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In Memory of Andrzej Antoszek (1971–2013)

I knew Andrzej Antoszek for a quarter of a century—longer than any other Polish Americanist—since we played on the same high-school basketball team and studied together in the English program at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. After graduating, Andrzej went on to work at the Department of English at the Catholic University of Lublin, while I enrolled as a graduate student in English at the University of Warsaw.

Passionately engaged in American Studies in Poland, Andrzej did important work in two fields: postmodernism and African American Studies. His doctoral dissertation on Don DeLillo paved the way for a group of young Polish academics who continue to work on postmodern fiction. Andrzej was among the first authors in Poland to publish scholarly as well as popular essays on cyberpunk and avant-pop at a time when these phenomena were still unknown to the Polish reading audience. His activity as a scholar and critic was not limited to strictly academic pursuits; he was a frequent contributor—as author or translator—to literary journals and served as a guest-editor for such established journals as *Akcent* and *Magazyn Sztuki*. He translated into Polish the works of prominent American writers, among others Susan Sontag and Robert Coover.

Andrzej's achievement in the field of African American Studies was perhaps even greater than his contribution to the study of postmodern American literature and culture. In 2009, he co-edited a volume of essays entitled *Black on White: African Americans Who Challenged America*; this book is the most comprehensive presentation of African American culture, literature, and history in the Polish language to date, a true milestone of American Studies in Poland. He performed his academic and other duties with utmost professionalism and dedication. In 2006, he co-organized an international seminar on African American culture in Puławy; this event provided a strong impulse for a further development of African American Studies in Poland and East-Central Europe.

The international community of scholars and students was his natural environment: he gave papers and lectures in Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan, as well as organized workshops for translators at the Imperial College in London. He had ambitious plans for the future: he was developing a new project on contemporary African American culture's engagement with the social, political and economic life of the black community and wanted to do the major part of research during a Fulbright Fellowship at the University of California.

Andrzej was about to complete his post-doctoral book entitled "Domesticated Narratives. Contemporary Polish Representations of African American Culture: Rap and Hip Hop Lyrics, Moving Pictures and Other Stories"; we agreed on the dates when he would send me the manuscript and I submit the review to the publisher. The manuscript never reached me.

The untimely passing of this outstanding scholar is an enormous loss to the American Studies community in Poland.

Marek Paryż

Irmina Wawrzyczek

Rethinking the History of the American Revolution: An Interview with Michal Jan Rozbicki

Michal Jan Rozbicki (b. 1946) is currently Professor of History at Saint Louis University and Director of the SLU Center for Intercultural Studies, which he founded in 2011. To the middle generation of Polish Americanists he is better remembered as the Director of the American Studies Center at the University of Warsaw, 1987–1990, Managing Editor of the Center's periodical *American Studies* (now *The Americanist*) in the years 1985–1994, and a co-founder of the Polish Association for American Studies in 1990. His academic trajectory began in Poland with studying Protestantism as a vehicle for the diffusion of scientific ideas across seventeenth-century northern Europe and England. Then he went on to look at how metropolitan cultural values changed when transmitted to British America, and explored the colonial origins of American identity. These lines of inquiry led him to investigation on how the conceptual package contained in the narrative of liberty produced by the American Revolution affected the political culture and the development of equal rights in the United States. It was this project that resulted in his biggest professional success so far, *Culture and Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* published by the University of Virginia Press in 2011, a book immediately noticed and widely discussed among the historians of early America. It also brought him the 2012 Best History Book award from the State Historical Society of Missouri. His article "Rethinking the American Revolution: Politics and the Symbolic Foundations of Reality," a follow-up on the book, won the 2012 Best Essay in Intellectual History prize awarded jointly by the Historical Society and the Jack Miller Center for Teaching America's Founding Principles and History.

* * *

IRMINA WAWRZYCZEK: *No event in the history of the United States can rival the American Revolution in importance and the mythical status it enjoys in American cultural consciousness. It is well reflected in American history writing in which*

the historiography of the Revolutionary period constitutes a well-populated, perhaps even crowded field of study. A number of major interpretations of the political, economic and moral reasons of the Revolution have gained widespread acceptance; a lot of excellent monographs have appeared on revolutionary warfare, leaders, foreign policy and the making of the Constitution. Yet, amid all the scholarship on the topic, and across the patterns and trends in American historiography of the last seventy or so years, one particular dilemma continues to be seen as an unsolved issue in understanding the meaning and consequences of the Revolution. It is the allegedly paradoxical coexistence of the grand political vocabulary of liberty, equality, universal rights and sovereignty as coined and propagated by the America's Founding Fathers, and many instances of supposedly betraying these ideals by the same Founders in their private lives and in the functioning of public institutions they controlled, slavery being the most flagrant example. In the United States, the country that built its political and cultural identity around the sacred concepts of liberty, freedom, and equality, this apparent "flaw" must be particularly disconcerting. With such celebrated contributors to the historical debate on the nature of American liberty as Bernard Bailyn (1967; 2003), Gordon Wood (1991; 2009), Edmund Morgan (1988), what urged you and gave you the intellectual courage to challenge the existing interpretations?

MICHAL JAN ROZBICKI: The names you mention are indeed pillars of American colonial scholarship, venerable authors of canonical works from which both you and I have learned our fundamentals in this field. Wood and Bailyn are still active (and flocks of their former doctoral students populate the history departments at major universities across the USA). They are often labeled consensus historians because of their traditionalist, and not infrequently celebratory, presentations of the Founders, and because of their inclination to de-emphasize social conflict, presenting instead a society relatively unified around the ideas and values of the founding elites. There is also an equally substantial group of early American historians who call themselves progressive and contest the consensus scholarship by stressing class differences and the role of ordinary people. The former concentrate on the political and constitutional, and the latter on the socio-economic and the cultural. This division has long and deep roots, and the two camps march along two parallel paths that rarely cross. Their work is at times quite politicized, as both groups seek usable histories to make their arguments about the present.

Although the two schools have produced remarkably impressive scholarship and defined the field for several decades, it is becoming increasingly evident that they are both heading down a dead-end street. I see two main reasons for it. First, they are seriously burdened by presentism**.** They delight in "discovering"

their own ideas in the past. Instead of reconstructing what liberty meant to various groups of people, and how they used it in ways peculiar to the cultural and social order of their time, both groups tend to treat it as a kind of Hegelian, abstract, and timeless idea that floats across centuries. After all, Jefferson proclaimed equal liberty, and although he "betrayed" his proclamation by holding slaves, we supposedly still subscribe to the *same* ideal. Second, it is a rare author that clearly makes a distinction between cultural fictions and their real-life functions in social and political praxis. What often gets lost is that mentions of freedom in a sermon or a congressional speech were symbolic representations, not objective descriptions of reality. So was the very concept of Revolutionary liberty. In short, both schools, despite their deeply divergent conclusions, share the same flawed, anachronistic premise—that the meaning of Founders' liberty talk already included equal rights for *all* classes of people. One of the groups makes the Founders more modern than they were, and the other laments that they did not live up to their political language.

As to your point about the audacity needed to question both schools, it was not so much courage as the excitement of coming up with an explanation of a persistent historiographical puzzle. Once one has absorbed the relevant sources and achieved a solid familiarity with the literature, questions about unresolved problems inevitably turn up. It is how one goes about answering them that makes a difference. I like to tell my students that the best position to find oneself in at that point is that of the boy in Hans Christian Andersen's story, who, unburdened by the established, pre-reflexive assumptions of the crowd, easily identified the truth that was invisible to others—that the Emperor had no clothes.

For those scholars and students of early American history and culture who have not had a chance yet to read your book, could you summarize briefly its main goal and the assertions around which you built your argument?

Perhaps the most succinct way to explain my criticism of current Revolutionary historiography would be to try and picture, for a moment, how someone like Sławomir Mrożek or Woody Allen would have seen it through their glasses. Let's visualize two groups of academics, with two disparate, *imagined* visions of the American Revolution, huddling in the opposite corners of the faculty lounge and not speaking to each other. The first cluster, known as Top Down Historians, believes that the Founders' minds were 237 years ahead of their time in their belief in absolutely equal liberty, that every word they wrote was a timeless description of objective reality, unembellished by class interests, and that their greatest dream came true when Americans woke up on the morning of

July 5th, 1776, to find that centuries-old, deeply ingrained belief in hierarchies of social difference had vanished. Presumably, their joy would have also included relishing the logical consequence of such a dramatic shift—an instantaneous downfall from their positions of power and privilege. The second professorial faction, known as Bottom Up Historians, are convinced that the Founders lied to themselves with their democratic language, betrayed their own noble dream by holding on to power and wealth, and thus helped to *deny* the otherwise predestined freedoms to ordinary people for two more centuries. But not to worry, these scholars have rectified the unsavory situation by replacing the old Founders with new ones, consisting of the remaining 99.99% of colonial population called "the people," who—237 years ahead of their time—all "stood for" a truly modern, inclusive, and egalitarian country that the old Founders neglected to create.

