* during the same period when Smithson was creating his major earth works. However, I think we can see Smithson’s legacy most clearly in *Underworld*. Klara Sax’s enormous art project recycling warplanes in the desert owes a great debt to the earth artists of Smithson’s generation. Listen to Klara as she described her work to an interviewer from French television: “This is a landscape painting in which we use the landscape itself. The desert

is central to this piece. It's the surround" (DeLillo 70) or to Nick as he mused: "I wondered if the piece was visible from space like the land art of some lost Andean people" (126). DeLillo explicitly invokes the major land art pieces of the 1960s and '70s which also saw themselves in relation to prehistoric monuments.

Similarly, *Underworld's* preoccupation with waste and what we are to do with it can be seen as another expression of the passions which motivated Smithson. "It seems that when one is talking about preserving the environment or conserving energy or recycling one inevitably gets to the question of waste and I would postulate that there's a certain kind of pleasure principle that comes out of a preoccupation with waste... there's a kind of equation between the enjoyment of life and waste" (Smithson 303). Like Smithson, Klara Sax is known for work based on recycling waste and using castoffs. Nick Shay's "firm was involved in waste. We were waste handlers, waste traders, cosmologists of waste" (88), and Nick recognized a link between his work and that of Klara, although he dared not articulate it. "I almost mentioned my work to Klara Sax when we had our talk in the desert. Her own career had been marked at times by her methods of transforming and absorbing junk. But something made me wary. I didn't want her to think I was implying some affinity of effort and perspective" (102). And waste and land art come together in DeLillo's description of the Fresh Kills landfill: "three thousand acres of mountained garbage, contoured and road-graded, with bulldozers pushing waves of refuse on the active face" (184) – the bulldozers calling to mind the bulldozers building the *Spiral Jetty* in Smithson's film.

I have organized this paper not only chronologically but also as a literal, physical trajectory from low to high, from Heizer's 50-foot trenches to Smithson's low-lying jetty and the recycling of waste and now to Walter de Maria's marriage of earth and sky in *The Lightning Field*. De Maria himself remarked that this 1977 work is neither of the earth nor the sky but both. "The land is not the setting for the work but a part of the work" – a definition which could apply to all earthworks (Tomkins, "The Mission" 53). *The Lightning Field* also gives me a chance to discuss another aspect of earth art – its sublime aspect, as this work without a doubt evokes the awe-inspiring, terrifying aspects of nature that Edmund Burke cited as "the ruling principle of the sublime" (262). De Maria's work consists of 400 custom-made stainless steel poles with pointed tips arranged in 220 foot intervals on a rectangular grid measuring one kilometer in width and 1.6 kilometers (one mile) in length. The poles average 20 feet in height. The work is located on a high desert plain (7200 ft) in southwestern New Mexico, an area with the highest density of lightning in North America. When lightning strikes the field the visible electrical charges light up the sky producing a sublime effect – the power and terror of nature at her most elemental. It is an effect that very few have been privileged to wit-

ness. For one thing the site itself is remote – about a three-hour drive from Albuquerque with no public transportation available, and the number of visitors is limited to six per day and only allowed from May to October. It would be more accurate to say six visitors are allowed each night because all visitors must spend one night in the cabin provided by the Dia Foundation which maintains the site. Lightning strikes on only a few days each month – like Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*, *Lightning Field* is very much a contingent work of art. But those who have visited the site have not been disappointed even if they have not been lucky enough to observe a lightning strike because the field of shining poles is in itself awe-inspiring as the poles catch the rising or setting sun. In midday the poles all but disappear to the eye but throughout the day as the sun’s angle shifts the light on the poles changes constantly. As one visitor put it “What you come here for is the light, not the lightning” (Tomkins, “The Mission” 52).

Tomkins’ remark provides a perfect bridge to the next artist I want to discuss – James Turrell. Continuing our journey both through time and in an upward trajectory we can now turn to James Turrell’s *Roden Crater*, a work begun in 1974 in the great era of earthworks but still in progress and not expected to be completed before 2006. In his gallery works as well as in *Roden Crater* Turrell’s medium is light, not the effects of light, but light itself. He has made light tangible, so much so that visitors have to be restrained from walking directly into his works in an effort to touch the light. In an extinct volcano outside Flagstaff, Arizona Turrell has been working to create his master work – “a naked-eye observatory for celestial events” (Tomkins, “Flying into the Light” 62). To prevent any interference from man-made light Turrell persuaded the local authorities of Coconino County to pass a “dark sky” ordinance, outlawing upward directed lighting within 35 miles of Roden Crater (Tomkins, “Flying into the Light” 64-65). The work will capture light from the sun, moon, and stars. Nine underground chambers with tunnels and openings are being constructed to receive celestial light at precise moments of the solar and lunar calendars, in a conscious reference to sacred sites of the past also constructed so that the sun entered an opening precisely on the solstice or other significant moments. In the crater’s enormous bowl one can lie on one’s back on a limestone platform, with one’s head lower than one’s feet, and experience “celestial vaulting” where the sky appears as a dome. Although Turrell has had more than a million cubic yards of rock and earth moved to sculpt the shape of the crater’s rim into a uniform height, he sees his work as different from that of Smithson and other earth artists because he wants *Roden Crater* to look untouched from the outside. “It’s a powerful geological form. I wanted to keep the strength and beauty of that form. This is different from the land art of Smithson and the others. They want to make a place. Of course Roden Crater is a place.... But I don’t want it not to be a volcano” (Tomkins, “Flying into the Light” 71).

Turrell's insistence that *Roden Crater* be seen as a volcano keeps "earth" an essential part of this celestial work.

The many years of work required and enormous cost of *Roden Crater* as well as the political maneuverings necessary to get the "dark sky" ordinance passed exemplify the complexities and contradictions that have faced the earth art movement ever since its inception. Far from being a "simple," "natural" movement, earth art requires considerable economic and political efforts, a feature perhaps most evident in the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Their *Running Fence* in California (1972-76), for example, required eighteen public hearings, three sessions at the Superior Court of California and a 450-page Environmental Impact Report.

The earth art movement has outlasted many of the other movements which had their origin in the 1960s and has spread far beyond the U.S. Art outside the galleries and museums has become a permanent part of the visual landscape, affecting our perceptions of both art and the earth.

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Anna Pochmara

Are You a “Real Man”? – The Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in American Culture

Nobody was born a man; you earned manhood provided you were good enough, bold enough.

Norman Mailer, *Armies of the Night*

This paper is intended to introduce the central issues of the construction of American masculinity. First of all, it will discuss masculine gender identity from psychological and historical perspectives. The latter perspective will present a number of factors that shaped specifically American construction of masculinity, such as the myth of the West and the capitalist workplace. Next, I will analyze the “crisis” of masculinity that was announced at the end of the nineteenth century and numerous ways employed to deal with it. The aim of this paper is to present the basic elements and dynamics of the construction of masculinity as well as its tensions.

The process of constructing masculine gender identity will be presented with reference to the works probably of the most prominent figure in the growing field of masculinity studies: Michael Kimmel’s “The Contemporary ‘Crisis’ of Masculinity in Historical Perspective” (1987), “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity” (2001), and “Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832 – 1920” (1994). Other relevant sources include Elisabeth Badinter’s *XY. On Masculine Identity* (1992) and Gail Bederman’s *Manliness and Civilization* (1995).

The above-mentioned texts analyze the construction of gender identity as a historical process as well as a psychological one. The psychological process of constructing masculinity takes place primarily at the oedipal stage of development. The boy passes from the stage of identification with his mother to identification with his father. Some psychologists argue that the boy goes through a stage of protofemininity¹ before the oedipal crisis and separation from the mother take place (see Badinter). According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the stage of identification with the mother, the Imaginary Order, is a blissful stage of unity without difference and absence. After the oedipal crisis the child

¹ The concept of protofemininity was introduced by Robert Stoller in the 1970s and challenged Freud’s proposition about innate masculinity (Badinter 46).

enters the Symbolic Order. This change is connected with the acquisition of language and the feeling of lack and separation (Moi 99-101). The renunciation of the mother and identification with the father mark the construction of not only gender identity but also sexual orientation. Through the process of identification with the father, the boy becomes both masculine and heterosexual, which explains why the two categories are so strongly linked in collective consciousness.

As Kimmel claims in his text "Masculinity as Homophobia," the flight from the feminine represented by the mother is the most crucial element of masculine gender identification process. Yet, according to Kimmel, this is not a unitary process completed once and for all in early childhood. The renunciation of the feminine is enacted throughout the whole life. Men constantly feel pressured to prove their manhood, especially when other men scrutinize it. Thus Kimmel claims that masculinity is a homosocial enactment of the repudiation of the feminine. This process is also connected with the repression of homosexual desire, which remains in every boy from the protofeminine preoedipal stage (276). Hence, according to Kimmel, the repudiation of the feminine and homophobia are strongly interconnected and reinforce each other. Both are salient for the validation of masculinity especially in the homosocial sphere. In Kimmel's view homophobia is not only irrational fear of gay men, but the term also encompasses gay panic – the fear of being latently gay – as well as the fear of being emasculated by other men (277). The juxtaposition of the homophobic character of masculinity's enactment and homosociality necessary to validate it creates a strong double bind tension, which is central for the structure of masculine identity. Thus, masculinity is primarily the rejection of the feminine and the homosexual rather than simply affirmation of the masculine. This strong current of anxiety and decisive role of the negative code leaves masculinity fragile and unstable.

Elizabeth Badinter, in her book *XY. On Masculine Identity*, proposes a similar perspective on the masculine gender identification process. She claims that out of two main processes of identity construction, inclusion based on resemblance and exclusion based on difference, masculine identity is produced mainly through the latter process (33). The negative process of masculine gender identification can be illustrated with cliché phrases such as "boys don't cry," "men don't dance" or titles of self-help books such as *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche*. Novelist Zane Grey claimed that: "All boys love football. If they don't they're not real boys" (quoted in Kimmel, "Consuming" 35). In mass imagination there exist numerous similar bans, including asking for directions or figure skating, which have been collected on sites such as "Top 74 Things 'Real Men,' Don't Do," "Things A Real Man Doesn't Do at Christmas," or "Twenty Things... You Never Hear Real Men Say."²

Moreover, the very phrase “real men” suggests an excluding dynamic characterizing the construction of hegemonic masculinity as, if there are “real men,” it can be induced that there are also men who are not “real.” The word “real” is not used as often in the case of women. A popular search engine reports 768,000 uses of “real man” and only 173,000 of “real woman.”

Badinter’s main thesis is that masculine identity is constructed in the process of differentiation – to be a man means not being like women, children, and homosexuals (32, 115). Nowadays, the feminine and the homosexual remain the most important categories of differentiation for men. Badinter claims that the renunciation of the feminine as the mother has always been an important element of the process of creating masculine identity. It was realized in many cultures in the separation stage of rites of passage. She agrees with Kimmel that men validate each other’s masculinity. In her analysis of rites of passage she stresses that only men engender other men. Moreover, Badinter emphasizes the importance of fear in the process of masculine gender identification – the fear of emasculating women and the fear of showing any signs of femininity, which are related to homophobia as defined by Kimmel.

It is important to stress that there is nothing timeless about the homophobic aspect of masculinity. In her study, Badinter quotes numerous examples of rites of passage that are inherently homosexual. Many critics also point to the fact that in the Ancient Greek culture, male homosexuality was explicitly acknowledged (Easthope 12). Anthony Easthope, in his psychoanalytical examination of masculinity, claims that male autoerotic and homosexual desire was culturally repressed with the growth of Christian influences. Over the next eighteen centuries homosexual behavior was linked to the notion of the sodomite – a category that referred to a particular sexual behavior, without turning it into a stable identity (Badinter 94-106). Finally, it was the end of the nineteenth century that witnessed the creation of the homosexual as a social category in contrast to the sodomite. As Foucault puts it: “the homosexual of the nineteenth century became a personage: a past, a history and a childhood; a morphology too, with an indiscreet anatomy and perhaps mysterious physiology.... The homosexual is now a species” (43). The creation of a separate category strengthened the exclusionary character of masculinity – adding another othered group for differentiation.

I have argued above that, on the psychological level, masculinity is a constant process of exclusion and rejection of the feminine, the child, and the homosexual, and that the success of the process can be validated only by other men. Although the psychological level is common to many, if not all existing, cultures (due to the fact that all boys are assumed to pass through the oedipal stage), at this point I want to focus specifically on American masculinity and the particular historical processes that shaped it.

In his article “Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920,” Kimmel presents the emergence of contemporary masculinity. It dates back to the 1830s – the peak of the industrial revolution and the emergence of the capitalist marketplace (13). Before the 1830s two models of masculinity prevailed: the “Genteel Patriarch” and the “Heroic Artisan.” The former derived his male identity from land ownership, whereas the latter represents an urban model of hereditary craftsmanship. By 1830, both models were replaced by “Marketplace Manhood,” which has remained valid until today. The new model is embodied in the figure of a businessman. Marketplace masculinity is based on an endless process of proving one’s manhood in the sphere of economic competition. Men derive their identity from the accumulation of goods which are a sign of economic success – “who has the most toys when he dies wins.” Constant competition and fluctuations in the marketplace leave masculine identity unstable and in incessant need of validation. Hence, men needed to stabilize their gender identity by excluding women from the public sphere of the marketplace. The strict border between the public and domestic spheres was one of the factors ensuring the stability of male gender identity.

