

Thiemann, Peter Schneck) but also offer insightful analyses of more recent texts such as Siri Hustvedt's *The Shaking Woman or a History of My Nerves* (Anna Thiemann), Richard Powers' *The Echo Maker* (Johanna Heil, Birgit Däwes), John Banville's *The Sea* and Richard B. Wright's *October* (Anca-Raluca Radu).

The closing essay in the collection, Dietrich von Engelhardt's "The World of Medicine in the Medium of Literature: Structures, Dimensions, Perspectives," serves as an apt conclusion for the entire collection. Engelhardt, as a medical historian, demonstrates medicine's long history of involvement with literature as well as its transnational character which in turn draws attention to the two fields' common interests in the changing context of globalized cultures.

Many of the remaining essays are no less interesting but the extensive scope of the project does not allow for a detailed presentation here of each of the discussed aspects of how medicine and literature interact to produce interesting dialogues. *Communicating Disease* is indeed an eclectic collection (which, contrary to what its title suggests, does include texts centered on British culture) whose aim is not only to demonstrate the diversity of cultural representations of American medicine but, moreover, to define the premises on which the two fields meet and interact. The collection is strongly recommended for those who already see medicine and literature in dialogue as well as for those eager to adopt the new perspective.

Work Cited

Anne Hunsaker Hawkins and Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, eds. *Teaching Literature and Medicine*. New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000. Print.

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Ewa Antoszek, Katarzyna Czerwiec-Dykiel, and Izabella Kimak, eds. *Inne bębny: różnica i niezgoda w literaturze i kulturze amerykańskiej* (Different Drums: Rebellion and Resistance in American Literature and Culture). Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2013. 199 pages.

Inne bębny: różnica i niezgoda w literaturze i kulturze amerykańskiej is a collection of essays by Polish scholars which explore a broadly understood theme of rebellion and resistance in contemporary American literature and culture. The first part of the title refers directly to Henry David Thoreau's classic—*Walden, or*

Life in the Woods (1854). In his open critique of materialism and conformism of nineteenth-century America, Thoreau encouraged his fellow citizens to follow the sound of different drums, that is, not to be afraid to think and act critically in order to contest the reality that surrounded them. In so doing, Thoreau, argue the editors, became a precursor of a tradition of rebelling against oppression curtailing the individual's sense of freedom. Exploring literature, film, music and art, the articles in the collection point to the role of the rhetoric of rebellion and resistance in the shaping of contemporary American culture. Each of the critical analyses is an exploration of an artistically manifested rebellion as well as of the oppressive forces against which the artists revolt.

The first group of articles focuses on twentieth-century canonical works in the field of literature and cinema, exposing their previously overlooked transgressive potential. The section opens with Małgorzata Rutkowska's analysis of the motif of travel as a form of rebellion in Henry Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi*, Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* and Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*. As Rutkowska explains, the journeys which the protagonists of the novels undergo serve as a critique and rejection of America and its fundamental values. Portrayed as a nest of corruption, America is juxtaposed with "new spiritual centers" (Miller's Greece, Bowles' Moroccan Sahara and Theroux's Honduras), which the protagonists head for. Movement is understood by Rutkowska as the antithesis of the seemingly safe and stable life in America which stands for spiritual and cultural stagnation. Thus, travel becomes a symbol of rebirth and of gaining a new sense of self. However, while in *Colossus of Maroussi* the journey leads to Miller's moral and spiritual awakening, the other two novels end in the protagonists' death in a foreign, "exotic" country. For Rutkowska, the self-destructive life journeys may be treated symbolically as the fate of "white" America unable to understand and accept the Other as inherent part of its own culture.

Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis employs feminist criticism to examine dining and cooking rituals as the strategies of asserting gender and sexual identity in Fannie Flagg's famous novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, as well as in its cinematic adaptation. Run by the main protagonists, Idgie Threadgoode and Ruth Jamison, the Whistle Stop café is seen by the critic as an ambiguous place where gender and sexual norms are transgressed, challenging the socially accepted order in the southern American community in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, the café, or more importantly, its kitchen, remains a place culturally designated for women, where they are to perform their expected subservient roles as mothers and housewives. On the other hand, it becomes a source of Idgie's and Ruth's financial empowerment and a center of their developing, ambiguous partnership. Niewiadomska-Flis argues that the rituals connected with preparing and consuming food are not only manifestations of an intimate bond between

the two women, but they can also be interpreted as acts of performing their homoerotic desires. Thus seen from a new perspective, the café is perceived by the critic as a site of resistance and radical openness. It is a place where the two females challenge the patriarchal, heteronormative system in the American South of the 1930s.