As you can see, some of my colleagues needed to be gently reminded that the Revolution took place well over two centuries ago. More seriously, my larger goal was to bridge the yawning gap between political and cultural histories of the era. The axis of my argument is a deeply historicized examination of the concept of liberty, not just as an ideological and constitutional notion, but also as the central metaphor of the age. Deconstructing the different meanings of that metaphor assigned to it by various social groups allowed me to separate the factual (practice) from the symbolic (rhetoric)—two spheres that are so often casually conflated in historiography—and to reflect on the relationship of culture and power. Ultimately, my aim was to resolve the perennial puzzle you mentioned earlier—that the Revolutionary era was a constitutional and rhetorical paean to equal freedom, while it preserved most of the existing unfreedoms.

To do so, I put forward two main theses. One is that the Founders and their contemporaries understood liberty as a privilege, not a universal right. For them it was a social relation between unequals. This may come as a shock to the present-minded but it should not surprise—this restricted meaning was deeply rooted in the preceding centuries, brought to America, and was not only *not* abandoned at the time of the Revolution but continued for the next two centuries until the civil rights legislation after World War II. In 1776, it was understood as a spectrum of immunities and entitlements that were accessible in different amounts to people according to their rank, with the widest privileges claimed by the upper elite. I note that even for Montesquieu there was an obvious difference between "the liberty of the people" (the right to do what the laws allowed) and "the power of the people" (reserved for the elite who had the qualifications to exercise authority on behalf of the people). A realization that this meaning of liberty was predominant among the Founders should put an end to the fruitless debate whether their ideas were egalitarian in a modern sense or not.

The other thesis relates to the ontology of liberty in this period. I suggest that we should not look at it as some sort of bounded and internally fixed entity, but as a complex amalgamation of political acts and symbolic representations used to construct the social relationship that liberty ultimately was. This enabled me to explain the crucial problem of how the extent of its meanings expanded to include new social groups between 1776 and 1800. It also allowed me to show the inaccuracy of the assumption—shared by so many in both historiographical schools as well as by much of the public in America today—that liberty is timeless and self-evident, rather than a man-made product of a specific time and place. To believe this is to assume that people are born with the concept of the Fourth Amendment or trial by jury, a view akin to believing that we are born with the concept of the cell phone. Liberties first had to be "invented," codified, and implemented. The fact that Revolutionary sources extoll universal freedom does not mean that they describe social reality. They were used to fight political battles and articulate ideal models for the future.

Because the Founders deeply believed that they would "naturally" hold on to their rank as an "aristocracy of merit," they produced an open-ended, universalistic narrative of equal liberty—not to disrupt the social order they dominated, but to validate the Revolution and attract political support. But if their vision of society was modeled on classical republics ruled by virtuous elites, their narrative of universal and equal rights was a gift of legitimacy to the ambitions of ordinary people. It soon became part of America's common cultural capital, enabling various groups to employ it as a weapon in their demands for rights and inclusion. Shays's Rebellion of 1786 in Massachusetts is a prominent example of this process—the insurgents utilized the entire vocabulary of *equal* liberty popularized by the Founders to frame their demands against the government of the new republic, now run by the Revolutionary leaders.

You can see why I cannot agree with the conclusions of Gordon Wood's otherwise splendid studies that the Revolution brought radical change in the way everyone in America perceived freedom. Politicians can quickly modify the language of liberty, but its meanings, historically embedded in the culture, need a long time to evolve—because the culture that generates these meanings must evolve too, and that is not an overnight trip.

The book stirred an animated discussion in the top circles of early Americanists. The authorities in the filed speak highly of your book. Trevor Burnard calls it "a major achievement" in the historical study of American liberty and finds your definition of it in the eighteenth-century "immensely helpful" (11). To Peter S. Onuf, your monograph reads like "a blast of fresh air in a stale, moribund field" (14),

and a "brilliant reconstruction of the history of liberty in Revolutionary America" (15). Allan Tully states that you succeeded in "what only a few early Americanists have done: . . . [you have] created through carefully constructed historical analysis an argument that gives a credible coherence and direction to the long 18th century" (17). Paul A. Gilje compliments your "sweeping interpretive approach to the changing nature of liberty in the age of the American Revolution" (291). J. M. Opal finds your grasp of historical subjects "profound and often brilliant" (125), and Marc L. Harris has no doubt that your book "deserves a significant place in a rethinking of what the Revolution set in train" (183). What is it like to find oneself at the center of academic attention and be so well received by fellow-historians?

Having started a serious discussion is, of course, very rewarding. That is what we historians live for—spend long years in the archives to try to lift the veil of time, get a bit closer to the truth, and convince others that we have a case. On the other hand, proposing a new take on such hallowed subjects as the American Founding, simply cannot be a bed of roses. History is subject to the same mechanism of reluctant paradigm shifts—described so ably by Thomas Kuhn—as science. Established scholars, who had devoted their lives to promoting their research, have a genuine stake in preserving the status quo. Recall François Furet, who revised the reigning interpretation of the French Revolution by moving the focus from class-conflict to the populistic conceptual framework that fuelled the progress of freedom *as well as* the Reign of Terror (and later, twentieth-century totalitarianisms). He desacralized an academic orthodoxy, and ended up being treated as a heretic. But he was right; one-size-fits-all methodological schemata, once consecrated by academia, inevitably become reductionist (and worse, boring). They certainly cannot capture the unruly and non-linear history of liberty.

*Your interest in European and American constitutionalism is not a recent strand of your research work. As Director of the American Studies Centre at Warsaw University, already in 1987 you hosted an interdisciplinary international conference devoted to the origins and consequences of three eighteenth-century constitutions, American, Polish, and French; you also edited a volume of the conference essays (*European and American Constitutionalism*). Your first major book published in the US,* The Complete Colonial Gentleman *(1998), was a cultural study of the colonial plantation elites in which you argued that the growth of their American class identity and aspirations foreshadowed democratic developments in the Revolutionary period.* Culture and Liberty *seems a culmination of the "revolutionary" themes in your research. Are you currently working on another cultural history project in the field?*

I have been working for some time now on a study tentatively called "Provincialism and the Trans-National Gentry Ethos in Early Modern British America and Poland," a comparative analysis of how the canon of public virtues was used to reproduce and maintain political power in both societies. I am hoping to show how these shared, symbolic representations had political utility among such otherwise distinct groups as colonial American planters and Polish provincial *szlachta*.

One might say that your academic background is both interdisciplinary and intercontinental. Born and bred in Poland, you went to a high school in Colombo, Sri Lanka, you studied English at Warsaw University and got your PhD from Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin for a study on Samuel Hartlib. Your transition from English studies to American cultural history happened in the course of working on your Habilitationsschrift, Transformation of English Cultural Ethos in Colonial America: Maryland, 1634–1720. *Since 1990 you have lived permanently in the US and taught colonial history at an American university. This combination of disciplinary perspectives and different intellectual experiences in various institutional contexts was bound to produce a cross-cultural scholarly personality. Also, when reading* Culture and Liberty, *I registered with satisfaction references to Polish authors: Zygmunt Bauman, Leszek Kołakowski, Antoni Mączak, Wojciech Wrzosek and Adam Zamoyski. In what way were their works useful for the construction of your argument? More generally, what do you consider your most precious Polish/European intellectual inheritance, and what are the best things you acquired from American academia?*

The older I get, the more grateful I am for the solid liberal arts education I received at the Department of English Studies at Warsaw University. My American students would be surprised to hear that most of the *undergraduate* classes I took were conducted in English (a *foreign* language we students had to be fluent in even to be admitted), and that I was required to be intimately familiar with long reading lists in the classics of literature from ancient Greece to modern France, apart from the canon of English and American literature, not to mention Old and Middle English, Latin, and other foreign languages. In addition, there were many world class professors at the university who inspire me up to this day, to mention only Leszek Kolakowski and Zygmunt Bauman, as well as a number of magnificent historians. I hold dear Kolakowski's reflections on the relation between relativism and certainty (especially the role of tensions between them as drivers of intellectual activity in history), and on the "happy" incompatibility of the various components of culture. Bauman's dazzling sociological study of freedom opened my eyes to many new problems. Antoni Mączak's elegant study on the

relations between the governing and the governed in early modern Europe has few equals up to this day.

Academically speaking, the experience of life in Poland before 1989 taught me three priceless things: skepticism toward established authority and all forms of political correctness, a sense of humor and irony (indispensable in maintaining epistemological self-awareness), and an abiding respect for the fragility of liberty, which is never a given.

As to American academia, it is changing but two things remain very impressive: a high degree of professionalism (for instance in faculty evaluations, peer reviews for publication, editorial decisions by research journals, etc.), and serious competitiveness in the academic marketplace—both attributes that challenge faculty to demand ever more from themselves.

Your youngest brainchild is the Center for Intercultural Studies at Saint Louis University. You created it for systematic research on the interactions between different cultures. Does it signal your departure from the cultural history of early America, or is it only an addition to it in response to the challenges posed by contemporary globalization processes?

It was a natural outcome of my interests. While editing a book of essays on cross-cultural history published last year, I realized that scholars in many disciplines increasingly deal with interculturality but have few methodological tools to deal with it. If they do have any, they almost always come from within the narrow boundaries of their fields. The intercultural is a rather elusive phenomenon that occurs in the space between two or more distinct cultures that encounter each other and negotiate reciprocal relationships. Studying it without proper theory is like sailing a ship without sails. By its very nature, it can only be explained with the help of various interdisciplinary methods. I founded the Center—and my university embraced the idea—to create a home for scholars of interculturality seeking new ways and new theoretical tools to do their work. As Greg Dening of the Melbourne School of history once observed, the historian gives voice to the dead, and the interculturalist gives voice to the Other. In so many ways, their work and their tools are alike.