In her study *Manliness & Civilization*, Bederman complicates the historical narrative offered by Kimmel. She agrees that between 1820 and 1860 the model of middle-class masculinity was shaped by the competitive capitalism based primarily on self-employment. According to Bederman it embodied the ideals of “manliness” – self-restraint, high-mindedness, and strong character (12). In pre-Civil War America the total number of self-employed businessmen and farmers constituted 88 percent of male population (Hantover 291). Yet, between 1870 and 1910, economic conditions changed considerably in respect to self-employment, which slumped from 67 to 37 percent during that period (Bederman 12). Self-restraint and hard work were not enough to prove successful in the new market conditions. To make the matters worse, the characteristics required in the emerging corporate culture were typically feminine – tact, teamwork, subordination, and ability to accept direction (Kimmel, “Consuming” 21). Apart from the feminization of marketplace on this symbolic level, in the mentioned decades the participation of women in the work force increased several times (Hantover 292). According to Bederman, these changes produced a need to remake the concept of Victorian *manliness* at the end of the nineteenth century. The concept was being slowly replaced with the term *masculinity*, which stood for “aggressiveness, physical force and male sexuality” rather than moral values connected to manliness (17-18).

Kimmel and Bederman differ in their choice of the critical point in the construction of the American masculinity; for Kimmel it is the emergence of the “Marketplace Manhood” in the 1830s, whereas for Bederman it is the crisis of the ideals of “manliness”

and the gradual emergence of “masculinity” that began in the 1880s. Kimmel diagnoses the development of the first symptoms of American gender identity “crisis” in the early nineteenth century, yet, he claims that American men had numerous ways to deal with it at hand, such as going West, proving oneself in the homosocial marketplace, as well as practicing self-restraint and discipline. Both social historians agree that it is at the end of the nineteenth century that the most intensive attempts to remake masculinity took place.

Apart from the changes in the workplace, another factor that is interpreted by both Kimmel and Bederman as threatening to American mid-nineteenth-century masculinity is the rapid increase in Eastern and Southern European immigration. Most of the immigrants were male and joined the working-class. These overlapping groups constituted competition not only in the marketplace but, more importantly, in the traditionally middle-class sphere of politics. According to Bederman, immigrants and the working-class were successfully competing for the power to govern American cities (13). As middle-class men identified strongly with the public sphere, and as masculinity was identified with citizenship, the above-mentioned phenomena were interpreted as a serious challenge to masculine identity.

To these mid-nineteenth-century social phenomena one must add a factor that is assessed by Kimmel as the most significant challenge to the power of men – the women’s suffrage movement (“Contemporary ‘Crisis’” 142). As the division into the female domestic sphere and male public sphere constituted the basis for masculine gender identity, the women’s movement was a serious challenge to men’s gender identity and authority. Kimmel illustrates this claim with the fact that at the end of nineteenth century, the notion of *manhood*, which differentiated men from children, was exchanged for *masculinity*, which clearly defined men in opposition to women. Like Bederman, Kimmel acknowledges the importance of the emergence of the notion of “masculinity,” yet he contrasts it with manhood, whereas Bederman juxtaposes it with manliness.

The crisis in the workplace and public sphere coincided with several other phenomena threatening the stability of nineteenth-century masculinity. Whereas on the social level employment patterns were central for the changing concept of American masculinity, the level of cultural imagination was influenced primarily by the notion of the Western conquest. In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner – in one of the most influential works ever written on American society, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” – announced the end of the frontier, emphasizing simultaneously its key role. Interestingly, his work turns out to be also crucial for the definition of American hegemonic masculinity. Turner’s thesis is inherently nostalgic and romanticizing, as he praises the phenomenon that had been announced as past in the 1890 census. The West is presented by Turner in terms of “the myth of the garden,” referring to the revitalizing power of nature

(Smith 253). As he poetically puts it: “here was a magic fountain of youth in which America continually bathed and was rejuvenated” (quoted in Smith 254). He claims that “the Great West” ensured “perennial rebirth” of America (Turner 81). The West stands also for innocence of the primitive contrasted with the assumed corruption of European civilization (82). In Turner’s text the West and frontier are linked to democracy and the emergence of American character, but also less explicitly to white American masculinity.

As Alan Trachtenberg claims in *The Incorporation of America. Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (1982), Turner’s hypothesis “fails to acknowledge cultural multiplicity; in the Southwest alone, Anglo-Americans, Spanish Americans, Roman Catholics, Mormons and Indians all contributed to a heterogeneous culture. It [the hypothesis] makes its claims on the basis of a decidedly partial experience – of chiefly Anglo-Saxon settlers and farmers flowing from New England into Midwest” (17). The West is presented by Turner as free, primitive, fresh, and virgin wilderness, unoccupied by Native Americans. Turner fails to account not only for non-white male presence on the frontier but also for female settlers. Thus, the frontier character that is glorified in his work can be interpreted as the essence of American nineteenth-century hegemonic masculinity.

Turner defines American (masculine) character as “[t]hat coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which are traits of the frontier...” (85). Thus the American character, which can be read as American white masculinity, is depicted with reference to power (masterful, dominant, powerful), physical strength (coarseness, grasp of material things), and vitality (buoyancy and exuberance). It is worth pointing out that, unlike in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, powerful masculinity was not linked to the religious sphere – Turner’s hero works “for good and for evil.” This becomes more comprehensible as we acknowledge that in the nineteenth century religious devotion became identified with the feminine sphere and thus it posited a threat of emasculation (Green 11-12, 32, 47). The fact that American character according to Turner “lacks in the artistic” can be read as an attempt to contrast the frontiersman with the overcivilized artist or intellectual as well as with European corruption.

Excessive civilizing and feminization (identified with religious influence) were central motifs of the late-nineteenth-century “crisis” of American masculinity. Turner not only defines American character but also reasserts the power of white masculinity with references to physical strength and frontier experience. Thus, Turner’s work pronounces a crisis – the end of frontier – and simultaneously answers the crisis. American mascu-

linity praised by Turner differs from civilized manliness analyzed by Bederman; it stands in stark opposition to civilization and sentimental religion. Turner's romanticization of the West can be interpreted as a way of dealing with the crisis of the end of the frontier by preserving it as myth. The myth is perceived as timeless and ahistorical rather than historically specific; thus it is able to posit a revitalized model of masculinity. Turner's vision powerfully contributed to the creation of the myth of the West and the trapper/cowboy figure that was to be glorified later in adventure stories, dime novels, and westerns. There is one more important implication of Turner's identification of American character with masculinity – this equation leads to the conclusion that a crisis of masculinity inevitably equals a national crisis.

Martin Green, who analyzes the myth of the West from a contemporary perspective, also links American character with masculinity. In his work *The Great American Adventure*, Green claims that adventure stories are the expression of tightly intertwined nationalism, democracy, imperialism, and masculinity. The West paradoxically serves to promote egalitarian democracy (as an escape from the city and civilization's hierarchy) as well as imperialism linked with territorial expansion (4, 7, 9, 16). Together, the two notions produce a peculiarly American nationalism as represented in adventure stories. Green argues that the above-mentioned concepts are inseparable from masculinity. American hegemonic masculinity, in his analysis, becomes differentiated from the devoted Quaker, on the one hand, and the brutal savage Indian on the other. It combines high-mindedness and civility with militarism (10). Thus, American adventure stories served to express the American credo, character, and masculine identity.

The gesture of identification of masculinity and citizenship or humanity is not restricted to American culture. Kimmel analyses aspects of classical social theories (Marx, Weber, Tocqueville, and Freud) to claim that they all describe masculinity rather than femininity or neutral humanity ("Masculinity" 267-69). Yet this connection seems to be especially strong in American culture. Two of the theorists chosen by Kimmel (Weber and Tocqueville) refer to "an American" rather than any democratic citizen. This is connected with the fact that the division into the public and private, the masculine and feminine, was stronger in America than in Europe. The insistence on gender segregation can be illustrated with the fact pointed out by Green, namely, that American nineteenth-century literature is strictly divided into the feminine romance and masculine adventure stories, without the tradition of European novel of manners. Only the masculine genres were seen as embodying the American character, citizenship and nationalism. Thus, as masculinity was defined within the public sphere, the changes in the social, economic, as well as political and national situation led to instability of masculine identity and a prevailing sense of its crisis. The process of remaking masculinity had begun.

In order to revive and stabilize the shaken concept of masculine identity, a number of strategies were employed. First of all, on the level of discourse, the theme of the feminization of American culture was diagnosed as central to the “crisis.” The threat of the feminine as the mother figure was voiced in protests against the feminization of American boyhood. The very concept of the feminization of American culture is inherently paradoxical. The anxiety-drenched American masculinity of the nineteenth century strongly reinforced the cult of true womanhood with the sanctification of motherhood at its center. Yet, as Joe Dubbert argues in his analysis of the progressive era: “American women had been too successful” in this task and consequently were treated as a threat to American boyhood (291). Thus, the feared feminization seems to be a direct result of the Victorian true womanhood ideology. Many solutions to this problem were proposed, including an increase in the number of male public school teachers and, most significantly, the foundation of the Boy Scouts of America in 1910.

The menace of feminization was voiced not only in misogynist words but can be found also in works of the supporters of women’s rights movement, among them the prominent scholar John Dewey. In one of his most influential essays, “My Pedagogic Creed,” Dewey argues: “I believe that next to deadness and dullness... our education is threatened with *no greater evil than sentimentalism*” (7, emphasis added). Sentimentalism in the nineteenth century was closely connected with the feminine sphere of family and religion. The danger of sentimentalism can be read as the danger of feminized education and feminized boyhood.

Since the feminine was projected as a civilizing force, it was frequently connected with the icon of industrial civilization – the city. On the one hand, the city in the American imaginary at the time contributed to feminization because of increasing bureaucracy, “sapping innate masculine vitality in the service of the corporation” (Kimmel, “Consuming” 23). On the other hand, quite an opposite image of emasculating corruption that conflated the city and the feminine was embodied in the figure of the prostitute. Hence, divergent anxieties connected with nineteenth-century rapid urbanization, including both moral depravity and excessive bureaucratization, were projected onto women.

The city was also closely associated with other marginalized groups, the immigrants from abroad and black people migrating from the South, who concurrently contributed to the growth of metropolitan areas in the North. In the dominant mythology, they were perceived as less virile races, positing the threat of cultural degeneration. Since cultural projections of otherness represent a set of fears and desires of the hegemonic group, they often overlap. Hence, immigrants and black people were, analogically to women, represented in the collective imagination as oversexed and impure (Kimmel, “Consuming” 22, 18). Moreover, these groups were also blamed for feminization, and their cultural

representations themselves were feminized. In the case of European immigrants, the fear of their degenerating influence was reinforced by America's projections of Europe as overcivilized to the point of corruption.

Finally, at the end of the nineteenth century, as I have already mentioned, a category of the homosexual was created. Bederman connects this fact with the diagnosis of neurasthenia – weakened overcivilized masculinity and the feminization of men. Arguably, however, the invention of a new category for differentiation can be perceived as a way to stabilize masculine identity. If the meaning of what a man is comes from what he is not, then adding the negation of the homosexual strengthens masculine gender identity.

Thus, American masculinity at the end of the nineteenth century was defined by projection of unmanly features onto the othered groups: women, European immigrants, Native Americans, blacks, and homosexuals. American masculinity has been constructed on the basis of exclusions, of which many are still rehearsed today (Kimmel, "Masculinity" 267, 284). In his analysis of masculinity as represented in American adventure stories, Green also stresses the importance of the negative code of male identity: "'Manhood' was also paired with some contrasting terms – as the affirmed or superior value – in dozens of polarities of thought. Any male had to strive always to be a man and not a boy, in Hemingway adventures; a man and not an animal, in religious exhortation; a man and not a slave in slavery narratives, a man and not a coward, a man and not a woman" (8). The contrasts and polarizations were especially strong in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as their goal was to reaffirm and strengthen American masculinity, shaken by a slump in self-employment, the end of the frontier, the rise in immigration, black migration, and the women's rights movement.

Bederman and Kimmel analyze the practical methods that were employed to deal with the sense of crisis. Middle-class men, at the end of the nineteenth century, tried to prevent the feminization of boys and socialization of "sissies" by reviving the ideal of self-restraint with primitive physical strength. The stress on physical exercise and preoccupation with the male body did not, however, affect Victorian repressive attitudes towards sexuality. Repressed sexual desires were projected outside ("Consuming" 18). Thus, it was women who were presented as sexual temptation and danger to strong and controlled masculinity. Male sexuality, on the other hand, was presented as "a capital of energy" that could revive the weakened manhood (Bederman 102). Although the discourse of sexuality was turning away from the Protestant notions of guilt and sin, the emphasis on the control of male sexuality, especially the bodily fluids, remained valid although became secularized. The ideas of spermatic economy and ascetic life, which at the beginning of the century were believed to shape strong will and self-restraint, were supposed to increase the physical strength of male bodies and save them from neurasthe-

nia. The degree of desperation in the sexual panic of the late nineteenth century is indicated in numerous publications and self-help manuals such as “Thirty-nine Signs of Masturbation” (“Consuming” 28), which were packed with notions like “spermatorrhea” or “seminal leakage” (Bederman 82).

