

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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