

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

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

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Patrycja Antoszek, *The 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

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

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

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