While the attitudes to sexuality began to change with the growing influence of Freudian psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century, other methods applied to revive male neurasthenia have remained popular until today. Engagement in manly aggressive sports was supposed to turn boys into men, not sissies. The athletic craze, according to Kimmel, popularized various kinds of sport, of which boxing, hunting, and baseball were the most prominent (“Consuming” 34-37). The career of boxing and prize-fighting resorted to working-class for models of more primitive and stronger masculinity. The savage past of potent masculinity was projected onto the lower classes and appropriated by the middle-class audiences. The degree to which this sport was in vogue is manifested in the slogan: “Boxing for Babies,” inspired by G. Stanley Hall’s pedagogical strategies of the day (Bederman 77). Hunting also experienced a renaissance especially after the establishment of the Boone and Crockett Club by Theodore Roosevelt and the publication of his memoir from safari, *African Game Trails* (1910). The killing of animals was intended to recreate a primitive struggle for survival in which one becomes a man (Bederman 211). Finally, baseball was particularly attractive as it combines civilized rules with physical strength, and was soon to be heralded the national American sport (“Consuming” 35-37).

An important element of the increased preoccupation with sports and the body was the emphasis on out-door activities. Whereas women suffering from neurasthenia were advised to remain at home, men were encouraged to escape from civilizing domesticity into the wilderness of the playground or ranches. As the literal escape was not available for all, the urban out-doors began to be represented in terms of “jungle,” for example in Upton Sinclair’s vision of Chicago *The Jungle* or Robert Wood’s *The City Wilderness*. This rhetoric was intended to reinforce the division into the domestic and public spheres, which ensured firm and stable boundaries between sexes.

Apart from active ways of reaffirming masculinity, an important struggle with over-civilization was fought on the level of fantasy and fiction, which is indicated by the rise in readership of adventure stories (Kimmel, “Consuming” 21; Bederman 23; Green 17). In his analysis of the adventure story, Green claims that the essence of the American adventure can be summarized as the story of “a genteel hero who has to abandon his privileges and apprentice himself to an uneducated Man of the Woods in order to become a true American” (39). This structure echoes the main tension of the late-nineteenth-century discourse of civilization as interpreted by Bederman. The civilized

man – a representative of “the American race” – appropriates the primitive races – Native Americans or Africans – in order to advance his race by reviving its strength (Bederman 21-31). The American in this paradigmatic plot is simultaneously gendered male and identified with the white race. Time in adventure stories is represented as space – primitive past, a significant element of the then-prevalent theory of social evolutionism – is projected anthropologically onto non-white races and geographically onto Africa or the West.

The discourse of adventure stories blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. As Green points out, many adventure stories were autobiographical in character, such as Kit Carson’s or Theodore Roosevelt’s. The historical characters of Daniel Boone, Kit Carson or David Crockett gained a mythic dimension, and their lives were fictionalized in novels.³ The mythical elements are incorporated into reality – rivers, mountains, forts and cities, not to mention Roosevelt’s hunting society – are named after Daniel Boone, Kit Carson or Davy Crockett. The exemplary appropriation of the discourse of adventure stories was performed by Roosevelt. The name of his regiment, Rough Riders, alludes to Western horsemen, which reinforces the link between the myth of the West and imperialism (Bederman 191). His companions are nicknamed in an analogical cowboy-like way: Cherokee Bill and Happy Jack of Arizona (Green 151). Roosevelt consciously constructed his image as a ranchman-cowboy dressed in Indian clothes living on the border between civilization and the primitive in order to enhance his masculine strength (Bederman 76-177). He managed to capitalize on the myth of the West in order to claim for himself a powerful image not only as a politician but also as the symbolic leader of the American race.

Although a number of different strategies were applied, the nineteenth-century “crisis” of masculinity was not overcome until the outbreak of World War I, which brought a sense of stability into masculine gender identity. The wartime performance of men was an extreme version of a number of the above-mentioned strategies employed for the re-definition masculinity. The escape from civilization and feminization into outdoor homosocial sports or prize fighting, and going into war, can be seen as analogical on the symbolic level. As Mailer put it in his recent essay “The White Man Unburdened”: “After all, war was, with all else, the most dramatic and serious extrapolation of sports” (4).

The process of the construction of masculinity, viewed from psychological as well as historical perspective, is based on a negative code: it consists primarily of differentiation,

³ Kent Ladd Steckmesser analyses the ways in which historical characters of the American West were constructed and reconstructed in fiction. The novels allegedly based on their lives often bear small resemblance to historical facts. See his *The Western Hero in History and Legend*.

exclusion, or escape. It is marked by anxiety and phobia. It is parasitic in respect to other social groups, which are used as screens for projections of fears and desires. Moreover, as masculinity is based on the unstable concept of success in the public sphere, it is fragile and susceptible to social changes and social crises. Masculine identity could also be compared to the liminal stage in the process of the emergence of social identity as defined by Conrad Kottak in *Researching American Culture* (1982). The liminal stage corresponds to the unstable, in-between, marginal phase that precedes aggregation – gaining a new identity, e.g. that of an adult, or that of a new culture. This sociological concept is used to describe rites of passage and immigrants' assimilation. It could turn out useful also in analyzing male gender identity. Several characteristics attributed to the liminal stage by anthropologist Victor Turner could also be applied to describe the process of masculine gender identity construction (quoted in Kottak 44). First of all, as Kimmel stresses, masculinity is a homosocial enactment, which corresponds to the fact that liminal groups form *communitas* – closed homogenous communities (Kottak 44-45). Also the male insistence on the rigid boundaries between the sexes can be read as forming *communitas*. The second important feature of the liminal phase is the acceptance of pain and suffering (Kottak 45). As David Savran claims in his book *Taking It Like a Man*, masochism is a salient part of contemporary American masculinity. Finally, masculinity can be read as remaining in the transition phase of identity construction as it is under constant process of validation and test. The final stable and safe phase of aggregation seems unattainable for men.

Thus, the peculiar construction of masculinity can be interpreted as a perpetual sense of crisis, which results from the social pressure for continuous validation of male identity. This claim has been voiced by many scholars examining gender relations. Hélène Cixous claims that, due to the phallocentrism of Western culture, men are drenched with a pathological fear that they might become women (884). The diagnosis that masculinity has been in "crisis" ever since its emergence is also openly pronounced by John MacInnes in his essay "The Crisis of Masculinity and the Politics of Identity." He claims that "masculinity can be seen as an ideology produced by men as a result of the threat posed to the survival of the patriarchal sexual division of labor by the rise of modernity" (311). The concept of masculinity is not based on a timeless, stable essence but rather on shifting ideals of modernity, rationality, and progress. As these very ideals have been used to attack male domination since the First Wave of feminism, MacInnes concludes that the patriarchal conception of masculinity cannot escape crisis.

If one assumes that masculinity's central dynamic is a sense of crisis, the examination of its socially recognized "crises" seems to be worthy of special attention. The process of masculine gender identification is manifested more explicitly and conspicuously at mo-

ments when it is being most seriously challenged and undermined. The strategies employed in the nineteenth century to stabilize the concept of masculinity, such as the narratives of escape from civilization and women or the appropriation of non-white cultures to define and empower hegemonic masculinity, are salient elements of American masculinity. The examination of the "crisis" faced by the nineteenth-century men seems to be even more significant today as a new crisis of masculinity has been announced and the turn of the centuries again is a bad time to be a man.

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Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich

Teaching American Literature in Poland

The aim of this article is to look at some aspects of the teaching of American literature in Poland. Attention is given to the change in the educational situation in Poland since the 1990s and its implication for the study of English and teacher education. The last fifteen years have brought opportunities, hitherto unimagined, for introducing American literature to Polish students, but also new challenges to the academic profession. Investigation into the teaching of American literature seems a worthwhile and topical issue, at the crossroads of Polish and American cultures.

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Poland's turn towards democracy exerted influence on various areas of life connected with American studies. The 1990s saw a dramatic increase in the numbers of students interested in studying English, with freedom for creating institutions of higher education and, as a consequence, an unprecedented increase in the number of various types of English teacher training colleges (often attended not by prospective teachers, but simply by students wanting to learn English). This has been part of the general phenomenon of an increase in the number of students in Poland. In 1980 the number was around 100, 000, while by 2005 it reached almost 2, 000, 000 (Czapliński).

Thus what before the Fall of the Wall had been a mere few hundred students of English, annually entering several prestigious Polish universities, has, since the early 1990s, gradually turned into thousands of students each year receiving training as English teachers, in every major city and in numerous towns all over Poland.¹ Although these institution can hardly compete with the academic standards of English at the universities, the core curriculum once established for the study of English is followed in each institution which is entitled to award the student a BA (*licencjat*) in English. The curriculum is built around several main areas of study:

¹ The city of Białystok (Eastern Poland), with the population of 300 000 inhabitants, can serve as a good example here. Before the political transformation of 1990 it was not possible to study English in Białystok at all. Now an interested candidate can choose among four institutions of higher education offering BA degrees in English and qualifying the graduates as teachers of English.

- British and American literature
- British and American studies
- theoretical linguistics
- applied linguistics (including practical preparation for the teaching profession)
- practical skills of using English.

There have been some changes in the curriculum to adapt it more strongly to the needs of the teachers of English, emphasizing a pragmatic attitude to pre-service teacher education. Also, instead of the previously offered five years of study, most colleges offer only three years of education ending with a BA, which obviously means the curriculum is more limited than it used to be. However, the core subjects, traditionally connected in Poland with the notion of philology, have remained and thus American literature has been an obligatory presence in each institution offering English as a degree. As a result of these formal changes in the educational system, we have been observing an unprecedented phenomenon of American literature becoming, alongside English one, the main literature taught in Poland after its own national literature. The spread of English teacher training colleges creates a unique opportunity to bring American literature to young people in Poland and to influence their reading patterns.

The New Student

The population of the students of English in Poland is an example of quantity not necessarily turning into quality. What once, under the *ancien regime*, was a prestigious field of study, a window on the West for the selected few, has become a mass opportunity for anyone willing, often being a second or third option to studying more prestigious subjects such as business, law or psychology. English studies have come to be perceived as merely a means to improve one's language skills, or as a way to find employment and security in the teaching profession (which, however, has a relatively low status in Poland and thus does not attract the most brilliant and ambitious young people). So the candidates for studying English are not exactly the *crème de la crème* of the student population.² The situation is further complicated by the fact that training is done in English, which more often than not results in a situation where students' language skills are insufficient to understand literary texts, not to mention participating in a discussion or the

² It ought to be stressed that there are enormous differences in the educational background and language skills of the candidates, particularly taking into comparison big city tuition-free universities (which have many strong candidates and highly selective procedures) and private vocational colleges, which, in general, accept anyone who is willing to study and prepared to pay.

ability to express ideas in writing. Achieving the goal of immersion in the language study is done at the expense of the student's intellectual development.

A still further complication in the teaching of literature stems from the general decline of reading. Even though a statistical Pole reads two books a month (Kochanowicz) and the readers are mostly young people, foreign fiction accounts for only 19% of all books read. What is more, the relatively good statistical result of "two per month" is created by those Poles who do read, while about half of the population cannot claim to have read a single book per month. Analysis of reading habits of Poles suggests that reading remains a certain elitist privilege, acquired at home, through private cultural traditions rather than through the efforts of institutions such as schools or libraries. Although it is impossible to determine whether the non-reading section of the population is more or less likely to become students of English – there has been no research to this effect – the statistics are not without relevance to the cultural background of our students and their reading experience.

The average student of English nowadays differs from his predecessor in the previous era. This average student today no longer comes to study English with a broad general background of participation in the mainstream culture. There is a number of American writers who have been a recognized presence in Polish culture, such as Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Jack London, John Steinbeck, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Kurt Vonnegut, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. These are the names that most people in Poland, once representing the now increasingly elusive formation of intelligentsia, would have known about and have read. The mainstream culture, however, is not always embraced by the candidates to study English today and neither do schools at pre-college level teach the students much about America, as has been noted by Franciszek Lyra in his observations about candidates for American Studies programs:

In Poland the knowledge of the United States imparted to students below the university remains spineless. Candidates for the American Studies programs continue to flaunt glaring gaps, seemingly unaware that American Studies demands not only a competent command of English, but also a degree of knowledge of the United States beyond splintered cognizance derived from outside the classroom, the mass media, indiscriminate self-education as it might be by genuine interest in America. ("American Studies" 158)

Thus today, to an increasing number of students entering various institutions obliged to teach them American literature, the subject is a *tabula rasa*. If we were to teach those students for example Serbian or Uruguayan literature (neither of which is a well estab-

lished presence in Polish culture) there would be little difference. American literature is a *terra incognita* to many students entering colleges and departments of English. They approach the subject called American literature as a large mass of totally new pieces of information which cannot be pinned onto the canvas of the earlier acquired general knowledge because this canvas does not exist. Often there is so much new information that it is against the human memory capacity.

This problem might be illustrated by a selection of students' responses in the test on American literature.³ The misinformation quoted indicates the ignorance which stems not so much from the inability to learn but, most of all, from not having any background knowledge when approaching the study of American literature. The selection comes from one part of the American literature exam testing students' knowledge of key names and titles in American literature. The other two parts of the examination included writing an essay on a novel and the recognition of styles characteristic of epochs and some of the main American writers. The errors are interesting because, contrary to those items in the test that students simply left unanswered, they indicate the degree of confusion of the student.