May it give you as much satisfaction as your other academic pursuits. Thank you.

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Julia Fiedorczuk

"The profession of humility": Marianne Moore's Ethical Artifice

Though Marianne Moore's status as one of the most important poets of the first half of the twentieth century is no longer subject to dispute, she is still considered as an eccentric or even a misfit whose exact place on the map of modernist poetry remains undetermined. With her old-fashioned religious views, her peculiar appearance including the three-cornered hat almost more famous than her best known poems, and her unswerving immunity to erotic passions, she cuts a unique figure among modernist writers. The only woman poet to have been treated with any degree of seriousness by the patriarchs of early twentieth-century Anglo-American avant-garde, including Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, she has been admired for her meticulously descriptive and yet artful style; however, her insistence on the ethical import of mimesis, dictated by her attitude of humility towards the material reality of the world, complicates her relationships with modernism. Like Laura Riding, another idiosyncratic character of the time, Moore is both important and somehow marginal with regard to what has long been considered as the mainstream of modernist poetry, that is to say—the "high" modernism theorized chiefly by T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot.[1] In the words of Harold Bloom: "If we compare her with her major poetic contemporaries—Frost, Stevens, Eliot, Pound, Williams, Aiken, Ransom, Cummings, H.D., Hart Crane—she is clearly the most original American poet of her era though not quite of the eminence of Frost, Stevens, Crane" (11). Bloom's diagnosis is symptomatic of how Moore's work has generally been received: as original but not quite "eminent" enough. A judgment essentially almost identical to Bloom's was expressed, as early as in 1922, by Bryher [Winifred Ellerman] who, reviewing Moore's debut *Poems*, described the book, sympathetically, as "the study of a Marco Polo detained at home" and urged its author to "leave the fireside and ride forth" pointing out: "your sword is ready and your kingdoms wait" (209–210). Bryher's piece was published

1 For the discussion of the continuing impact of Hulme's, Pound's and Eliot's theorizing on our understanding of modernism see Beasley.

in *Poetry* as part of "A Symposium on Marianne Moore" put together by Harriet Monroe and presenting the opinions of four critics, in addition to Bryher, also Marion Strobel, Pearl Anderson and Monroe herself. Strobel's opinion was the most disparaging, as she accused Moore of a lack of grace and described her subject matter as "inevitably dry" (210). Other reviewers expressed qualified praise, including Monroe who, though on the whole approving of the younger poet's work, nevertheless concluded that Moore was "in terror of her Pegasus" (213).

All of the opinions quoted above suggest that Moore's writing, though intelligent and inventive, lacks some elusive quality that bona fide poetry should have. What is interesting, Moore herself was hesitant to label her own work as "poetry." Her ambivalence about the status of her own writing was most famously expressed in her National Book Award Acceptance Speech, where she described poetry as "a peerless proficiency of the imagination" and added: "I prize it, but am myself an observer; I can see no reason for calling my work poetry except that there is no other category in which to put it."[2] This hesitance can be read in two ways. On the one hand, it can be understood as an expression of modesty, as if Moore was suggesting that what she does is not good enough to merit the honorable title of "poetry." But on the other hand, one could read Moore's statement perversely, and perhaps against the author's intention, as intimating that in fact her work is too unique, and of too large a scope, to be contained within the category "poetry." In this second understanding, it is the category of "poetry" that turns out to be too narrow or otherwise insufficient to do justice to the originality of Moore's artistic endeavor. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that it is the latter understanding of Moore's disavowal that reflects the essence of her achievement more accurately.

However, that is not how Moore's work has traditionally been perceived. Bryher and Bloom, though writing at different historical moments, express the same set of reservations about her poetic output. It is very clear that the two critics' ambivalence towards Moore's writing stems from their conviction as to the very special status of poetry. Both Bryher and Bloom regard it as the highest form of literary art, a stance which is in keeping with the aesthetics of high modernism. From the perspective of such an elitist understanding of poetry, it is Moore's work that seems to lack something crucial. What is not stated

2 About a decade later Moore made a similar statement in conversation with Donald Hall. She said: "I disliked the term 'poetry' for any but Chaucer's or Shakespeare's or Dante's" (Hall).

explicitly in the quoted comments, but is nevertheless quite obvious from the perspective of twenty-first-century readers, is that the allusive quality missing from Moore's poetry is related to gender.

This is hardly a surprising conclusion since modernist poetry often defined itself as "masculine" (or even "male"). High modernist aesthetics in fact relied on the exclusion of the feminine, as its basic condition, newness, was linked with male sexual potency. Pound expressed these principles rather succinctly in his afterword to Remy de Gourmont's *Natural Philosophy of Love*:

> one offers woman as the accumulation of hereditary aptitudes, better than man in the 'useful gestures,' the perfections; but to man, given what we have of history, the 'inventions,' the new gestures, the extravagance, the wild shots, the impractical, merely because in him occurs the new up-jut, the new bathing of their cerebral tissues in the residuum, in *la mousse* of the life sap. (171)[3]

The masculinist bias of most early-twentieth-century avant-garde movements has been thoroughly examined by now, likewise, Marianne Moore's strategies of dealing with the anti-feminine predisposition of much experimental poetry

3 As is well known, Pound praised what he considered to be Moore's „masculine" traits. In the following excerpt from a letter (sent to Moore in February 1919), he also imagines himself to have acquired "femininity" by means of achieving "chaotic fluidity." Quite predictably, the attention quickly shifts to Moore's body and Pound's fantasy about its skin color:

> You , my dear correspondent ,
> are a stabilized female ,
> I am a male who has attained the chaotic fluidities ;
>
> our mutual usefulness
> is open to the gravest suspicions of non-existence, but
> nevertheless , also , and notwithstanding all this ,
> I am glad that you are red-headed and not
> wooled , dark , ethiopian .
>
> It would have been a test case :
> you dark , nubian ethiopian : could I
> have risen to it ; could I m ,
> perceiving the intelligence from a distance ,
> have got over the Jim Crow law

"Doggerel Section of Letter to Marianne Moore," 363; punctuation and spelling irregularities are Pound's.

have been subject to extensive analysis.[4] However, it is important to note that it is precisely the "feminine" quality of Moore's work that makes it innovative in its own unique way, not least because of how Moore's ambivalence towards the ethos of high modernism shapes her responses to the material world, both human and inhuman and, as a consequence, because of how it influences her style.

It is interesting to look closely at the terms of Bryher's review. In short, this critic believes that Moore's poetry lacks the spirit of conquest. If Moore is a Marco Polo, that is to say, an explorer and a discoverer, she is one that has not yet set forth on her, or rather, *his*, journeys. Bryher's reading of Moore revolves around the binary opposition between the feminine realm of the homely and the masculine realm of conquest or seduction. Rather than taking up her sword and triumphing over new kingdoms, Moore decides to stay at home, even though the spirit of her work is, in Bryher's words again, "that of a man with facts and countries to discover and not that of a woman sewing at tapestries" (209). That "sewing at tapestries" should be the antithesis of art is of course considered by Bryher, as by the majority of modernist poets, as a dogma. Moore's work is thus characterized as a mixture of the "masculine" spirit of innovation, and the "feminine" sense of obligation towards home.

However, the absence of the impulse to conquer and subdue, which complicates Moore's relationship with the predominantly masculine mainstream of modernist poetry, is not a flaw but, on the contrary, a particular strength of Moore's poetics. In a recent book on vibrant materiality, Jane Bennett has proposed to develop a "perceptual style" open to the fact of activity and aliveness of beings and things around us. Bennet defines this perceptual style as an openness to "the appearance of thing power" (5), a development of H.D. Thoreau's precept that one should always be looking at what is to be seen.[5] It is possible to argue that eight decades before Bennett's book Moore was already developing that kind of style, a style which made it possible for her to poetically present the "facts and

4 Even though the artistic society of New York granted women quite a lot of freedom and independence (see, e.g. Cristanne Miller), the relative social equality between the genders did not translate into artistic practices of the majority of poets of the time. Moore's ways of dealing with femininity in the inhospitable context of avant-garde poetry of her time, which she nevertheless found very compelling, have been discussed for instance by Elizabeth Oliver and Bonnie Costello.

5 "No method or discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen?" (*Walden* 187).

countries" she came into contact with, while respecting their autonomy more than the autonomy of her poems, or even their status as "poetry." Moore's work is always looking towards the world external to language, though it is important to add that ultimately there is no sense of rupture in her poetry between language and material reality. Her writing does not focus on itself but, on the contrary, on what is not itself, on what is, and must always remain, other and strange, though not necessarily unspeakable or non-speaking, and certainly not passive. Her work is, to use a currently fashionable phrase, "object oriented" in the most radical way.

Moore's observation skills are famous and have frequently been praised. Elizabeth Bishop, Moore's friend and disciple, writing in 1948 referred to Moore as "The World's Greatest Living Observer" (680). In Bishop's view Moore's descriptive style was unmatched and the satisfaction it offered the reader came from Moore's "being able to give herself up entirely to the object under contemplation" (682). In the words of Josh A. Weinstein, it is thus possible to conclude that Moore's poetics is "a poetics of humility" (373). She is not a conquistador assuming dominion over new territories but—a hostess. The creatures inhabiting her poetry are not turned into hostages of her imagination, rather, as many critics have already noted, there is a constant interplay of the imagination and the real in her work,[6] or, as I am going to claim, the literary imagination is not perceived by Moore as discontinuous with reality.