Beata Zawadka's article on the 1950s filmic oeuvre of Douglas Sirk is an impressive examination of the transgressive potential of the director's melodramas: *All I Desire*, *Magnificent Obsession*, *All the Heavens Allows*, *Written on the Wind* and *Imitation of Life*. Considered by Sirk's contemporaries as classical Hollywood "tearjerkers," the films are now critically acclaimed for their incisive, social critique of the conformist life of the upper middle class America of the 1950s. As Zawadka argues, the key to de/en/coding Sirk's "impossible stories" lies in the understanding of their intended theatricalization which relieves the classical Hollywood genre from its formal and ideological constraints. Sirk's experience as a theater director as well as his interests in painting had an unquestionable impact on his productions. Consequently, his kitschy, pathos and action-filled melodramas become highly stylized cinematographic "performances" of life. By stressing his works' performative character, Sirk simultaneously liberates his narratives from the necessity to depict the world realistically. In doing so, the director challenges the genre as a mode of cultural production, pointing to its "imperialism" in creating a "real" vision of life. In Sirkian "impossible stories" the fatalism of the characters' lives is always overcome by the classical Hollywood happy ending. As Zawadka aptly argues, this strategy is in fact used by Sirk to reveal Hollywood's power to create and sell an illusion of life.

The subsequent section of the book comprises in-depth analyses of the theme of rebellion manifested through/in art and experimental writing. In "Living Pictures in the Works of Stephen King," Zofia Kolbuszewska examines the reasons behind King's employment of the trope of the living picture in his story "The Road Virus Heads North" and novel *Rose Madder*. As the critic claims, King uses this particular trope to manifest his doubt in the cultural status of horror and to stress his own ambiguous position between high and low culture. This ambiguity is manifested by the writer's status as a widely recognized classic and an author of popular bestsellers. Kolbuszewska's analysis of King's use of the living picture as a means of addressing the question of the Other in American culture is particularly interesting. Drawing on the Gothic convention, ekphrastic discourse and the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, the critic interprets the living picture as a manifestation of the uncanny which questions the socially established and accepted order. Thus used in King's texts, the living pictures reveal growing, deep anxieties in contemporary American culture, arising from the inevitable confrontations with a broadly understood Otherness.

Paweł Frelik's article "Paul Laffoley: Science Fiction Art in Search of Utopia" is an insight into the work of the artist of the fantastic, probing the reasons for his marginal position in the world of art as well as his insufficient recognition in science fiction cultures. On the one hand, Laffoley's outsider position can be attributed to the artist's persistent rejection of any form of categorization of his art. Yet, more importantly, it is his combining art with belief that raises major questions among audiences approaching his work critically. Deciphering the utopian vision of humanity encoded in Laffoley's work, Frelik points to alchemy, occultism and transcendentalism as major influences on the artist's philosophy. This spiritualistic aspect, together with Laffoley's openly declared belief in extraterrestrial life, leave audiences perplexed. As Frelik stresses, for Laffoley, his work is first of all a visionary project which documents and contributes to the enhancement of the humanity's development through the evolution of consciousness. Consequently, his ambiguous work challenges not only critical approaches towards science fiction literature and art but also gives opportunity to rethink modern understanding of art in general.

Equally interesting is Julia Nikiel's critical overview of *bizarro*, a controversial literary movement which emerged in the 1990s. As the critic states, in the most general terms, *bizarro* is a radical response to the broadly accepted literary and linguistic *savoir-vivre*. According to the movement's leaders, Carlton Mellick III, Kevin Donihe and Kevin Dole II, previously established literary traditions limit the artist's self-expression and the ways in which reality can be described. Although *bizarro* has already gained a large number of readership, it remains relatively little known in the academia. The reason for that, argues Nikiel, is *bizarro*'s inherent "weirdness" celebrated by the writers. Contesting the limitations of literary realism, *bizarro* artists draw on science-fiction, fantasy and horror to create absurd, dreamlike visions of the world. Pointing to the movement's use of obscene, violent and sacrilegious content, Nikiel claims that this strategy aims at challenging the constraints of literary "good taste" and the terror of political correctness. Although offensive and nonsensical, *bizarro* is perceived by Nikiel as a movement successfully reflecting and commenting on the state of contemporary American popular culture.