- "Murder in the Cathedral" – Edgar A. Poe's drama
- Charles Brockden Brown – 21st⁴ century author of fiction
- "For Whom the Bell Tolls" – a novel written by Mark Twain in Spain
- "For Whom the Bell Tolls" – a poem by Emily Dickinson⁵
- "For Whom the Bell Tolls" – a short story by Ernest Hemingway
- "For Whom the Bell Tolls" – the title of a poem by T.S. Eliot
- "Farewell to Arms" – short story by Ernest Hemingway
- Sylvia Plath – post-modernist writer
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – 20th century American Jew writer
- "Leaves of Grass" – an anthology by E.A. Poe
- "Leaves of Grass" – Robert Frost's poem from the period of post-modernism
- "The Calling of Lot⁶ 49" – a contemporary poem which uses typical flight phrases; ment to be performed together with music

³ The students from whose examination papers those quotations are taken are graduates of teacher training colleges and thus hold BAs (licencjat) entitling them to teach English. They took this examination while studying towards MA, after an additional survey course in American literature.

⁴ Any erroneous use of English is authentic.

⁵ In reference to this particular error (and a few others as well) it is tempting to quote what Franciszek Lyra wrote several years ago: "Might there come a day when young Poles would not recognize Faulkner's name? We need not fear such probability, however, as long as for name and prestige Emily Dickinson successfully competes with Danielle Steele, as is presently the case among Polish students of American literature" ("Is Poland Being Americanized?" 35). Apparently, the day has come when some students confuse Dickinson with Hemingway.

⁶ "Lot" in Polish means "flight."

- “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” – a book by Melville
- “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” – a novel by Mark Twain
- Margaret Fuller – Beat Generation poet
- “Call me Ishmael” – poem by a Jewish writer Saul Bellow
- “Slaughterhouse Five” – a novel written by Roderick Usher (by the same student: Roderick Usher – an author of “Slaughter Five”)
- Kate Chopin – the author of “Ahab”
- “Leather-Stocking Tales” – a modernist work

One of the most surprising findings in this field of confusion is that contemporary young people are so unaware of Ernest Hemingway’s fiction. As Jerzy Durczak observed, analyzing American literature in Poland in the 1970s, the three most popular American writers then were Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck and “the most popular of the three was no doubt Hemingway who, along with Faulkner and several European writers, became necessary reading for those who were interested in literature and who wanted to be considered intellectuals” (45). There are two possible explanations why so many young people nowadays do not recognize the titles of major novels by Hemingway – either he ceased entirely to be a noticeable presence in Polish mainstream culture, or the students no longer aspire to being considered intellectuals. In 2001 Michał Głowiński, a famous Polish critic, claimed that, while in the 1950s the question about a great American writer would certainly be answered with the name of Ernest Hemingway, today he would probably be only mentioned in this position by those who are sentimental about the fascinations of their youth (22-24). However, in 1999 the publishing house MUZA prepared a 13-volume edition of Hemingway’s selected works. Thus perhaps the failure of many young people to aspire to be intellectuals should be blamed to the fact that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is sometimes taken for a poem by either Emily Dickinson or T.S. Eliot?

Faced with this new type of student, often full of good-will but without the background of participating in the mainstream world culture, how do we set out on our educational mission of bringing the student closer to American literary culture?

The Objectives in Teaching American Literature in Poland

What are the objectives of the syllabi of American literature courses in Poland? There are certain assumptions of the purpose and content shared by Polish lecturers of American literature, although, as far as the student body is diverse, so are the lecturers’ teach-

ing and research experiences. But formulating some key assumptions as to what guides the teaching of American literature in Poland might be attempted.⁷

I. The specificity of American literature.

American literature is taught in two ways: on the one hand it demonstrates literary forms in general and universal tendencies in the development of literature, while on the other it focuses on the specificity of American literature and the cultural heritage it belongs to. The second aspect seems essential because it allows the presentation of the United States as a country unique in its self-creation of nationality and statehood. The focus on the unique attributes of American literature is also a good starting point for the discussion of the processes of Americanization of the world culture and the worldwide spread of the notion of the American Dream. The study of American literature from the realm of high culture facilitates an understanding of popular American culture, such as the Hollywood cinema. Through high literature we may negotiate students' orientation to popular culture and, equally importantly, help them to understand the phenomenon of the Polish fascination with America.

The historical development of the United States brings in another topical issue today – the perception of the Other (in terms of ethnic, racial, religious or gender differences). In American literature the Other has been present since the early colonial texts. Today the relation with the Other and diverse concepts of multicultural society have become dominant problems of the European Union and the sooner Poles learn to understand them, the easier it will be to deal with the inevitable development of Poland in the same direction. In this sense the study of American literature not only helps in understanding America, but also the ongoing changes within one's own culture.

American multiculturalism is rooted in the specific historical development of the United States. The significance of the issue of multiculturalism today, however, coincides with the often uneasy development of the European Union towards a multicultural society. The concepts once reserved for describing American society are now being used to discuss issues of intercultural education in the context of European regions and European/regional identity, as when Jerzy Nikitorowicz uses the metaphors of the melting pot and the salad bowl to discuss the ideas of tolerance, integration, acceptance, open identity and the dialogue concept of multicultural education.

There are several specifically American themes which may be shown through the study of literature: the wilderness, the concept of open spaces and colonization, the Fron-

⁷ This part of the article to some extent refers to the interviews conducted with several eminent Polish lecturers in American literature: Tomasz Basiuk, Andrzej Ceynowa, Zofia Kolbuszewska, Agata Preis-Smith, Agnieszka Salska, Tadeusz Sławek and Marek Wilczyński. The interviews were presented and discussed in my book *Literatura amerykańska w kształceniu nauczycieli języka angielskiego*.

tier, the absence of the centre, the misogyny, the dichotomy between the South and the North, the individual, race and religion. These themes are either absent or pronounced differently in Polish culture.

II. Reflection upon native culture and own identity.

The reading of American literature with attention given to the presence of the Other may serve a better understanding of one's own identity, nowadays often in a state of flux. Even if Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity" is not as yet a metaphor to be applied to Polish society, the changes are inevitable and continuing, while multicultural society, with its impact on the sense of self and identity, looms around the corner. Through the study of a foreign literature it is possible to acquire a better sense of the host culture and one's own identity.

The processes of Americanization and globalization are not always accepted by Polish students and can be perceived as a threat to local culture. The fears of McDonaldisation, perpetuated by the media and politicians, may be rationalized by the study of American literary culture. The teaching of American literature creates a unique opportunity to comment on the events of the day, from the realm of mass culture as well as economy and politics.

Certain texts are particularly useful in providing a window to look upon important themes of Polish culture. The reading of Jewish American writers is a good example of the way American literature may serve as a place of reflection on a related theme of Polish culture. There are other texts which enable Polish-American intercultural study, such as Flannery O'Connor's "The Displaced Person," William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* or Susan Sontag's *In America*.

The study of American literature, for example through books such as *Moby Dick* or *The Grapes of Wrath*, permits the role of the Bible in American culture to be shown and thus displays the differences between the Polish and American approaches to religion. Poles are often unaware of the deeply religious quality of American culture, as the perception of America is dominated by Hollywood productions, for example action films, horrors, comedies and sitcoms. The study of literature may not only demonstrate this essential aspect of American culture, but also help reflect upon the dominant Roman-Catholic religion in Poland.

III. The function of literary texts in the development of language proficiency.

One of the main arguments brought forward in the call for the presence of literature in language studies is its beneficial influence on the development of students' language skills. Studying literature improves all skills, primarily reading and writing. Literary studies involve both extensive and intensive reading practice. Writing tasks connected with the study of literary texts develop students' ability to organize writing in an effi-

cient way, thus assisting them in the acquisition of the essential skill nowadays of being able to express oneself through the medium of a written text.

The study of literature teaches the decoding of texts, demonstrating that what is on the surface is not always the main message or content of the text. The realization that texts have multiple layers is a way of learning to understand the reality better.

IV. Post-modernity.

The presentation of post-modern texts and, in general, of post-modernity as a concept, stems not only from the importance of the issue for American literature, but is also needed due to low understanding of the topic by young Poles. The secondary school curriculum does not contain references to post-modern type of discourse and a young Pole is unlikely to have heard of post-modern writers. The whole concept of post-modernity is a confusing topic in Poland, not only because of post-modernity's inherent ambiguity and plurality, but because it is not taught at pre-college level. When used in the media, it sometimes comes with an air of suggestion that post-modernity constitutes an area of conflict with Polish national values. This view may be modified through the presentation of postmodern texts within the context of American literature courses.

Polish students benefit from learning of the ways post-modern texts criticize the capitalist society and that formal experiments in prose may be combined with an involvement in social and political issues. Post-modernity, both as an historical phenomenon of the 1960s and also a recent phenomenon, may serve political discussion, which should not be ignored in the institutions of higher education. Post-modern American literature leads into the issue of Americanization and "soft power." The politicizing of literary study serves a useful purpose of turning students into better, more critically thinking citizens.

V. Interdisciplinary approach.

The teaching of American literature can be successfully done through an interdisciplinary approach. To start with, American culture is visually oriented, and film, painting and photography can be merged with literary texts (e.g. *The Grapes of Wrath* with photographs of Dorotea Lange and the John Ford film version of the book). American poetry, contrary to Polish, has a strong oral tradition and this can be demonstrated through the recorded versions of poets from Ezra Pound to Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac or Anne Sexton, to Laurie Anderson and Emily XYZ. Harlem Renaissance poets and Toni Morrison can best be studied with jazz music, which for Polish students would mean bringing the unfamiliar literary text through a somewhat more familiar medium of music. Studying historical texts along with belletristic literature of the epoch is another possible interdisciplinary approach.⁸ Particular opportunities are created here for the

⁸ There have been many calls for interdisciplinary approach in the teaching of both British and American culture, and integrating literature with courses in history and cultural studies. Somehow it seems that even

study of drama, where the text can be combined with a video version of the play. The main constraint here is that this methodology is time-consuming. In general, however, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature should certainly be advocated.

VI. American literature and the graduate.

In the choice of an approach to the teaching of American literature we cannot remain indifferent to what we expect of the graduate. There is no one predictable career path for graduates of English, be it a small town BA programme or Warsaw University English Institute. A young urban graduate has various job opportunities: translating and interpreting posts as well as teaching are particularly available, but also work in business sector, corporate structures, media, cultural institutions, publishing houses and advertising. Graduates in smaller cities and towns are most likely to work as teachers or self-employed translators.⁹

Whatever the career path, a good command of the language is a key competence. The more the student has read in English, the higher the language skill. On the other hand, no matter what the specific place of employment will be, the graduate will be expected to function in the capacity of an expert on Britain and America. Not knowing that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a novel by Ernest Hemingway may seriously undermine the assumed expert knowledge!

As a teacher the graduate should be able to influence his learners' reading preferences, to intensify their intellectual development and to comment on the presence of American culture in the students' own world. Knowing the limitations of any individual knowledge, a good teacher should be able to guide his learners into the realms of literature hitherto unknown also to him.

Another important thing the graduate should learn from his literature courses is that usually there is no one single interpretation of a text and that individual approach to a literary text should be respected. This the graduate will have learnt most of all from the way s/he was taught, which brings in the issue of the importance of the lecturer's personality and the style of teaching. If the lecturer imposes upon the student the attitude that literature requires a process of understanding and that diverse approaches to the text are possible, it is likely that the graduate will apply the same attitude in his/her own teaching.

though lecturers agree with the concept, there are always practical difficulties in integrating the courses and the idea often remains wishful thinking.

⁹ My own research on students and graduates indicates that during their studies most students are not particularly attracted to a teaching career, while later on most do become teachers (Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, "American Literature in the Curriculum," and Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich and Ewa Lewicka-Mroczeć, "Dziesięć lat później").

The Content of American Literature Courses

The starting point for the study of literature is the choice of texts to be studied. Once this is done, the inevitable happens: the lecturer creates the canon. This is true for native literature, but for a foreign one even more so, especially if we deal with students whose knowledge of American literature outside the classroom is non-existent. In Polish educational reality the canon created for a given course is rarely, however, the result of the ideological position of the lecturer – the practical considerations are often equally influential: the availability of the texts, the length of the course, students' linguistic and intellectual skills. It is essential to explain to the student the rationale behind the reading list.

In general the content of American literature courses in Poland reflects both the traditional concept of the canon as well as the changes to the canon brought by the sense of inadequacy of the reflection of American society and culture by the traditional F.O. Matthiessen's canonical concepts. The Polish teaching of American literature has not remained impervious to the debate about the canon. The concept of class, race and gender has its definite impact on the selection of the content for American literature courses.

The texts which remain pillars of American literature courses in Poland, however, represent fairly traditional composition of the canon. Thus the student is most likely to be asked to read something by white male authors such as E.A. Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Kurt Vonnegut. There are attempts to present the new canon reflecting the diversity of American culture, with particular emphasis on multiculturalism and multicultural texts. The university lecturer faces, however, many painful dilemmas resulting from the short duration of the course. Can I teach Alice Walker at the expense of *Huck Finn* or a Faulkner novel? How can I introduce Raymond Carver if they have never read anything by Hemingway? Can I spend time on Louise Erdrich and skip Melville? Can I bring in Annie Dillard if they haven't studied *Walden*? These dilemmas grow with the awareness that many of the students will only learn about American literature on the basis of the "canon" which the teacher has designed for the course.