Moore's poetics of humility is linked with her strong tendency towards self-effacement, even though her style, for instance her complex prosody, is an inevitable mark of the presence of the artist. Yet, the artist that she is is not a romantic egoist but someone genuinely interested in what is external to the ego or, more broadly, to human subjectivity, thus making the poetry hospitable, like Noah's ark, to all kinds of beings, both human and non-human, as well as to various discourses, for instance that of natural sciences. Moreover, as Weinstein notices, Moore "affords ethical status to all elements of the natural world" (375), or, as Bishop perhaps too narrowly put it, she has an "amazingly uncondenscending feeling for animals" (685). These qualities of Moore's work make Bonnie Costello conclude that even though "Moore's poetry predates the environmental movement by several decades … it shares some of its prominent themes." Those themes are: "a disdain for human rapacity, plunder, and anthropocentrism, a celebration of nature's variety, economy and ingenuity" (133). Her interest in the natural world along with her refusal to either imaginatively "conquer" or pastoralize it make it possible to see Moore as a forerunner of

6 See, for instance, Blackmur, Costello.

what is today known as ecopoetics, or what Weinstein calls a "confluence of form and content" (373)[7] in the service of a work of witnessing to the marvelous if somewhat uncanny fact that the world exists and can be experienced. As Bishop put it, Moore expresses in her writing a sense that natural things "exist to be loved and honored" (682) and that it is poetry's duty to express this knowledge.

Speaking about the duty of the poet is of course problematic, and even Bishop signals a sense of discomfort with Moore's sense of obligation that "shows through a little plainly" (683). The idea that poetry might have a responsibility outside of itself is certainly incompatible with the elitist understanding of poetry as the highest form of literary art and with the New Critical idea that art is an autonomous realm. On the other hand, however, one does find reflections concerning the obligations of poetry in the writings of other modernist writers as well. For instance, in "The Serious Artist," Ezra Pound famously claimed that bad art is immoral because it is "inaccurate," it "makes false reports" (43), thus implicitly equating good art with truthfulness. However, for Pound, art's truth-telling obligation is restricted to humans. "The arts give us a great percentage of the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of man, of immaterial man, of man considered as a thinking and sentient creature. They begin where the science of medicine leaves off or rather they overlap that science" (42). As a continuation of "the science of medicine," art is concerned with human beings. It could perhaps be assumed that where medicine deals primarily with the body, "the arts" are concerned with the spirit. Truth, in Pound's understanding, is spiritual and anthropocentric.[8] In contrast, the sense

7 As Jonathan Skinner and others have noticed the term ecopoetics is more widely used than discussed. Nevertheless, there seem to be two main usages of the term. Sometimes ecopoetics is understood as "the making and study of pastoral poetry, or poetry of wilderness and deep ecology" or "poetry that confronts disasters and environmental injustices, including the difficulties and opportunities of urban environments." The other usage does not link ecopoetics with the theme but focuses on "how certain poetic methods model ecological processes like complexity, non-linearity, feedback loops, and recycling" or "how poetic experimentation complements scientific methods in extending a more reciprocal relation to alterity—ecopotics as a 'poethics'" (Skinner). Even though the themes of Moore's poems are often linked with non-human nature, it is the second understanding of ecopoetics that can be more meaningfully applied to her world.

8 The scope of this essay does not allow for a discussion of Pound's treatment of non-human nature, ranging from very traditional pastoralism (for instance, in Canto 49), through the reiteration of the image of nature-as-woman or woman-as-nature (for instance in the

of obligation present in Moore's poetry is not exclusively, or perhaps even not primarily, oriented toward human beings and it does not necessarily focus on the spirit. Her understanding of truth might be anthropomorphic, but it is not anthropocentric: the world depicted in her "observations" is teeming with independent and active non-human presences. The accuracy of her poems is a linguistic accuracy, but it concerns something more than language and the imagination, reaching out towards the real: not the "Lacanian" real of the human psyche, but the pragmatic real of the natural sciences. Moore's work oversteps the boundaries of poetry or even literature as such,[9] and perhaps that is the reason why Moore's poems are, according to some critics, not "eminent" enough to count as poetry. They lack the spirit of conquest or, to refer to Pound again, "perfect control" (49), they are something else than pure art. Pound complained about the traces of emotion found in Moore's work, even though he famously praised it as *logopoeia,* or "a dance of the intelligence among words." This is how he wrote about Moore's (and Mina Loy's) work in 1918:

> These two contributors to the 'Others' Anthology write *logopoeia*—poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of ideas and characters. It is, in their case, the utterance of clever people in despair, or hovering upon the brink of that precipice. . . . It is a mind cry, more than a heart cry. 'Take the world if thou wilt but leave me an asylum for my affection' is not their lamentation, but rather 'In the midst of this desolation, give me at least one intelligence to converse with.' (*Literary Essays* 424)

early poem „A Girl", alluding to the story of Daphne's transormation into a tree as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), to the representations of non-human nature in "Pisan" Cantos where, as I have attempted to demonstrate in a different article, the speaker's subjectivity is figured as post-pastoral (Fiedorczuk). Suffice it to say that, even though non-human nature appears in some of Pound's most compelling poems testifying to the poets' proto-environmental awareness, on the whole it is human history, politics and spirituality which constitute the main preoccupation of his writing.

9 In a recent discussion about ecopoetics, Jonathan Skinner emphasized that ecopoetry's aspiration is to transcend the condition of textuality: "one important aspect of ecopoetics entails what happens *off* the page, in terms of where the work is sited and performed, as well as what methods of composition, or *de*composition, precede and follow the poem" (Hume 760). In the case of Marianne Moore, her careful study of botanics and zoology is part of the ecopoetical process which happens "*off* the page."

While all of this is true about Pound's own poetry, it is not really an accurate description of Moore's work. To be sure, "[a] dance of the intelligence among words" is a handy formulation, but it will fit any piece of writing that the critic judges as intelligent. That Moore's poetry is "akin" to many things outside of language is already quite clear even in her very early poems, moreover, that seems to be the very quality responsible for her lack of "eminence," or "modernity." The following lines form the opening of "Critics and connoisseurs":

> There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious
> fastidiousness. Certain Ming
> products, imperial floor coverings of coach—
> wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I have seen
> something
> that I like better—a
> mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly bal-
> lasted animal stand up,
> similar determination to make a pup
> eat his meat from the plate. (*Complete Poems* 38)

The prosody of this fragment has both a musical and a visual effect.[10] The stanza consists of nine syllabic lines of roughly two lengths, where the long lines consist of 11 to 14 syllables and the short ones—of 6 to 7 syllables. Generally the long and the short lines alternate, but there is one exception: the fourth line of the poem is long instead of short, and it consists of as many as 17 syllables, thus standing out against the relatively regular prosody of the whole stanza. The effect of this intervention is an acceleration of the pace of the poem, as if the speaking suddenly became an urgent issue and the speaker wanted to finish one part of a sentence ("but I have seen something") in order to move to the next one. Perhaps it is in places like this one that Pound detects the disagreeable presence of emotion, so strong that it causes the line to spill over and produces an almost impish effect of a playful presence just barely hidden behind the regular surface of the poem and completely disobedient to its rules.

But play is a serious thing, as proved by poetic things the speaker "likes better" than the otherwise very admirable "Ming / products," for instance: "a / mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly bal- / lasted animal stand up."

10 Moore's poems sometimes exist in multiple versions. In this analysis I am referring to the poem as printed in *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*, 1967).

The image conveys a mixture of playfulness and gravity and a sense of continuity between biological necessity (the "imperfectly bal- / lasted animal" has to stand up) and artistry (it requires effort, it is poetry). The unexpected line-break in the middle of the word "ballasted" in this version of the poem[11] is justified by the count of the syllables (14 and 7 respectively in the two lines under discussion) but also, the interrupted word aptly illustrates the "imperfect ballast" in which natural poetry is found. The part of the word which ends line 6—"bal-"—is shorter and, because of the association with a "ball," it is also *rounder*, one might have the impression that it is moving and about to roll down the dash which follows it. The part of the word moved (as if it was pushed over) to the beginning of line 7—"lasted"—is longer and, because of the association with "lasting" it is also more stable. The way in which these lines are arranged enacts the act of balancing: it is a combination of movement and stability, of lawlessness and order which has to reassert itself over and over again. It is important to add that the same terms describe Moore's prosody. Her style is not a *re*presentation but a presentation, an enactment of the interplay of chaos and design found in nature.

It is even more difficult to understand why Pound should consider Moore's work as a "mind cry." None of the poems printed in *Others* convey anything even remotely related to "despair" simply because the speaker in Moore's poems is hardly ever narcissistically experiencing her own psychological states. In an attitude of hospitability, the consciousness of the speaker is turned outwards, allowing life to reaffirm itself in it and through it. If there is a "victory" in Moore's poems, it is not of the kind Bryher encouraged her to pursue. It is not the victory of a Marco Polo, or of art over its material but of a living co-existence of phenomena usually considered as antithetical, for instance—of nature and art.