A lot of attention is given in the collection to the theme of rebellion and resistance in contemporary ethnic American literature and culture. A very interesting contribution to this section is Mateusz Durczak's examination of a controversial dispute over the use of the word "nigger" within the African American community. Although the use of the "N-word" by white Americans has officially become a legal crime, the word remains popular within the African American hip hop community. As Durczak states, the official requests made by the African American establishment to ban completely the use of the racial

slur revealed a serious split within the African American community. Attacked by the community's leaders for ignorant and disrespectful use of the word and for propagating it as a means of financial profits, the hip hop community not only refused to comply with such demands but accused the elite of the lack of understanding for the ordinary "black street." For this group, claim the hip hop artists, the word has received a new, positive and empowering meaning. Durczak's important analysis not only addresses the complexity of the problem of language as a tool of both oppression and liberation, but it also points to a much larger dilemma that ethnic American artists and writers are exploring nowadays; namely, the generational conflict concerning the understanding of ethnic American identity (both communal and individual) as well as freedom of artistic expression.

This problem is also explored in the article by one of the co-editors of the book, Izabella Kimak, in which she focuses on South Asian American women writing. Kimak's analysis of selected works by Jhumpa Lahiri, a well-acclaimed second-generation writer, and those written by first-generation authors, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee, points to a conflict that stems from the writers' serious differences in the understanding of the South Asian immigrant experience. It is especially vivid in their portrayals of India and America. As Kimak stresses, while the first generation writers tend to see the two places in terms of binary opposition, with South Asia depicted as a site of constraint and America as a symbol of liberation, the second-generation writers openly refuse to follow this model, considering it as an oversimplification. Lahiri's gradual distancing herself from "ethnic" themes and her literary exploration of commonly shared human experience should be read as an explicit statement about her work. Not only does she refuse to follow the path of her literary predecessors, but also refuses to carry the burden of an ethnic writer "representing her people." Lahiri's claim for freedom of artistic expression is undoubtedly one of many ethnic voices emerging on the literary scene, pointing to a new phase in contemporary ethnic American literature. Junot Diaz's novel *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, analyzed by Karolina Majkowska, can serve as such an example. Pointing to the novel's intertextuality, various literary and cultural references, series of original footnotes and a multitude of foreign words and phrases, Majkowska describes Diaz's work as a voice from the periphery challenging both western and Dominican literary traditions. Revolting against the reductive classifications of ethnic American literature, based on the center-periphery dichotomy, Diaz is undoubtedly an important voice in contemporary American literary canon.

For the readers interested in Latino-American female writing, Grażyna Zygałło's and Maja Sobotka's articles should be of particular interest. Zygałło examines Chicana artists' use of their lesbianism as a political statement in their struggle

against gender and sexual oppression. Analyzing the works of such accomplished writers as Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga and Susan Castillo, the critic explores lesbian Chicanas' double stigmatization. Not only do they struggle against the dominant society's sexism and homophobia but they are also outcast in their own ethnic communities. Their writing becomes therefore both a political tool used to publically speak about the situation of the queer in America as well as a means of open celebration of the female body and the self. Maja Sobotka analyzes the "poetry of rebellion" by Puerto Rican author Luz María Umpierre. As Sobotka aptly observes, Umpierre's entire work is a manifestation of her life-long activism against racism, sexism and homophobia. An openly declared lesbian, promoting her theory of homocriticism, Umpierre has fallen victim to various forms of prejudice which she addresses in her poetry. Consequently, language becomes Umpierre's tool used to shape and express her critique. Original in style and provocative in content, Umpierre's poetry is a documentation of her struggle against the forces silencing her voice and of her constant affirmation of herself, her lesbianism and of womanhood at large.

Inne bębny is by no means a project that aims at exhausting the theme of rebellion and resistance in American literature and culture. Its goal is rather to show various faces of rebellion depending on the time, context and the medium used by the artist discussing it. Analyzing the examples of artistic revolts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the collection also shows how various socio-political and cultural changes have affected America's understanding of freedom. This is clearly demonstrated in the articles devoted to ethnic American artists. The ethnic writers' work is the best example of how, from a tool of oppression and domination, language has become a means of personal and communal liberation.

Exploring the complexity of the above mentioned themes, *Inne bębny* is undoubtedly an important addition to the field of American studies in Poland. The fact that the collection is written in Polish makes it useful not only for Polish scholars working in the areas of research explored by the contributors, but also to a wider, not necessarily academic readership interested in American studies. While most of the analyzed works are generally known to Polish Americanists, there is still a significant portion of material which might be new to a non-academic audience. In this respect, articles by Kimak, Frelik, Nikiel, or Sobotka are of unquestionable value. Moreover, theoretical backgrounds against which individual analyses are conducted provide useful information on the most recent developments in literary and cultural theories. Zofia Kolbuszewska's critical analysis of Stephen King's employment of living pictures and Beata Zawadka's examination of Douglas Sirk's melodramas can serve as good examples.