A pluralistic approach is usually attempted. The teacher of American literature in Poland makes his (or her) contribution to the preservation of great works of American literature, but remains aware of the expansion of the canon. The reading lists reflect mainstream cultural texts, but hint at the presence of the non-canonical (or newly canonical) in American culture.

To conclude, there seem to be several assumptions guiding the selection of texts in the teaching of American literature in Poland:

- to reflect the traditional concept of the canon and to present, at least generally, the established corpus of American writing,
- to present literature responding to the issues of race, class and gender,
- to respond to the existing reading preferences of young people (particularly such popular writers as H.P. Lovecraft, Philip K. Dick, Ursula LeGuin or William Gibson¹⁰),
- to show the developments in American fiction not reflected by related counterparts in Polish literature, particularly post-modern texts,
- to comply with the problem of the availability of the texts and students' reading ability (nineteenth century texts are easier and cheaper to obtain, short stories take less time to read, Vonnegut is easier and faster to read than Pynchon, poetry is easier to handle in the classroom conditions than the novel, etc.),
- to reflect in the choice of texts the research work of the lecturer.

The Practical Solution

Designing the syllabus the lecturer is torn between the necessity to provide an elementary knowledge of the history of American literature, taking into account the fact that the basic knowledge is no longer drawn from the student's background of participating in mainstream Polish culture (even though it has room for key American writers¹¹ such as William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Henry James or Kurt Vonnegut). Considering the time limitations and the likelihood that students' out-of-the-lecture-hall knowledge may be highly limited, a survey course of American literature including the most important facts in its history, a basic sample of styles and a reading list containing the number of texts that students can be reasonably expected to learn, is a necessity. This can then be supplemented by a semester course focusing on selected aspects of American literature, which could be American Women Poets, the study of a single novel (e.g. *Moby Dick* or a Pynchon novel), Afro-American writers, Native-American writers, Jewish urban novels, Gothic fiction, twentieth-century short story; the list of choices is practically unlimited. Usually such focused courses are related to the lecturer's research interests. This seems to be the most reasonable solution: a survey course followed by a focused presentation of a selected area of American literature.

¹⁰ Interestingly, these writers, so popular among young Polish readers, have little, or no, American referentiality (as also observed by Franciszek Lyra in "Is Poland being Americanized?").

¹¹ This can be demonstrated by the action carried out in 2005 by the most popular Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* of systematically adding to the newspaper a copy of a book from the canon of world literature, including, among others, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, William Faulkner, Vladimir Nabokov, Ray Bradbury.

Towards a Conclusion

The above discussion does not give an answer to the question of how to teach literature in the post-modern electronic society and how to take the best advantage of the crossroads of Polish and American cultures while teaching American literature at college level. The important issue of methodology of teaching literature has been left out of this discussion, although the method of teaching is of high relevance to the final effectiveness of bringing students closer to the pleasures of reading and to a better understanding of America. The exact content of the syllabi, most frequent items on reading lists, the notion of a hidden curriculum in the teaching of literature, the transfer of the students' academic knowledge into their later practice as teachers of English – these are just a few of the many issues that might be discussed in connection with the teaching of American literature in Poland.

Perhaps teaching American literature is not only a task, but a Mission? It may offer a unique way to bring both the Text and a better understanding of America to those large numbers of young Poles whose educational choices are determined by the domination of English as the *lingua franca* of the contemporary world.

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REVIEWS

Charles Altieri. *The Particulars of Rapture. An Aesthetics of the Affects*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004. x and 302 pages.

How do we come to understand possible ways in which the arts can move us? In what sense could we be changed by what we feel when we allow works of art to generate modes of perception helping us to express our desires and satisfactions? How can we come to understand better how these modes may engage our fellow participants in a culture? What kind of language could do justice to expressive intensity and to values immanent in our responses to the aesthetic?

As Charles Altieri convincingly argues in his fine book, when sought in the realms of cognitivism and those Enlightenment perspectives that stem from rule-oriented and criteria-based practices, possible answers to these queries are likely to blind us to expressive subtleties shaped by the arts. He claims that both cognitivism and rationalistic philosophy provide interpretive frameworks the acceptance of which makes literary theorists prefer contexts to texts, which results in literature's subsumption under rubrics of philosophy or moral psychologism. In order to honour texts outside sociopolitical and ideological contexts, the author proposes to consider the role of elemental feelings in our response to the aesthetic that, as he argues, condition and mould our ways of being moved.

In Altieri's opinion, if we view emotions generated by the arts from the perspective of traditional cognitivism or Cartesian representationalism, in static classificatory terms, we then sacrifice the particularity and subtlety of the elemental response that does not easily lend itself to aprioristic interpretations. However, when acknowledged by our sensibilities not for the sake of judgment or systematic knowledge, but for the sake of expressive value that can direct our attention to certain forms of desire and thus can make us better aware of who we wish to be, elemental feelings are not an object of knowledge (as they are in contextual models of interpretation), but a source of knowledge. Only by allowing our motivation for talking about the arts to step outside those domains of philosophy and theory that seek explanation by subordinating the aesthetic to the first-order impersonal claims of knowledge can we assert that "the arts inspire accounts that make affective experience not just something we understand, but something that we pursue as a fundamental value" (4).

Instead of the category “emotion” that in the cognitivist model is inevitably associated with particular beliefs and thus links emotional response to dictates and projects of reason, Altieri proposes to use the term “affect” because it provides “a means of referring to the entire range of states that are bounded on one side by pure sensation and on the other by thoughts that have no visible or tangible impact on our bodies” (2). He then divides affects into four primary categories of feelings, moods, emotions, and passions. In his categorization, a basic theoretical tension is established by juxtaposing feelings and emotions. Emotions arise whenever an attitude informed by a belief or a set of beliefs happens to situate the agent in a particular narrative or an action-oriented or cause-governed account of behaviour or identification. In this context, emotions are treated as theological instruments of knowledge aiming at explanation. Contrasted with emotions theologically understood, feelings may be then seen as unmediated elemental responses that can modulate the agent’s consciousness in ways that invite description, yet which defy a criteria-based explanation. The book’s emphasis is on affective experience that manifests itself in particular elemental modulations of the agent’s consciousness and reveals areas of salience beyond the claims inherent in cognitivist views.

Asking for serious forms of attention paid to feelings, Altieri is more interested in ways of being available through art rather than in modes of knowing which need the arts as their epistemological ally. The critical orientation the author wishes to honour allows him to focus on those affects that do not form as emotions and cannot be explained in terms of what he identifies as “belief-judgment nexus” and, more important, it provides him with a theoretical stance from which works of literature can be viewed as texts beyond the dominance of historical, political, and philosophical contexts (9). In ways that cannot immediately be defined but which can nonetheless be practiced, the stance offers a critical scrutiny of relations between the agent and works of literature that come to bear on our ethos as exemplars of particular existential states. Focusing on their power to engage our consciousness, the author reflects on how they can bring us closer to our understanding of what and how we value. And it would be difficult to deny that in order to be able at all to meditate on our sense and process of valuing, we cannot ignore the role elemental affects play in our relation with literary texts and with the world as it stands.

The book powerfully demonstrates how it is possible to make philosophy bear on how we engage in works of art without making it a framework that may always become a temptation to make literature a means for rehearsing philosophical truths. When contrasted with recent critical attempts to read literature from the heights of philosophy, as is the case of Martha Nussbaum’s Neo-Aristotelian position, for example, Altieri’s model seems to be even more interesting for what it promises. In his attempts to bypass epistemically driven attitudes toward the psyche and the arts, he shows that in our deal-

ings with how texts move us philosophy may have its important place without becoming the arbiter of what we are to find in them.

Altieri is right to point out that in the mainstream cognitivist approach emotions are predominantly viewed as states of the psyche to be pegged on an adjectival scale of gradation and intensity where complex responses of consciousness become reduced to such categories as “sad,” “jealous,” or “angry,” for example. He claims that adopting the adjectival line of scrutiny cannot do justice to the more fluid and fleeting aspects of our affective lives that invite our awareness of ‘how’ rather than ‘what’ affects may modulate our desires and aspirations in culture. Instead of seeing emotional responses pursued as adjectival categories, he wants to understand them as adverbial modes of intensity, modes that can make us aware of certain possibilities of self and ethos that the adjectival orientation tends to suppress. In this respect, he may be said to be insisting on the value of adverbial “hows” and on their theoretical superiority over adjectival “whats.” He emphasizes a process of being moved, not a category under which one would wish to sum up aesthetic experience.

The book’s central achievement resides in its making us freshly aware of the distance between texts and their audience moulded by ambitions of epistemically guided concerns of literary theory. It enables us to see that, by responding to works of art from the adverbial stance, we can tap into modes of salience that come to bear on reflexive consciousness outside ambitions of discursive knowledge. Although the author does not entirely deny the role reason has to play in our making sense of human experience, he is suspicious of treating the domain of the arts as merely supplementing what philosophy and science may sponsor as knowledge. He honours those interpretive positions that can see the arts not as processed by impersonal knowledge but, most important, as processing the world and providing us with self-knowledge through what moves us.

In his reflection on the advantages of the adverbial approach to the arts, he draws on Spinoza, Kant, and Heidegger. Showing how philosophy can become an ally of literary criticism without subsuming it under epistemic rigour, he demonstrates how literary studies can make use of philosophy without making literature dependent on its dogmas. If he decides to see phenomenology as “central to my argument,” this is only because it “insists that there has to be some kind of intuition or noncriterial judgment through which we register the possible rightness of our descriptions” (34). The phenomenological perspective can serve theoretical purposes just because “it offers means of seeking generalization without relying on either induction or deduction” (34). Making admirable use of those aspects of the Enlightenment thought that acknowledge ways of talking about human value different than project-based and cause-oriented forms of reason, Altieri shows how Kant’s idea of “purposiveness,” Spinoza’s concept of “conatus” or

Heidegger's discussion of the significance of mood can become tools that can help us refine our sensibilities as we try to come to terms with the elusive and the enigmatic in our affective response. They do not serve as master scenarios here; rather, they are lines of description in our attempts to make sense, in the elemental, adverbial fashion, of the affects generated by the arts.

As he applies his critical model to an impressive range of art works, the author reflects on how they can be read as texts outside contexts, as entities engaging consciousness on deeply personal levels unacknowledged by forms of attention circumscribed by conceptual reason. Reading texts as texts (not as con-texts), as autonomous art forms bearing on our psyche without our appeal to a distinct ideal of knowledge, may indeed be said to constitute the book's central preoccupation. That literary value does not have to be collapsed into the philosophical, or political, and that we are better off caring not about ways in which theory moves us, but about modes in which works of art can redirect our attention as for who we aspire to be, is not only a most important statement Altieri has to make; it is first of all a critical practice that he successfully implements as he dwells on examples from both literature and visual arts.

Reading poems that range from Henry King Bishop and Matthew Arnold to Sylvia Plath and Robert Creeley, looking at pictures from Caravaggio and Titian to Paul Cezanne and Edvard Munch, he meditates on how value may reside in how these works of art move us. In order to acknowledge the affective modes of interpretation, he proposes to analyse three basic subjective states that he thinks "afford significant affective satisfactions in relation to the manners by which we pursue investments even though the values involved are very difficult to fix or to assess in the terms provided by the practical understanding" (186). Identifying these states as "intensity," "involvedness," and "plasticity," and, discussing them in the context of poems, he illustrates how intensity may come to modify our subjectivity; how involvedness may make us aware of an extension of our personal boundaries toward other lives; and, finally, how plasticity can engage the psyche as it rehearses various rival imaginative demands. In Altieri's model, the three states, and with them our standing in the world, can become modified through particular engagements in the aesthetic. The three states are by no means conceptual carriers that the arts are supposed to equip with a meaning. Rather, they designate forms of attention that can be shaped by our serious dealings with art works. Most important, they are not lines of explanation to be followed by the ambition of reason but paths of description to be practiced in our hopes to do justice to expressive behaviour nurtured and sustained by the arts.

That the adverbial approach to the affective states generated by our encounters with literature may provide us with broader and richer interpretative fields is best illustrated in an impressive reading of Yeats's "Long Legged Fly." Altieri's discussion of the lyric

focuses here on intensity as an organizing feature and shows how the poem's structure participates in shaping a concern that eventually escapes any practical orientation and makes the agent acknowledge an existence of powers that set limits for historical consciousness. He isolates particular moments of crisis for consciousness that the poem brings into focus and proposes "to ask what form of concentration the poem asks of us if we are to raise ourselves to the modes of intensity that bring the various moments into conjunction" (192). Dwelling on intensity as a value actualized by the lyric's structure, he points to possibilities of interpretation that make attempts to thematize, allegorize, or historicize look insignificant in view of what texts reveal and how they bear on our consciousness (as well as on our ways of talking about how they achieve that) when we look for value in the literary from first-person or elemental angles. In this interpretation, Yeats's famous lyric becomes an arena where the forces of history are juxtaposed with a psychological reality acting as a limit condition of historical consciousness. By pondering on how intensity enters the lyric's drama, Altieri shows how we can fruitfully reflect on the affects as energies bearing on our sense of who we are. His analysis convinces us that "we may be able to isolate an imaginative force enabling us to treat what history imposes as if it were a challenge rather than a sentence" (192).