The most explicit expression of the conviction that the task of poetry is not to achieve autonomy but, to the contrary, to give expression to the continuity between natural *poiesis* and human artifice is formulated in "Poetry," one of Moore's best known and most frequently discussed works. First published in 1919, the 38-line-long poem subsequently underwent significant revisions, to be reduced, in the version published in 1935 to the following three lines:

11 From *Collected Poems* (1967). It is important to note that other versions of the poem exist also. Lines 6–7 are sometimes printed as a single line (which then becomes the longest and the most emotionally 'excessive' line of the poem), other versions introduce the line-break in a different place. However, the eccentricity of this particular prosodic arrangement allows one to conclude that it was in keeping with the poets' intention.

> I, too, dislike it.
>
> Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine. (*Complete Poems* 36)

However, the original version of the poem was included in the notes of the book and it is the version as printed in the notes to the *Selected Poems* (1935) and, subsequently, in *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* (1967), that I will refer to in my analysis. The beginning of the original version reads as follows:

> I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
> Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine. (*Complete Poems* 266)

The opening refers to the fragment in *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler* where Butler records a conversation with a boy who claims to dislike poetry (Bloom 71), but of course it also serves to acknowledge the fact that there exists a large community of readers whose disposition is likewise antipathetic towards this literary form. As a response from a poet one might expect some kind of "a defense of poetry," but if "Poetry" is a defense, it is paradoxical to say the least. It begins with the confession: "I, too, dislike it." Moore admits that poetry can be unattractive or even worthy of contempt as "all this fiddle," that is to say, playing around with sounds and meanings. However, the seemingly trifling activity of verse-making becomes not only important but even urgent once "a place for the genuine" is discovered in it. The "genuine" is left unexplained in the shortened version of the poem but the longer text gives us a catalog of very palpable examples:

> Hands that can grasp, eyes
> that can dilate, hair that can rise
> if it must, these things are important not because a
>
> high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are useful. (266–267)

The word "useful" placed prominently at the beginning of the line comes as a surprise. One does not tend to think about the effects of poetry in terms of their usefulness, as usefulness is at odds with the notion of the sublime, the "natural," it would seem, territory of poetry. Moore's evocation of the usefulness

of poetry is clearly a way of responding to the accusation that verse-making is mere "fiddle." It is worth noticing, however, that the usefulness of the genuine things listed in the preceding lines has more in common with, referring to Bryher again, the spirit of "a woman sewing at tapestries" than with that of "a man with facts and countries to discover." Nevertheless, "the genuine" is at the same time not unrelated to Pound's "accuracy" and Riding's "truth," even though the reverberations of Moore's term are different because of her emphasis on usefulness. Still, "eyes that can dilate" are eyes presented so accurately and truthfully in a poem that they are not different from real eyes. "The genuine" comes into being when the barrier between reality and poetry dissolves, which is to say, when we begin to understand that it has never been absolute. There is no sudden rupture between the material reality of the world and the linguistic creativity of the poet. Language, too, is material, and it can also be "useful." "Hands," "hair" and "eyes" are "useful" both outside of the text and within it, if the text, in all its artfulness, knows how to evoke "the genuine." This involves both the preservation of what already exists and the creation of something new. In Moore's ecopoetics, preservation and innovation are not opposed to each other, which complicates its relationship with modernism even further. As noted by John M. Slatin, Moore often refuses to takes sides and sometimes "apparently irreconcilable positions are brought into combination" in her work (Bloom 83), for instance—modernism and conservatism. But if modernism is related to innovation and conservatism to preservation, it is important to note that they are "irreconcilable" only within the conceptual framework which equates innovation with destruction as avant-garde poetry often, in fact, does.

In the subsequent parts of the poem, the truthfulness of good poetry is contrasted, rather authoritatively, with the activity of "half-poets," one more testimony to the fact that Moore, like most of her contemporaries, believed in the elitist character of poetry, in spite of her own writing's radically anti-elitist import:

> One must
> make a distinction
> however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the
> result is not poetry,
> nor till the poets among us can be
> 'literalists of
> the imagination'—above
> insolence and triviality and can present
>
> for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them,'
> shall we have
> it. (267)

The above fragment has received a lot of critical attention, with many commentators wondering what it means for poets to be "literalists of the imagination" and usually concluding that the phrase is, at least ostensibly, oxymoronic. It is important to point out that the formulation is borrowed from W. B. Yeats' critique of Blake, where Yeats expressed dissatisfaction with Blake's excessive adherence to his visions at the cost of style (Bloom 74). Moore obviously disagrees with Yeats and demands that poets be not less but more "literal": only then will they be able to present "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

Going against the majority of critical responses to "Poetry," I would like to propose that there is no contradiction in demanding both literalness and imagination at the same time, in fact, to demand both of them is less strange than Moore herself might have thought. If a literal rendering of an imaginary vision produces "real toads," it simply means that imagination and reality are not opposed but continuous, in stark negation of T. S. Eliot's famous claim, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that "the difference between art and event is always absolute" (27). In fact, it is a verdict such as Eliot's that should be considered strange. Such an opinion as his could only be formulated in the context of the philosophical tradition equating language's primary function with representation, where *re*-presentation must always aspire to, but never reach, the condition of presence. But such a dualistic understanding of language has now become obsolete. As intuited by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and demonstrated by cognitivism, the essence of language might as well be understood as expression, and not as representation. Language creates presence, causes things to happen, signals the experiential parameters of a given speaking body. As Graham Harman[12] and other object oriented philosophers have argued, human creativity, including linguistic creativity, is not exceptional and not qualitatively different from the natural creativity of other material things. One might point out that human language has a tendency to anthropomorphize experience and of course this fact is impossible to negate. But, again, the inclination to anthropomorphism does not make humans or human activities exceptional. As Timoty Morton put it, "[j]ust as I fail to avoid anthropomorphizing everything, so all entities whatsoever constantly translate other objects into their own terms" (207). In other words, toads do not become less real for being seen by human eyes, or by those of a dog or a fly, nor is there any reason to suppose that one of those perspectives or some other perspective should be able to produce an exhaustive experience of those strange amphibians. The intuition expressed in Moore's poem is that the task of the imagination is to reconnect words with

12 See, for instance, Harman's *Guerilla Metaphysics*.

life and thus to prevent the narcissistic proliferation of poetic "fiddle" which experiences nothing but itself.

"Bad art is art that makes false reports," said Ezra Pound. For Moore, bad, self-preoccupied poetry makes things "become so derivative as to become / unintelligible." No one could like *that*, because "we / do not admire what / we cannot understand" (*Complete Poems* 267). However, it is not complexity that makes poetry unintelligible but lack of truthfulness. It is quite possible to write in an ostensibly lucid way, but if "the genuine" is missing the writing will ultimately be incomprehensible simply because it will not communicate, it will be perfectly solipsistic.

> Moore's list of possibly genuine things is famously inclusive:
> the bat
> holding on upside down or in quest of something to
>
> eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf
> under
> a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that
> feels a flea, the base-
> ball fan, the statistician—
> nor is it valid
> to discriminate against 'business documents and
>
> school books'; all these phenomena are important. (267)

Both human and inhuman phenomena are equally crucial. Moore does not introduce any hierarchy among the elements of the world and, once again, makes the boundaries of poetry permeable by defending "business documents and / school books" against Tolstoy's disparaging treatment of these things as the antithesis of poetry, however broadly understood.[13] Poetry is found everywhere imagination is found, that is to say, whenever words preserve their connections with life.

Moore's ecopoetics is thus a way of knowing. She is not very much interested in inventing a new reality, rather, she uses creativity in service of the reality which already exists. Unlike Pound, she does not think the knowledge available

13 Moore refers to Tolstoy's diary, where he writes: "Where the boundary between prose and poetry lies, I shall never be able to understand. The question is raised in manuals of style, yet the answer to it lies beyond me. Poetry is verse: prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books" (73).

through poetry is limited to human affairs. Her interest in the non-human world, fueled by her extensive reading in scientific literature, is coupled with humility. In sharp contrast with the instrumental rationality of much western science, Moore does not turn its objects into laboratory specimens. Her poems do not kill or destroy, they seek connection with that which escapes analytical examination, that is to say, with the living "flesh of the world," to use Merleau-Ponty's formulation. And even though Moore shared the modernist poets' faith in the elitist character of poetry, her own writing does not aspire to uniqueness or superiority over other things or discourses. Her poems are also part and parcel of the flesh of experience, they belong to the same ontological plane as the objects she presents. In some of her poems about animals, for instance in "The Pangolin," the equality of the speaking subject and the observed animal is expressed through the poet's use of humor. In the words of Rachel Trousdale, "Moore's humor is not ridicule, even if it borrows some of ridicule's techniques; instead, she treats laughter as a starting point for respect and serious mutual understanding" (123). Like the imagination, humor, too, is a matter of collaboration, not of competence, it is a laughing *with* someone whose otherness cannot ever be exhausted, not a laughing *at* someone who is thus reduced to an object of ridicule.