Overall, the book's argumentative power, its lucid and engaging style along with a trim index and informative division into six chapters will surely have their specific rewards for the reader. Although its "envisioned audience is primarily those concerned professionally with philosophy and those who study the arts," the book may be of great interest especially to those literary critics who are wary of the cognitivist approach to value, and who, in their dealing with the literary, wish to seek and practice ways other than rational appraisal guided by philosophy. As the author claims, the books "can be considered an effort to modify how we talk about literary works" (33). And with its fine emphasis on subtle qualities of texts that escape the ambition to place them in the domain of rational assessment, *The Particulars of Rapture* achieves this aim by restoring the significance of text through its emphasis on the role played by affective modes in our appreciation of why and how literature matters.

Rafał Dubaniowski

Grzegorz Kość. *Robert Lowell. Uncomfortable Epigone of the Grand Maitres*. Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 2005. 338 pages.

After Robert Lowell's bright star faded almost completely before the end of the eighties, the story of his life and achievement quickly hardened into academic common knowledge. Much like its more general equivalent, academic common knowledge, dis-

seminated via textbooks, seminars, lectures, and anthologies, is inevitably selective, prone to didactically expedient simplifications, and resistant to novelty and change. In the case of Lowell, this common knowledge rests upon a handful of facts and near-facts: he was the last American Puritan, alienated, tormented, and self-centered, ruthlessly exploitative of the world and others in his poetry; he was a renegade New Critical prodigy, who in *Life Studies*, a volume central to his career, turned his back on his modernist masters to join the ranks of the confessional poets; he was one of those prominent American intellectuals who in the troubled times of the sixties supported with their authority the anti-war protests and the student revolts.

To see common knowledge occasionally shaken up is a refreshing and energizing experience. Therefore a book like the recently published Grzegorz Kość's *Robert Lowell. Uncomfortable Epigone of the Old Maitres* cannot be overrated. Kość not only revises much of the mythology that has encrusted the poet, offering at the same time a re-examination of his work, but also redefines Lowell's relation to the two literary epochs he straddled – modernism and postmodernism – with his feet, the author argues, planted equally insecurely in both.

The argument Kość presents in his book can be summarized as follows. Except in his earliest years as a poet, Lowell never felt entirely comfortable in the role of a latter-day Modernist. Although not until the end of his life did he manage to divest himself of vestiges of his early, grandiose modernist ambitions, such as to make of art a shield against the world's contingency or to impose the imperial mind's control upon its chaos, much of the poetry he wrote in the sixties and seventies witnesses his efforts – irreducible to a continuous development, erratic, contradictory, half-deliberate, and often frustrated – to articulate an alternative poetics to that which he had inherited from his modernist masters. "For the lack of any other convenient term" Kość writes, "I shall call [the poetics] *post-modern*" (10). In that long process, meticulously traced and documented by Kość, Lowell's *Life Studies* of 1959 does not mark any particularly important breakthrough. It is, the author claims, in many respects a product of the same mind (albeit more mature and less secure) that expressed itself in *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946); the poems communicate the same aloofness on the part of the speaker, and are marked by the same ironic distancing which, by then, had become the poet's habitual response to the evident unfeasibility of the modernist project to represent in language all of reality, the world's as well as the self's. Far from being genuinely confessional, the volume is "crypto-modernist," and is best read as a "rhetorical performance," disclosing nothing of the real Lowell and persistently "insinuating that all this verbal junk bears no relation" to its author (36).

It is in the notorious *Imitations* (1961) that Kość discerns the earliest signs of Lowell's attempts to move beyond the confines of the modernist narcissistic and control-

ling self. In these rather liberal “translations” of various European poets, often unmistakably “Lowellized” in tone and imagery, he sees, paradoxically, Lowell’s first tentative efforts to empathize, to hear what others (rather than himself) have to say, and to see the world through their eyes. This new interest becomes more pronounced in *Notebook 1967-68*, then wanes in the *Notebook* of 1970, is altogether abandoned in *History* (1973), only to resurface again in *The Dolphin* (1973) and *Day by Day* (1978). The unauthorized inclusion of Lowell’s second wife’s personal letters in *The Dolphin*, much criticized when the book first appeared for breaching fundamentals of human decency, when viewed in the context of this wavering evolution, appears to Kość to have been only another of the poet’s efforts “to break away from the cultivated garden of his mind,” an effort which “ambiguously reflects his ambition to do justice to the universe beyond his own projections” (93).

Increasingly weary of his poetry’s self-absorption, in the sixties Lowell not only sought ways to open it to the Other, but also started looking for a poetic idiom more adequate to communicate the world’s contingency than his customary language of irony and silence. Interestingly, the chapter in Kość’s study that documents that aspect of the poet’s erratic evolution focuses on Lowell’s brief flirtation with politics, his involvement in the anti-war protests of 1968 and the McCarthy campaign. While the episode revealed to the poet (extremely ill at ease in the role of political spokesman) the inadequacy of ironic evasion of self-disclosure and commitment in the political realm, it fostered his reliance on the unexpressed and implicit in his public poetry, and thwarted the transformation which he sensed his language needed. But in the convoluted story of Lowell’s struggle to depart from the models he absorbed in his youth, almost every setback coincides with a step forward, and the experiment given up on in one set of poems is returned to in another, not infrequently only to be again abandoned, even in mid-text. And so, by the end of his career, Lowell had experimented with prose, with the loose, undisciplined, associative, clichéd colloquial speech, laboriously adjusting in this way his aesthetics to the demands of his (and the time’s) growing sense of reality’s fluidity and resistance to forms.

Tracing the evolution in the poet’s metaphysics and aesthetics, Kość discusses several striking similarities between the attitudes and propositions Lowell articulated (or only half-articulated) in his last volumes, *Day by Day* especially, and the thought of Martin Heidegger, the philosopher whose ideas make the foundation of the post-modernist literary project. Although never a student of Heidegger in the literal sense, Lowell was not unaware of his revolutionary theories and their aesthetic implications. And so ever since *The Dolphin*, Lowell begins to distance himself from the modernist ambition to freeze life’s flux into permanence, seeking instead to reflect temporality and change. Even

earlier, in *Notebook 68-7*, he starts showing awareness that the modernist goal of objective description is unfeasible, and that what we see is always colored with what we know, assume, and believe. Increasingly discernible in his late work is a Heideggerian humility about human chances to grasp and tell the truth. As understanding is always incomplete, and – moreover – communication of what we have understood always falls short of our intention, there is no other way for a poet but to accept failure, error, approximation, and to construe an aesthetic mindful of these limitations. This insight goes hand in hand with the recognition, again paralleling Heidegger's, that language is more than *logos*, i.e. a means of representing and making sense of the world; that there is an aspect to language – *phûsis* – “which is pronouncedly the other of *logos* – ‘raw and raw,’ wayward, and excessive, invariably resistant to mastery” (224). It is precisely that aspect of language that, as Kość argues, Lowell explores with considerable interest in *Day by Day*, loosening his habitual control over words, letting language “speak for itself,” and thus opening his poetry up to language's surprises and mysterious otherness.

A question that Kość's study endlessly provokes is what would have happened had the poet not died an untimely death in 1977. If by the end of his life he had come to the brink of envisaging a poetics that was postmodern in several of its aspects, if he had come to contemplate the postmodern proposition that language, rather than being a tool of describing reality is a medium of creating it, what kind of poetry could have resulted from that? The logical implication of Kość's argument (though not articulated in the study) is that Lowell probably would *not* have made the plunge his post-modernist explorations entailed, or that the plunge would have been – as was his wont – half-hearted. The poet's age aside – and radicalization in old age is less probable than reverting to the well-entrenched positions occupied in one's youth – Lowell's testing of new ideas never guaranteed that his commitment to them would last. This is precisely the sense in which his evolution was erratic. Besides, the grip of modernism on his mind was comparable to the grip of New England from which, as the author argues in the book's third chapter, there was no easy escape. Boston could be left – first for New York and later for England – but not so the Boston state of mind. “Sad friend you cannot change,” Kość quotes Elizabeth Bishop remarking in “North Haven,” her elegy for Lowell (234). But then other questions immediately come to mind – Would we have *cared* to see Lowell changed, transformed dramatically into somebody like Ashbery or like Olson? Isn't what we cherish about him precisely his imperial, tortured vision, his all-devouring solipsism, his maddeningly multiplying ironies, and his inimitable, violent, emphatically non-pedestrian language? The late Lowell can be mistaken for some other poet; the mid-career cannot.

There is literary criticism that dazzles with the boldness or extravagance of its claims, and there is criticism which, quietly and patiently, goes about its job of unearthing unknown or overlooked facts to correct misrepresentations, received opinions, and well-entrenched beliefs. Kość's criticism is of the latter kind. It is polemical and yet not for the sake of polemics. Meticulously researched and scrupulously documented (one third of the book is taken up by footnotes), it builds its case not only against the background of, one feels, virtually all of Lowell's important past and current criticism, but also through reference to the poet's unpublished material, collected at the Houghton Library of Harvard University and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas. Relying on that material, Kość painstakingly, indefinitely adjusts, attenuates, corrects, and challenges established opinions of the poet and his work, as for instance, when he introduces Lowell's unpublished prose eulogy written upon Pound's death to show that Lowell did, after all, have second thoughts about his position in the Bollingen Prize controversy concerning *The Pisan Cantos*, or when he inspects an early, unpublished draft of *The Dolphin* to argue that Lowell's revisions testify to his determination not to excuse himself but to assume full responsibility for the failure of his second marriage. Yet Kość does not try to heroicize the poet any more than he deserves, that is for his "sustained struggle to unlearn the conception of art, which he absorbed so thoroughly in his youth and to which he was so prone because of his mental illness" (232). Nor does he ever try to streamline history. A strength of this study – though from another perspective also its weakness – is that it tirelessly acknowledges all of the complications, makes myriad reservations, reports all dissenting and contrary opinions, till the reader either turns the book's last page with a sense of having been offered an impressively complete picture or, having gone through some fifteen pages of a chapter, becomes disoriented and unsure about the gist of the author's argument.

Emphatically, however, this book deserves all of the attention one can muster. Lowell's volumes of poetry may have been moved in the last twenty years "to the ... back stacks." But this is the fate of "everything printed," as the poet remarked stoically in *Notebook*. Sooner or later, much of the postmodern writing of today will probably also end up on the same dusty shelves. Once this happens, whether Lowell managed or did not manage to jump on the postmodern bandwagon, whether he was only a "miraculous anachronism" (110) or an unacknowledged, hesitant explorer of the postmodern frontiers, will cease to be critical to his reputation. And then his place in American letters may yet again be reassessed. Meanwhile, it is good that studies like Grzegorz Kość's keep Lowell's books, though in the back stacks, well dusted and properly displayed.

Agata Preis-Smith, ed. *Kultura, tekst, ideologia. Dyskursy współczesnej amerykanistyki* [Culture, Text, Ideology. Discourses of Contemporary American Studies]. Kraków: Universitas, 2004. 458 pages.

The anthology *Kultura, tekst, ideologia. Dyskursy współczesnej amerykanistyki* is a comprehensive selection of essays representing current trends in American cultural and literary studies. Translated by scholars affiliated with Warsaw University and the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, it is meant to acquaint Polish readers with the state of theory and research in this field in the United States. The essays have been divided into four parts devoted to issues of the ideology, literary canon, revaluations within literary criticism, and current trends in Afro-American criticism.

In the introduction, the editor outlines the main tendencies in American literary studies and criticism in the twentieth century. She points to both specifically American factors and European influences on the development of critical approaches in the American academia. This historical overview considerably facilitates the reception of the essays included in the volume because their authors often rely on and refer to previous achievements of American scholarship. Thus, the introduction puts the essays in a wider historical perspective, which allows for a more holistic and comprehensive view of the contemporary state of American Studies. The essays included in different parts often deal with similar issues, which testifies to the presence of interconnections between ideology, literary canon, constructions of ethnicity etc.

The first section "Tekst a ideologia" [Text and Ideology] opens with Edward Said's classic text "The World, the Text, the Critic" (1979). Essentially, Said opposes the poststructuralist claim that texts do not belong to physically existing reality. He insists on the worldliness of texts and discusses different modes in which texts function in reality. He also raises the problem of relation between the text and its external circumstances and demonstrates that literature can only be understood in the broader historical and social context in which it is produced. To support his claim, Said refers to the Arabic research in the Middle Ages on the nature of language and text. He focuses on the thesis that historical circumstances influence textual meanings, and opposes the approaches which emphasize unlimited freedom of interpretation. Referring to texts as diverse as Gerald Manley Hopkins's poetry, Oscar Wilde's and Joseph Conrad's stories, Said demonstrates the worldliness of literature. Following in Foucault's footsteps, Said argues that texts arise from conflicts, external pressure and are engendered by power relations. Addressing the question of the critic and criticism, he tries to define the nature of critical essays, and opposes the theories viewing them as secondary in relation to literary texts.

The next essay, "American Criticism Left and Right" (1986) by Gerald Graff, takes up the subject of ideological dimension of literary criticism. He points out that ideas which appear in literary texts are often appropriated to serve purposes beyond authorial intentions, which leads him to consider the question whether writers can control social uses of their texts and, consequently, be held responsible for historical events. He argues that in modern societies traditional ideology of the ruling class was substituted by consumer pluralism, which led to the crisis of radical theories. Admitting that the status of the Right is problematic in the United States, which lacks both reactionary and revolutionary tradition in the European sense, Graff questions the applicability of the dichotomy radicalism vs. conservatism to the history of American criticism. He sees the 1960s as the turning point in ideological and political interpretation of literature, and focuses on revisions proposed by feminists and poststructuralists. Like Said, Graff refers to Michel Foucault's theory; however, he concentrates rather on the problems arising from defining literature as the locus of power. Graff criticizes poststructuralists for breaking with liberal and democratic ideas. Skeptical of poststructuralist rhetoric, Graff, like Said, expresses a longing for literature regaining its social function.

The subsequent essay, "Pastoralism in America" (1986) by Leo Marx, is devoted to a more particular issue, namely, the question whether pastoralism can serve as a basis for convincing ideology in the United States. The author raises this and other related problems, having realized some of the shortcomings of his own book *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), where he discusses intellectualists' reactions towards the rise of industrialism. The mainstream culture considered this transformation as a sign of progress but there was also a minority which associated it with uprooting and alienation. In his book Marx stressed the affinity between such skeptical mentality and the pastoral model, which as he foretold, would soon become an anachronism. Upon reflection, in his essay, he reconsiders this prediction in the light of radical movements of the 1960s, which, as he argues, constitute an ideological continuity of the nineteenth-century pastoralism. Apart from the counterculture of the 1960s, Marx also points to other contemporary movements which voice skepticism about material progress, and concludes that pastoralism is an ideology which expresses the views of a large group of educated middle-class people. He defines pastoralism by referring to the origin of the term, and stresses the initial admiration for shepherd's lifestyle. Based upon opposition of conventional and collective vs. personal, spontaneous, and natural, pastoralism gradually came to express the kind of mentality not necessarily associated exclusively with shepherds. The bulk of his essay is devoted to tracing pastoral motifs in classical works of American literature such as *Moby Dick*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Walden*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Great Gatsby*. He argues that such American attitudes as skepticism of progress,

escape into nature, romantic individualism, and rejection of organized society are all rooted in pastoralism. Marx views the cultural revolution in the 1960s as resistance against the technocratic concept of material progress, and promotion of pastoral world-view.

As opposed to Marx's discussion of a specific model, two subsequent essays deal with ideology on a more general level. In the text "The Problem of Ideology in a Time of Dissensus" (1993), Sacvan Bercovitch focuses on the importance of ideology in the confusion caused by divergent contending critical approaches in modern American Studies. He argues that there is no escape from ideology, and questions the separation of literary criticism and ideology, which was part of the old canonical consensus within literary studies. The scholar claims that ideology can move us towards a new understanding of texts as historically conditioned. To illustrate this thesis, he discusses the role of ideology in reassessment of the American Renaissance, focusing particularly on the question of how a literature opposing the dominant ideology can be culturally representative. Bercovitch concludes that the recognition of the impact of ideology liberates interpretation and helps to understand fully the history of American literature, whereas denying its role precludes dialog between different critical discourses.

Bercovitch's views are challenged by Giles Gunn in his essay "Beyond Transcendence, or Beyond Ideology: The Problematics of Cultural Criticism in America" (1995). Gunn acknowledges that ideology pervades modern American Studies and calls attention to New Historicism as a particularly ideology-oriented approach with Sacvan Bercovitch as one of its main representatives. However, Gunn questions Bercovitch's view of "American ideology" and his assumption that texts cannot separate themselves from and reflect upon ideology determining them. According to Gunn, even though ideology is pervasive, it is not omnipotent. Therefore, he postulates criticism which recognizes the role of socio-political context but does not become absorbed by it. This aim, as Gunn claims, can be fulfilled by pragmatism represented by William James and John Dewey because it allows for criticism from the outside, from "beyond ideology", which Bercovitch considered impossible. In this sense, Gunn expresses ideas corresponding to Said's concept of "worldliness" of texts, which critics should be aware of, but he adds a clear reservation that ideology is not an all-powerful factor.

The presentation of ideological issues would not be complete without reference to multiculturalism. This problem is the subject of Henry Louis Gates's essay "Good-bye Columbus? Notes on the Culture of Criticism" (1995). Presenting his stance on multiculturalism, the scholar rejects both extremes: protectionism of the Right as well as aggressive attitude of the Left; (which refutes pluralism and any possibility of non-violent co-existence) and calls himself a liberal pluralist advocating tolerance. Similarly to Berco-

vitch and Gunn, Gates recognizes the growing importance of political issues within literary studies, which led to re-evaluations in the literary canon. Examining the causes of the present crisis and dissensus, he argues that oppositional criticism gradually absorbed by the academia did not manage to keep up with reality, and failed to help understand America in its variety. Moreover, Gates also claims that the dichotomy of sovereign vs. colony it was based on, exhausted its potential for describing complexities of modern American culture.

The second part of the volume, "Problematyka wartości i kanonu literackiego" [The Problems of Literary Canon and Values] comprises three texts, which share a lot of common views on these issues. In the opening essay "Contingencies of Value" (1989), Barbara Herrnstein Smith observes that within the last fifty years the study of literary evaluation has been neglected and evaded by literary academia in favor of an intensified attention devoted to interpretation as a source of objective scholarly knowledge. However, abstention from evaluations resulted in accepting the established academic canon of "literary masterpieces" as the object of critical studies. Consequently, recent attempts to challenge the canon revived interest in values. To remedy conflicts over their role in literary studies, Herrnstein postulates a new approach acknowledging that values are changeable and historically determined. To illustrate this, the scholar describes literary works and values in economic terms, and claims that the value of literature depends on how it satisfies the needs and interests of receivers at a given time and in particular circumstances. As values are not stable entities, also evaluations are not sources of any objective knowledge of those values. Finally, Barbara Herrnstein Smith points out how values are culturally reproduced through individual factors such as author's choices and readers' interpretations, as well as institutionalized evaluations such as awards and academic research. The dynamic process of generating values explains both why texts become outdated and lose their appeal when they fail to satisfy receivers' needs, and, on the other hand, how they can survive once canonized. Thus, circulation of texts in culture, which seemed to be a result of their value, constitutes the source of it.

Similarly to Herrnstein, Jane Tompkins in "'But Is It Any Good?' The Institutionalization of Literary Value" (1985), the last chapter of her book *Sensational Designs*, calls for a new approach to literature, arguing that what makes a masterpiece is often not an intrinsic value of the text but historically-dependent critical approaches. According to Tompkins, this explains changes in literary canon reflected in the content of subsequent anthologies of American literature. However, less radical than Herrnstein, Tompkins does not deny existence of literary value, but only stresses subjectivity and changeability of evaluative criteria nested in historical conditions. Therefore, the crucial problem to consider is not whether a text is any good but rather what was its cultural role in its own

time, which is the attitude she adopts to defend texts successful after initial publication but denied “literary value” afterwards. The fact that the texts she focuses upon were mostly written by women poses the question about possible reasons for excluding female writers from literary canon, which is thoroughly investigated in the following essay, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood. How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors” (1989) by Nina Baym. Similarly to Tompkins and Herrnstein, Baym points out that reception of literature is influenced by literary theories and shows how in the past these theories led to underestimating women’s texts. She gives three possible reasons; first, prejudice of male critics, second, divergence of women’s literature from literary standards of the time, and finally, the role of gender-related restrictions imposed by later critical theories. Concentrating on the latter aspect, Baym discusses different approaches to literature focusing on its “Americanness,” including a myth of America defined by critics in the 1950s. She points out, that women’s literature generally did not fit into those patterns, which led to its exclusion. Baym also refers to persistent metaphors of “exploration” and “fathering” that turn literature into the domain of men. As she concludes, while pursuing uniquely American traits modern theories ironically reduced the variety of American fiction as they eliminated women and left men to their own devices in a melodrama of beset manhood.

The third part, “Z zagadnień prozy: wewnątrz i na zewnątrz kanonu” [On Prose: Inside and Outside the Canon], continues the discussion of literary canon; however, it focuses more on specific re-evaluations and changing approaches within literary criticism. The opening essay, “The Novel and the Middle Class in America” (1986) by Myra Jehlen, tries to account for the fact that in predominantly middle-class America, writers have not produced realist novels describing everyday life of ordinary people but rather romances recounting stories of exceptional individuals’ escape from conventionalized society, often ending up in failure. As an explanation Jehlen points to different origins of the dominant middle class in Europe and America. The latter clearly lacked the challenge of the old bourgeois class. The scholar refers to the works of such authors as Flaubert, Balzac, James, Melville, Hawthorne, and Faulkner to illustrate the contrast between the novel, where the central problem is the internal structure of society, and the romance, which accepts the status quo and focuses more on how to overcome the difficulties in adjusting to it. Whilst Jehlen discusses a particular genre, in the following essay “Bio-Political Resistance in Domestic Ideology and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (1995), Lora Romero focuses on a single text, one written by a popular woman author and excluded from the literary canon. Challenging existing interpretations of Stowe’s domestic ideology as based on the opposition of power and resistance, Romero analyses the text from a perspective which links the abolitionist and feminist aspects of the text with the

concept of biopolitics. She argues that the nineteenth-century notion of physical health and harmony of body and mind constitutes the basis from which Stowe criticizes patriarchal power.

The essay closing the part devoted to re-evaluations in American literary criticism resumes a more general level of reflection. In the text "Fictions of the Present" (1988), Lary McCaffery discusses the dominant modern literary trends and genres. Rejecting easy simplifications, which affirm the death of postmodern experimentalism and stress a conservative nature of contemporary prose, the scholar gives examples of unconventional contemporary writers. However, he also notes upon the evolution of postmodern forms adjusted to grasp the new reality. McCaffery is one of the few academics advocating that science fiction is the quintessential literary genre of contemporary American culture. Moreover, he points that writers from marginalized groups (such as ethnic or racial minorities), whose texts used to be distinguished predominantly by the subject matter, now have moved to some formal experiments, very often within SF. He acknowledges the increased interest in political issues; however, he also notices the continuation of postmodern trends like indeterminacy of meaning and blurring of genre distinctions within politically engaged prose.

One of the aspects mentioned by McCaffery; namely, the emergence of new prose going beyond traditional representation of racial experience, is thoroughly discussed in the last part of the volume, "Kultura i literatura Afroamerykańska" [Afro-American Literature and Culture]. It opens with Henry Louis Gates's seminal text "Writing, 'Race' and the Difference It Makes" (1999) in which the author challenges the very concept of "race" defined in terms of distinct and deterministic racial essences. He rejects the nineteenth-century theories openly discussing "race" as a distinctive factor as well as more modern approaches taking it tacitly for granted. Gates argues that such a perception of "race" is only a social and linguistic construct, with no objective and scientific validity, which is why he puts the term in quotation marks throughout his essay. As the concept of racial difference originated among others from the lack of Black "writing" as a means of representation, he views the emergence of Black literature as a reaction against those accusations, intended to assert identity. However, for Gates this attempt of the Black voice to enter the "White discourse" confirmed the existence of the difference. Therefore, the new task for Black critics is to free Black literature from its dependence on the "White" canon, and judge it on its own terms and merits.

The discussion on the position of Afro-American literature within the canon and the challenges for critics is continued in Toni Morrison's text "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature" (1999). Similarly to Gates, Morrison deconstructs the concept of "Blackness" and analyses arguments for excluding

Black art from the canon throughout history. She also supports the view held by several authors included in this collection, especially Smith, Tompkins, Baym; namely, that critical discourse structures the consumption of texts deemed to be literature. She admits the achievements of recent racial criticism, which led the recognition of Afro-American literature, however, like Gates she also sees the dangers of analyzing it in the context of (and thus adjusting it to) the “White” standards. Consequently, like Gates, who breaks with traditional Black literary criticism, she postulates a new approach necessary to fully express the “Unspoken”. According to Morrison, the tasks of such criticism are; first, to work out a theory to study Black literature with reference to its own culture, second, to reinterpret the canon, and third, to analyze all contemporary literature taking into consideration Afro-American presence and influence. As regards the second aim, Morrison shows how the “Whiteness” of the American literary canon derives from the work of critics who fail to explore the social and cultural significance of texts adjudicated as literary, namely, she discusses Melville’s *Moby Dick* from a new perspective, as a political allegory exploring racism and “Whiteness.”

While Gates and Morrison undermine traditional Black criticism which confines Black writers and scholars to focusing on the relationship between Black people and the oppressive White system, bell hooks in “Postmodern Blackness” (1990) calls for the recognition of Afro-Americans’ role within postmodern discourse. She points out the paradox that although postmodernism claims to raise the concepts of “difference and otherness” as legitimate issues in the academia, it fails to recognize Black presence in the culture and in scholarship. While critical of some postmodern ideas, bell hooks highlights the ways postmodernism illuminates the understanding of the African-American experience.