Moore's attitude towards the non-human protagonists of her poems is persuasively expressed in "Jellyfish," brief enough to be quoted in its entirety:

> Visible, invisible,
> a fluctuating charm
> an amber-tinctured amethyst
> inhabits it, your arm
> approaches and it opens
> and it closes; you had meant
> to catch it and it quivers;
> you abandon your intent. (180)

Perhaps it is the poet who "approaches" the jellyfish through her attempts to describe it as "a fluctuating charm" inhabited by "an amber-tinctured amethyst." The description, though surely anthropomorphic, is accurate but, as every description, it is incomplete. As the poet approaches, the jellyfish "opens" and "closes," and the two actions can be understood as either sequential or simultaneous. The line "and it closes; you had meant" aligns the withdrawal of the jellyfish into the uncanny independence of its unique existence with the human intent which can be understood as an inclination towards mastery. The next staccato line, built almost exclusively out of monosyllabic words, aligns "catch it" with "quivers."

The line is difficult to read without stuttering, which makes it almost possible to experience the jellyfish's quivering in one's own body. As a result of this emphatic undoing of subjective boundaries, it is no longer possible for the human observer to maintain the position of mastery: Marco Polo must abandon his journeys and, why not, take up embroidery. With its patterns of distant landscapes and exotic animals rendered with the clumsiness necessitated by nature of this art, his tapestries will perhaps be just as good as poems.

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Marta Kmiecik

"Does it seem I … poet-wit? Shame on me then!": Laura (Riding) Jackson's Refusal to Play the Game of Poetry

Je est un autre.
–Arthur Rimbaud

As of the beginning of the twenty-first century we can certainly speak about the revival of Laura (Riding) Jackson's work. In 2001 Persea Books published a revised edition of her 1938 *Collected Poems*. The first years of the new century also saw *Anarchism Is Not Enough* (University of California Press, 2001), her seminal collection of essays, and two works she co-authored with Robert Graves: *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* and *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies* (Carcanet, 2002). Younger scholars have started to take interest in this once controversial figure, and for good reasons. This article aims to show how (Riding) Jackson's awareness of the difficulty of objectifying "I" in the poem, awareness that she gained through the process of writing poetry, contributed to her dismissal of poetry as a decorative rhetorical strategy and how her *practice of poetry* proved this very assumption wrong. (Riding) Jackson's *poetic practice* stems from a paradox: suspicious as she became of what poetry was in fact capable of expressing, she could hardly articulate these concerns outside poetry. Hence, she proved poetry, a *truthful lie*, to be a coherent and successful metacritique of itself and its own limitations and possibilities.

The fact that (Riding) Jackson had argued against poetry long before she finally renounced it, as Michael A. Masopust notices (48), and that it was precisely poetry that provided a territory for that struggle means that (Riding) Jackson's poetry was very much in concert with the modernist project, which, as philosopher Charles Taylor argues in his work *Sources of the Self*, defied the nineteenth-century romantic vision of the self placed within nature and defined in relation to what was empirically available to the subject (848). Modernist writers, starting from Baudelaire's times, presented nature as an amoral force, strange to the subjectivity of the self. In order to find the truth about the self, they tended toward the exploration of the internal realm and the extent to which comprehending it was dependent on language**.** Also, they realized that their experience of what was external to the self was never direct, but rather mediated, and inaccessible in its

entirety. Taylor argues that these factors gave birth to the epoch of the decentralization of the subject (850). Yet, modernists were aware of the contradictions inherent in their thinking about the subject: they still wanted to somehow relate the textual construct "I" they laid bare to the empirical reality, already knowing that not only did they perceive the world through the forms they themselves created, but that it was precisely those forms that enabled them to experience it (870). Out of such a conflict, there emerges a tension that underlies the nature-self-text axis. Laura (Riding) Jackson's poetry explores this tension.

I read (Riding) Jackson's Self in the context of the Self-world, and subsequently, Self-text conflict. As a poet, she is primarily concerned with the question of the poetic subject as *never quite the Self*—in other words, she identifies poetry as the process of (re)writing the Self, the result of which is always an approximation of the Self, a certain textual performance. According to her philosophy in the period preceding her rejection of poetry, "[a] poem [wa]s an uncovering of truth of so fundamental and general a kind that no other name besides poetry is adequate except truth" (*Poems* 484). This poem=truth equation was a central element of her initial reasoning. She understood truth as "the result when reality as a whole [wa]s uncovered by those faculties which apprehend in terms of entirety, rather than in terms merely of parts" (*Poems* 484), and she was positive that the poem could be such an uncovering. In other words, she did not view the fact that the poem was a *kind of medium* as problematic. Rather, she was convinced that its *artifice* was *not artificial*, which meant that it constituted *the only possible linguistic arrangement* through which the uncovering could happen. What has to be stressed is the poet's deep belief in the transcendental nature of language as a carrier of *truth* and her own nearly mystical experience of it. That is why for (Riding) Jackson poetry was first and foremost a certain moral imperative. Upon her discovery that she had misjudged the potential of the poetic medium, which she began to view as a well-crafted lie designed to manipulate the reader and keep her/him away from the truth, (Riding) Jackson put forward the concept of the "I-thing" that was to correspond to *what happened* to the subject within the space of poetry. Importantly, the poet never ceased to believe in language as a prospective medium that could produce true meanings.[1] The difficulty that my

1 After her renunciation of poetry, (Riding) Jackson started working on two language-centered philosophical prose projects: *The Telling* and *Rational Meaning: Toward a New Foundation of Words*, a peculiar dictionary of "intrinsic" meanings she had been putting together for several years with her husband, Schuyler B. Jackson until his death in 1968. She later carried on compiling it on her own. Although never officially finished, the work was published in 1997.

work points to is that once (Riding) Jackson started to feel uneasy about her belief in poetry as an art that corresponds to the purity of language rather than to the utility of discourse, she remained torn between the "I" and the "I-thing": the Self and its approximation, its mirror image reflected in the poem.

In the first part of this article I am going to analyze what at first was the attraction of poetry for (Riding) Jackson and what possibilities it presented. Poetry provided, according to (Riding) Jackson, a chance to present reality and the subject immersed in it the way they really were. Then, I am going to show how the poet came to the conclusion that the only thing poetry actually offered was its failure to grasp reality and the Self and, as a result, the only thing that could emerge from the text was the approximation of both the real and the Self. In other words, the text presented their discursive enactments—the results of their textual transformations.

For (Riding) Jackson, language, in the process of writing, becomes both the very *subject* and the *object* of poetry. Hence her poetry could be described as both *metapoetic* and *metalinguistic*. Jerome McGann notices that "her writing is a continuation of modernism's constructivist line (Pound, William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky), which emphasized word-as-such" (466). For (Riding) Jackson, "words-as-such" are crucial, since they are to reflect thoughts. In her early theoretical work, (Riding) Jackson argues that words are the only material out of which *the truth of poetry in its integrity* is made; she refuses to isolate words as independent *matter* of poetry that itself generates autonomous meanings. She dismisses such an employment of language as burdened with additional semantic suggestions, which she finds distracting from the truth poetry is supposed to render. As early as in her sketch from the 1928 *Anarchism Is Not Enough* she notices:

> Language is a form of laziness; the word is a compromise between what is possible to express and what is not possible to express. That is, expression itself is a form of laziness. The cause of expression is incomplete powers of understanding and communication: unevenly distributed intelligence. Language does not attempt to affect this distribution; it accepts the inequality and makes possible a mathematical intercourse between the degrees of intelligence occurring in an average range. The degrees of intelligence at each extreme are thus naturally neglected: and yet they are obviously the most important. (13)

This passage indicates that (Riding) Jackson's interests as thinker and poet revolved around the nature of language from the very beginning of her literary career. Moreover, the poet had already at that time been aware that there indeed existed things "not possible to express." It can be inferred that they were conceptualized

by the poet in her mind and located in thought. The task of language was to translate the abstraction of thought into the actuality of words so that the truth could be articulated *into* the real world. In the late 1920s, (Riding) Jackson still believed, although not without reservations, that poetry as a thought-processing activity had some potential for this:

> Poetry is an attempt to make language do more than express; to make it work; to redistribute intelligence by the means of the word. If it succeeds in this the problem of communication disappears. It does not treat this problem as a matter of mathematical distribution of intelligence between an abstract known and unknown represented in a concrete knower and not-knower. The distribution must take place, if at all, within the intelligence itself. Prose evades this problem by making slovenly equations which always seem successful because, being inexact, they conceal inexactness. Poetry always faces, and generally meets with, failure. But even if it fails, it is at least at the heart of the difficulty, which it treats not as a difficulty of minds but of mind. (*Anarchism* 14)

In this passage (Riding) Jackson acknowledges the very struggle that takes place in the process of writing poetry. She points to what she once believed to be the feature that distinguished poetry from other arts: its potential as an asocial force capable of transgressing the socially utilitarian, which brought poetry as close as possible to "the literal truth," as McGann puts it (461). That truth, (Riding) Jackson once believed, could be enacted within language. In his prefatory note to *Rational Meaning: Toward a New Foundation of Words*, the work (Riding) Jackson co-authored with her husband, Schuyler B. Jackson, Charles Bernstein argues that

> the Jacksons reject any external or transcendental vantage point from which language would acquire its truths. They return us, again and again, to language as an enactment, a telling. Truth, in this light, is never exterior to language (there is no extra-linguistic, 'independent' reality), just as different languages are not exterior, but rather, interior, to each other. (114)

Truth lies *within* language; language is where truth is to be sought. The real is supposed to be found in language. Language, especially in the form of poetry, gives us direct access to the way the real is. The art of poetry is the art of the real. To further demonstrate how much (Riding) Jackson initially believed poetry to be invested in the real, I would like to pay special attention to one of the poet's sketches from *Anarchism* entitled "Poetry and Music" in which she sets forth her views on what poetry is in relation to music. She explains why poetry should

not be thought of as an art closest to music as far as its artistic expression is concerned. Her argument in this essay best exemplifies the difference between art as a social force intended to please and art as an asocial force invested in the truth, and I find this distinction central to her original poetics.