To sum up, *Kultura, tekst, ideologia* undoubtedly deserves much credit as a successful attempt to render the atmosphere and stylistics of “cultural wars” waged within the American academia over the past three decades. Although every choice inevitably bears the traces of initial presumptions, the editor of this collection, through a meticulous selection of authors and texts, has managed to present a variety of voices in contemporary American Studies without bias. In bringing diverse approaches together within a single volume, this valuable book helps Polish readers (scholars, students, journalists) grasp the dynamics of the current debate in the American humanities. This survey of different voices within the American academia not only provides a comprehensive view of the debate, but also helps trace both commonalities and controversies. The arrangement of essays is most commendable as it greatly facilitates our understanding of the problems explored. Somewhat paradoxically, the intellectual mosaic, representing confusion, dissensus and disagreements, turns out to be particularly well-structured and coherent itself.

Agata Preis-Smith and Marek Paryż, eds. *The Poetics of America. Explorations in the Literature and Culture of the United States*. Warsaw: Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, 2004. 257 pages.

The collection of essays entitled *The Poetics of America. Explorations in the Literature and Culture of the United States* is a product of cooperation between Polish institutions and former American Fulbright professors. The eighteen papers published in the work cover an impressively wide scope of subjects and approaches: from the reassessments of the works of such classic writers as Faulkner and Whitman, to poetry published on the Internet; from meticulous studies on single texts, to comprehensive views of tendencies in American literature as a whole; and from novels to guidebooks to poetry to paintings to comic books.

Among the varied topics presented in the anthology, three issues seem to be particularly recurrent: how ideology may be either imposed or exposed by literary and extra-literary texts; how language is used for such political rhetoric; and how it could be freed and renewed, often with the help of other means of expression. Several papers seek to examine canonical texts from such new perspectives, and, indeed, already the first essay in the section "Signifying Landscapes" illustrates this tendency.

In "Realism and Representation: Considering Some Images" John R. Leo reexamines Andy Warhol's art. Comparing it to nineteenth century representations of the Mountain of the Holy Cross, which textualize landscape to serve the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the author argues that Warhol's Pop images similarly re-spiritualize the material world. In both cases reality effects in paintings and photographs are in fact used to turn objects into icons and, ultimately, promote American ideology. An analogous undercurrent of colonial thinking is exposed in "Passage to (more than) India: The Poetics and Politics of Walt Whitman's Textualization of the Orient" by Marek Paryż. The prevalent reading of Whitman's poem is called into question, as the author shows how metonymic and metaphoric representation in the poem leads to asymmetrical portrayal of the East and the West, again influenced by the concept of the latter's manifest destiny. What appears to be harmonious coexistence of all cultures, religions and philosophies, on closer scrutiny reveals a contrast between the timeless anonymous passivity of the East and the active individuality of the West. Thus, Whitman seems to be torn between "imperial zeal" and "colonial anxiety." A similar paradox is extensively described by Andrew S. Gross in "The American Guide Series: Tourism, Consumerism, and Managing Space." The author demonstrates how the guidebooks, funded by Federal Writers Project in the 1930s, simultaneously promote consumerist Yankee expansion and express nostalgia for the disappearing local color. Gross observes how, while promoting the political ideal of

a united nation, the guidebooks also demonstrate a carnivalized treatment of local communities in terms of tourist attractions. These two issues of nostalgia and carnivalization are also present in the last paper in the section, "The Individual in Urban Space: Some Perspectives of American and Canadian Fiction" by Nancy Burke. The author illustrates apocalyptic visions of the city in the literature of the USA, where, unlike in Canadian fiction, the influence of urban landscape and absence of natural environment seems to be blamed for carnivalization and degradation of culture.

The topic of the idealized retreat to nature returns in several articles in the next two sections of the anthology: "Horizons of American Poetry" and "Focus on Prose." However, the dominating theme seems to be the uses of language in constructing and promoting ideologies. In "A Civic Model of Reading *The Cantos*," Tadeusz Pióro examines analogies between the readers of Pound's poetry and ideal citizens as envisaged by the poet. Language emerges as a bearer of ideology, with the power of shaping and categorizing readers, with no less pressure than civic authority. "Faulkner's Fable. The Poetics and Politics of Displacement" by Ewa Turlik shows that a similar analysis was performed by Faulkner, who portrayed the mechanism of instilling public solidarity and national spirit under the headlines of Manifest Destiny as means of ideologically loaded social control. In "The Architecture of Desire in Faulkner's Disembodied *Mansion*" by Holli Levitsky, Faulkner's fiction also proves to be a good illustration of how serious matters – death, love, and marriage – are parodied and, literally, carnivalized. In "Throw your body on the line: Tom Hayden's Rhetoric of Activism for the 1960s to the Present Decade," by tracing the methods and rhetoric of auto-creation in the memoirs of a leading anti-establishment activist, Jacek Romaniuk presents another case of language used to construct a radical political program. A more traditional and utopian outlook was promoted and upheld by Polish American fiction, discussed by Danuta Romaniuk in "Literature and Domesticity in Polish Immigrant Communities in the USA, 1880-1939," an essay which can be found in the third part of the anthology, "Constructing Ethnic Poetics." Here the ideological role of literary fiction was to uphold the national identity through ennoblement and idealization in the portrayals of Polish families. Even gender and sexual identity seem to be subject to linguistic and ideological manipulation: as Agata Preis-Smith argues in "Gender Masquerade as a Social Statement in Confessional Poems of the 1950s and 1960s," gender roles in the poems of Plath, Berryman, and T.S. Eliot are mostly socially determined, and gender as such appears to be constructed by "reiterated rhetorical structures."

It is hardly surprising that such visions of pervasive, ideologically charged artificiality should provoke artists and scholars to seek ways back to authenticity. In "Surprise Ending: Affirmation and Altruism in Dreiser's Last Novels," Lawrence E. Hussman reconsiders

the treatment of religion in *The Bulwark* to state that, although self-neglect described by Dreiser seems rather extreme, it might surely provide a valuable alternative to the present day culture of consumerism. “‘Natural Truth’: Laura Riding, L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E and the Romantic Connection” by Julia Fiedorczuk presents a different way out – through reformed language. The essay describes struggles by a modernist poet Laura Riding and L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E school to find a mode of expression that would be directly connected to physical experience of the “natural truth.” In the romantic rebellion against conventionalized and dead language the author sees the American dream of freedom and self-reliance. Ewa Łuczak describes a similar search in “Between Speech and Silence: Sandra Cisneros and Ann Castillo,” where the ideal language in question could facilitate the fullness of expression of feminist discourse. However, this hope of finding a “natural language” that Riding voices seems to be deflated by Whitman’s poetry, reconsidered by Mikołaj Wiśniewski in “Walt Whitman: The Co(s)mic Poet. Unfixing Nature in the *Song of Myself*.” According to the author, Whitman is far from naive hopes of unity with the universe, but rather treats nature with irony. Since nature’s message to humanity is blank, it may at most inspire people to fill nature’s emptiness with artefactic constructs.

In this respect Whitman’s views come surprisingly close to several new literary projects examined in the anthology. E-writers, whose output is examined in “Exploration in American Poetics: Beyond the Boundaries of the Printed Page” by Ann C. Colley use the potential of computer technology to overcome the limitations imposed on language by the medium of the “printed page.” The examples and history of e-literature detailed in the paper point to the interactivity and non-linearity of e-texts as a means of achieving freedom of both expression and readership. Also in the case of graphic novels by Neil Gaiman, discussed in “Dreaming America: Political Desire and Nostalgia in Neil Gaiman’s Graphic Novel Series *The Sandman*” by Stanisław Gieżyński, cultural myths are re-told and given new strength by the new medium, once again encouraging readers to visualize the American Dream. In the last part of the anthology, “Constructing Ethnic Poetics,” two more papers are devoted to mixed media: a fusion of literature and photography. “Striving for Visibility: Using Photographic Imagery in Asian American Literature” by Agnieszka Bedingfield describes attempts to demonstrate that Eastern and Western identities are not mutually exclusive. In the age when visual stimuli gain precedence over the written word, it is literally visibility that shapes the perception of ethnic minorities. Analogically, as Joanna Ziarkowska shows in “Photographs in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Storyteller*: A Dialogue of the Past and the Present,” supplying autobiographical text with photographs may help overcome stereotypes about Native American communities.

The blending of various media, of fact and fiction, of ideology and imagery, as presented in the last part of the anthology, may well be a new direction characteristic for the poetics of American literature. Matched by the diversity of themes and methodological approaches of the papers, this fascinating variety shows how rich the cultural field is and how challenging it is to follow recent developments within it. *The Poetics of America* surely helps map the main itineraries in the study of American literature and culture, both in Poland and abroad. Hopefully, similar collaborative scholarly projects will be appearing in the future so that Polish readers can stay in touch with the current developments in American Studies.

Dorota Guttfield

CONTRIBUTORS

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich is Professor in the Department of English at the Warsaw School of Social Psychology, where she teaches American literature and intercultural communication. Her special interest is the crossing of cultures. She has written a book on teaching American literature in Poland, *Literatura amerykańska w kształceniu nauczycieli języka angielskiego* (2003), and edited a number of books on American literature, most recently on the canon of American prose, *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej. Od Nathaniela Hawthorne'a do Joyce Carol Oates* (2007), and, with Jerzy Kamionowski, the third volume in the series on American women poets, *O wiele więcej Okien* (2008).

Paulina Ambroży-Lis is Assistant Professor of American Literature at the School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She was a Fulbright Fellow at Stanford University in 2002. She has published articles on Edgar Allan Poe, Wallace Stevens, John Barth, William Carlos Williams, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Mary Jo Bang. She is working on a book “(Un)concealing the Hedgehog: Modernist American Poets and Contemporary Critical Theory.”

Kate Delaney teaches literature and writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is a member of the editorial board of *American Studies* and coordinator of the international initiative of the American Studies Association. Her essays have appeared in various U.S. and European journals and compilations. She is working on a study of culture in the post-Cold War era.

Joanna Durczak is Professor of American Literature at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Author of *Treading Softly, Speaking Low: Didactic Impulse in Contemporary American Poetry* and contributor of ten chapters to *Historia literatury amerykańskiej XX wieku* (edited by Agnieszka Salska), she is currently working on a book about American nature writing.

Zofia Kolbuszewska is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the Catholic University of Lublin. She teaches courses in literary theory and American literature. In 2003-2004 she was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Columbia University, New York.

Author of two books, *The Poetics of Chronotope in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (2000) and *The Purloined Child: American Identity and Representations of Childhood in American Literature, 1851-2000* (2007), and several articles on Pynchon, American postmodernism and the American Gothic, she is currently working on a project concerning the sublime and the apocryphal mode in the novels by Thomas Pynchon and writing a book on *ekphrasis* in the contemporary American novel.

Joseph Kuhn teaches American literature at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. He has published on the Fugitive poets, Henry Adams, T.S. Eliot and modernist voice, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Brockden Brown, and Stephen Crane. His monograph *Allen Tate: A Study in Southern Modernism and the Religious Imagination* has been submitted to the University of Adam Mickiewicz Press for possible publication in 2009.

Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska is Assistant Professor at the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw. She holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Białystok; her thesis was a study of the birth control movement in the United States. Her interests include American social history and gender studies.

Jadwiga Maszewska is Professor in the Department of American Literature and Culture, University of Łódź. Her special area of interest is American ethnic literature. In 2000 she published a book on Native American women writers, Leslie Marmon Silko and Louise Erdrich. Currently she is working on a study of the American Southwest as a culturally diversified region.

Anna Pochmara holds a double M.A. degree: from the Institute of English Studies and the American Studies Center, both University of Warsaw. As a doctoral student in the Institute of English Studies, she received a Fulbright Junior Grant to do research for her Ph.D. project at the African American Studies Department, Yale University, in the academic year 2007-2008. She has just submitted her doctoral dissertation on the Harlem Renaissance. Her interests include American modernist literature, gender and sexuality studies, and African American studies.

Noel Polk, having retired from his teaching duties at the English Department, Mississippi State University, continues his tenure as editor of *The Mississippi Quarterly*. Professor Polk specializes in American fiction and has published and lectured widely in the U.S., Europe, Japan, and the former Soviet Union on William Faulkner and Eudora Welty. His recent books include *Children of the Dark House: Text and Context in*

Faulkner (1996), *Eudora Welty: A Bibliography of Her Work* (1993), and *Outside the Southern Myth* (1997). He edited a new edition of Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* for Harcourt Brace (2001). In addition, he is in the process of editing William Faulkner's works for The Library of America.

Joseph C. Schöpp is Professor (em.) of American Studies at the University of Hamburg. He taught at the John F. Kennedy Institute in Berlin and at the Universities of Mannheim and Tübingen. From 1984 to 1989 he was Director of the German American Institute in Freiburg. He is the author of a monograph on Allen Tate (1975), a book on experimental fiction in postmodern America (1989), and co-editor of a book of essays on Transatlantic modernism (2001). A collection of his essays appeared in 1999. His current research interest focuses on American Transcendentalism.

Jerzy Sobieraj is Professor in the English Department, Warsaw School of Social Psychology. He has published articles and books on American literature and history, with a particular focus on the U.S. South. His last book is a monograph in Polish entitled *Ku Klux Klan* (2004). As a recipient of several academic grants, he did research at Brown University, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Nashville University.