(Riding) Jackson argues that it is common practice to describe music employing the language of poetry and to describe poetry by borrowing phrases from the jargon of music. She objects to such "musification" (32) of poetry, as she calls it, stating that the nature of poetry is that of an asocial phenomenon, whereas the nature of music is that of "chicanery" performed in front of an audience, which implies that music is an "art" (33), and thus a social phenomenon. Having pointed out several other differences between poetry and music, (Riding) Jackson makes a distinction at another, deeper level—that of what art is and what poetry is. "Art" is juxtaposed by (Riding) Jackson with "'pure' poetry" which, according to her, is "made out of nothing by a nobody" (33, 32, 34). If poetry is written to flatter an audience or critics, then, as an "art," it equals music. For (Riding) Jackson, "pure poetry" is "metaphysically musical," that is it involves the reader intellectually, instead of manipulatively playing on his/her emotions. Thus, the poet points to an "art" as a phenomenon that has a "social source" (32, 33); in other words, all that is "art" is socially utilitarian. She confronts these general assumptions with her self-conscious analysis of several differences between poetry and music.

First, the poet calls musicians "physically misshapen" (33). The metaphor implies that music is incapable of existing asocially, because an audience has certain expectations of the performer which he or she has to meet to be accepted. Therefore, the aim of a musical work is success and flattery. Then (Riding) Jackson claims that the language of "pure poetry" is "unsystematizable" (34) and idiosyncratic, which her aforementioned statement, calling for a repetition here, proves: "a poem is made out of nothing by a nobody." The composer uses a set of patterns and formulas that have nothing to do with the real and that predefine him as an artist to compose his work. Music plays on emotions, its aim is to "give pleasure to the mind." Poetry does not affect its readers in that way: its end does not create any pleasant effect—it is nothing but an "immediate insistence on itself," the very opposite of what music is. Poetry is the "absolutism of dissatisfaction"; the reader is always brought to a point "beyond which the consciousness itself cannot go," while music, considered by (Riding) Jackson an "experience," one lives through, even if conceived of as sad and tragic, evokes all kinds of moods that—paradoxically—make the listener still derive pleasure from it. Such aesthetic satisfaction is called by the poet "the vulgarity of satisfaction" (35–36). Poetry is defined against music as an isolating force, which is what

makes it recommendable. By an isolating force (Riding) Jackson means a quality that defies social adaptation and distortion, something that by nature cannot be utilized by society and its mechanisms.

As an asocial force, poetry was supposed to be an enactment of the Self. However, as time passed and her poetics evolved, (Riding) Jackson seemed to change her mind, and claimed that she had misjudged the asocial potential of poetry. Poetry, just like human communication, turned out to contain concealed, non-verbal messages. In a poem entitled "Hospitality to Words," (Riding) Jackson elaborates on the question of the discursive nature of communication. Speaking to someone, uttering words is like pulling the concepts out of one's thoughts and forcing them into an utterance, which is a form of social communication burdened with hidden meanings. Writing poetry is an analogous process:

> How mad for friendliness
> Creep words from where they shiver and starve,
> Small and far away in thought,
> Untalkative and outcast. (*Poems* 70)

The poet comes to realize that the true meanings of words are "far away in thought / Untalkative and outcast" from discourse. Another example comes from "Poet: A Lying Word:"

> Does it seem I ring, I sing, I rhyme, I poet-wit? Shame on me then! Grin me your foulest humor then of poet-piety, your eyes rolled up in white hypocrisy—should I be one sprite more of your versed fame—or turned from me into your historied brain, where the lines are more actual. Shame on me then! (*Poems* 237)

This passage aptly illustrates what Charles Bernstein calls (Riding) Jackson's "longing for rootedness in language's intrinsic meanings." It was this longing that led her to a radical denunciation of poetry as an art most likely to lie because of its frequent employment of metaphor and other stylistic figures that detach words either from their designates or their "true" meaning. In this way, poets are counterfeiters who produce a counterfeit version of a universal linguistic reality. What (Riding) Jackson also stresses is her concern with the history of the (mis)use of words, which belongs to the social sphere of language usage. Together with it, the poet indirectly questions conventional order and social hierarchy—the two main factors responsible for the shaping of the linguistic code. This is the moment when (Riding) Jackson finally dismisses poetry as merely another manifestation

of social discourse. However, it has to be emphasized again that she still believes that there is a possibility for a "pure" language to exist *outside poetry*, the kind of language that can *tell* the Self.

Having demonstrated the potential of poetry, the reasons for its eventual failure, and the concept of "pure language," I will move on to discuss how the anxiety accompanying these discoveries is expressed in the very poems. The moment (Riding) Jackson started to become aware of poetry's insufficiencies, her verse turned out to be a *wonderful* display for those "inadequacies." That the language of poetry falsifies the universal truth is the most obvious of poetry's deficiencies, according to (Riding) Jackson. However, it cannot escape notice that due to the close engagement of poetry with the concept of subjectivity, and the subject itself, there emerges the problem of the speaking persona and its relation to the Self. I believe the nature of this interconnection, as it has been explored by (Riding) Jackson, to be the main factor that led to her final abandonment of poetry.

Before I concentrate specifically on this interconnection, I would like to make a few remarks on the process of comprehending the external reality by the human subject in (Riding) Jackson's poems. What kind of reality is it that is accessible to the human subject? In the poem "The World and I" (Riding) Jackson shows the ways in which the Self clashes with the "approximation" of reality evident in a linguistic enactment of the poem. The poet recognizes that the subject's comprehension of reality is defined by language, and thus reality in itself becomes its linguistic mirror image. Yet the Self does not get translated into this reality, it cannot place itself within it:

> This is not exactly what I mean
> Any more than the sun is the sun.
> But how to mean more closely
> If the sun shines but approximately?
> What a world of awkwardness!
> What hostile implements of sense!
> Perhaps this is as close a meaning
> As perhaps becomes such knowing.
> Else I think the world and I
> Must live together as strangers and die—
> A sour love, each doubtful whether
> Was ever a thing to love the other.
> No, better for both to be nearly sure
> Each of each—exactly where
> Exactly I and exactly the world
> Fail to meet by a moment, and a word. (*Poems* 198)

Before I move on to discuss the passage, the poet's definition of the truth requires repetition: "[t]ruth is the result when reality as a whole is uncovered by those faculties which apprehend in terms of entirety, rather than in terms merely of parts" (*Poems* 484). Truth emerges as a result of the subject's collision with the external reality, and thus manifests itself in the subject's comprehension, or making sense of, this reality. First, reality is uncovered by the Self, and subsequently this uncovering can be possibly channeled into language in a manner that would most literally describe the experience. The very uncovering with the participation of the Self, however, has the nature of an extralinguistic epiphany. In this way, the subject is always "a word behind" the Self. This implies that the poet acknowledges the linguistic mediation of reality from the position of the Self that is not entirely immersed in language. She claims that there is, indeed, "a moment" in which the subject stays outside the linguistic reality, in the pre-linguistic world of the Self. That moment happens right before the Self's collision with *the word*, "a compromise between what is possible to express and what is not possible to express" (*Anarchism* 13), in which the subject's failure to meet the world is manifested.

The poet recognizes that there, indeed, exists an experience of the Self that precedes its linguistic enactment. The poem entitled "Beyond" explores the nature of the phenomenon whose transfer from the empirical and/or sensory realm into the linguistic realm is in itself problematic and undermines the literalness of the truth that can possibly emerge from the poem:

> Pain is impossible to describe
> Pain is the impossibility of describing
> Describing what is impossible to describe
> Which must be a thing beyond description
> Beyond description not to be known
> Beyond knowing but not mystery
> Not mystery but pain not plain but pain
> But pain beyond but here beyond (*Poems* 131)

Pain, be it psychological or physical, is one of the most subjective feelings and, because of that, is accessible only to the Self in the form similar to that of the aforementioned epiphany. The difficulty (Riding) Jackson points to is whether pain, whose referent is actually a feeling contained within the subject, functions as an indicator of the existence of a possible extralinguistic subjectivity. The "beyond" is a place to which language apparently has no access, the place identifiable only with the Self. Any attempt at translating the "beyond" into lan-

guage, if possible at all, is limited to capturing "what follows" the sensory or emotional experience; in other words, the very *way* this experience is channeled into the linguistic sphere. To put it differently, the poem "grasps," or materializes within language, the moment of the sensory experience being processed by the mind. Extralinguistic "pain," the actual feeling of pain belongs to the Self and is "[b]eyond description not to be known / Beyond knowing but not a mystery." Pain can be made sense of by the mind, and it is this rationalization of pain, or its location within consciousness, that makes the feeling of pain utterable by the subject that experiences it. Once uttered, it peculiarly "leaves" the Self and gets attached to the textual "I," which suggests that pain is a borderline phenomenon.

Now, I will focus on (Riding) Jackson's enquiry into what happens to the Self exclusively in the space of *language organized into poetry*. Does it ever get translated into its own linguistic enactment within that space? (Riding) Jackson's reflections on *what poetry does to language* led her to conclude that the Self, instead of getting established within poetry as a linguistic enactment of the Self, gets destabilized, and there emerges an artificial construct previously unknown to the poet: the "I-thing." The "I-thing" is a discursive construct imposed on the Self, which (Riding) Jackson explores in the poem "Disclaimer of the Person." Written in the 1930s and included in the final part of *Collected Poems*, "Poems of the Final Occasion," "Disclaimer of the Person" is a two-part meditation on the Self's confinement within the discursive space of poetry and its inability to *get rewritten* into its direct linguistic equivalent.

In "Disclaimer of the Person," (Riding) Jackson, in an artistically brilliant way, delegitimizes the nineteenth-century identification of the poetic "I" with its creator. As Jerome McGann argues, "(Riding) Jackson made a definitive swerve from romantic 'I-centered' poetry, along with all the ideological assumptions that came with that tradition (the most important of these being the idea of the poet as genius or creator)" (466). "Disclaimer of the Person" is a recognition that the "I" the poet assumes in the poem may be nothing but an entity that annuls the Self, excluding the possibility of its linguistic enactment within the space of the poem. The first part of "Disclaimer of the Person" differs considerably from the second; in part one, the reader finds (Riding) Jackson exploring (exploiting) a somewhat limited number of phrases and word combinations. It seems as if she were trapped within a space circumscribed by language and did not wish to leave it. The poet wanders through verbal configurations, exploring what happens in between the binary opposites of the affirmative and negative statements. In fact, she frames her exploration with those polar opposites, examining the dubiousness that occurs in between. The poem opens with the following statement:

I say myself.
The beginning was that no saying was.
There was no beginning.
There is an end and there was no beginning.
There is a saying and there was no saying.
In the beginning God did not create.
There was no creation.
There was no God.
There was that I did not say.
I did not say because I could not say.
I could not say because I was not.
I was not because I am.
I am because I say.
I say myself. (*Poems* 251)

When one reads the opening line, it is hard to resist the impression that the line is a peculiar rewriting of the famous Whitmanian formulation "I celebrate myself, and sing myself" (26). (Riding) Jackson *de*constructs the formula, abandoning the nineteenth-century perspective—the poet is no longer an ultimate creator of the reality-within-the-poem. By saying "I celebrate myself" Whitman emphasized his creative powers: he, in fact, made his entire poem evolve, or revolve, around the poetic "I" whom he endowed with the creative power of the Self. In other words, within the poem the empirical Self of the poet-man and the textual "I" are united. (Riding) Jackson's opening statement signals that the reader is immediately taken into the enclosed space of language where the poem and its projection of the "I" actually take place. There emerges a tension between the textual "I" and my-Self: already in the opening sentence the "I" becomes the subject in a discourse, the agent in an utterance, whereas "myself" turns into an object—some*thing* that gets articulated by the "I." Being is for the poet conditioned by saying: "I am because I say." Without "saying" there is no "being" in poetry. "Being" in the poem is not direct; it is always mediated by "saying." And "saying" belongs to the sphere of discourse. Poetry is not a territory for the Self to project itself fully through language in order to transform itself into its linguistic counterpart. Poetry is a space in which the Self gets disguised as "I" and goes down the slide of discourse. (Riding) Jackson becomes aware of that and this is the point when her gradual departure from poetry starts for good.

More attention is paid to the status of the discursive "I" in the following passage from the second part of "Disclaimer of the Person":

This is the I, I: the I-thing.
It is a self-postponed exactitude,
An after-happening to happen come:
As closing calm is actual
By all the sooner winds, and these
Its wild own are, in heirship silent. (*Poems* 258)

The "I-thing" is a "self-postponed … after-happening"; the Self's replacement in the discursive space of the poem that operates in *a-moment-after* mode. The poet diagnoses the relationship between the two as highly problematic later in the poem, because the relation seems to open new possibilities previously unknown to her: This is that latest all-risk:

An I which mine is for the courage
No other to be, if not danger's self.
Nor did I other become, others,
In braving all-risk with hushed step,
Mind rattling veteran armories.
I thus creep upon myself
A player of two parts, as woman turns
Between the lover and beloved,
So be it well—she is herself and not,
Herself and anxious love. (*Poems* 258–9)

The poet sees herself as "[a] player of two parts": an *objectified subject*—a compromise between the subject and the object. The poem forces contradiction upon the subject: it makes the subject contradict its own subjectivity by questioning its own status as subject. Thus, the poetic discourse attempts at annulling the validity of the Self and excludes it from the space of the poem by blocking the possibility of translating it in its actuality into language.

If I my words am,
If the footed head which frowns them
And the handed heart which smiles them
Are the very writing, table, chair,
The paper, pen, self, taut community
Wherein enigma's orb is word-constrained. (*Poems* 259–60)

What if I have become writing? What if I am playing in the "word-constrained" territory?— the poet seems to be asking. Writing and being get confused on the page:

Does myself upon the page meet,
Does the thronging firm a name
To nod my own—witnessing
I write or am this, it is written?
What thinks the world?
Has here the time eclipsed occasion
Grown language-present?
Or does the world demand,
And what think I?
The world in me which fleet to disavow
Ordains perpetual reiteration?
And these the words ensuing. (*Poems* 260)

"Disclaimer of the Person" is (Riding) Jackson's most courageous venture; the venture that makes her question and reevaluate all the assumptions she had so far made, taking her thinking on the subject far beyond what modernist philosophy offers. In fact, this poem establishes poetry as perhaps the only space which, in McGann's words, "is that form of discourse whose only object is to allow language to display itself, to show how it lives. What was once named 'God'—that being whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere—has died and been reborn as language." As the critic further argues, "poetry is literally a divine action, for poetry is language practicing itself. In poetry, language lives and moves and has its being" (472).

Similarly, in the poem "I Am," there emerges an objectifying, and objectified, "I" that remains distinct from the Self. The "I" is like any other commodity, a prop set alongside other props, "names" only:

I am an indicated other:
Witness this common presence
Intelligible to the common mind,
The daylight census.

I am such-and-such appearance
Listed among the furnitures
Of the proprietary epoch
That on the tattered throne of time
Effects inheritance still,
Though of shadow that estate now,
Death-dim, memory illumined.

You, spent kingdom of the senses,
Have laid hands on the unseeable,
Shadow's seeming fellow:
And all together we
A population of names only
Inhabiting the hypothetic streets,
Where no one can be found
Ever at home. (*Poems* 209)

Finally, (Riding) Jackson, speaking through the medium of poetry, declares that the Self turns out to be untranslatable into language, and the place reserved for it in the poem gets occupied for good by the discursive "I" that posits the poet as an "indicated other" within the poem. (Riding) Jackson, who used to believe that "pure" language was the space the Self could *get to* inhabit once channeled by the poet into the linguistic space of poetry, arrives at a conclusion that anticipates postmodern philosophy: language becomes a game to play, a game that generates *truths* of its own, which the poet does not want to accept. In this light, language could be almost synonymous with discourse, a strict division between the two being no longer justified. In this way, the Self is eternally replaced by the "I-(play)thing," and the poem is a vehicle for putting language into play.

(Riding) Jackson discovers that the discursive "I" is what would have had to suffice had she continued to carry on writing poetry. The poet, for whom the truth was the ultimate value, must have been disturbed by that discovery: she realized how far away from her original assumptions about the nature of poetry and truth the *practice* of poetry had actually taken her. She decided that she would rather question poetry than compromise the truth. By refusing to engage in a game to be played and, eventually, abandoning poetry, she chose to withdraw into the self-containment of the Self. However, during the period of claiming *within* poetry that poetry, indeed, falsifies "true" meanings of words and disguises the Self, (Riding) Jackson, paradoxically, made language work and communicate its *inherent* truths. Her explorations, courageous as they were, eventually led her to poetic silence, because she did not manage to reconcile herself to the conclusions she herself had drawn, the most important of them being that art, by its nature, creates discourses in which *ambiguity* equals *possibility*. Was her refusal to play the game of poetry ill-considered? I do not know, but I wish she had made use of the possibilities she discovered. That would have certainly enriched American literature and given us readers many stimulating impulses.

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Tadeusz Pióro

Death and Heroism in the Work of Frank O'Hara and Andy Warhol

Heroism and Mechanical Reproduction

In the preface to *The Spirit of Romance*, published in 1910, Ezra Pound declares that "the study of literature is hero worship," narrowing down what Emerson and Carlyle thought about the study of history to one its aesthetic aspects. We might paraphrase this as: "the study of Modernist literature is the study of hero worship and its discontents." Yeats and Pound worshiped and hyperbolized, Conrad and Joyce and Ellison preferred to remain realistic, but each tried to make heroism the fulcrum of poetic or novelistic narrative, unlike the master some of them acknowledged—Gustave Flaubert. In his essay on Jackson Pollock, T. J. Clark takes Flaubert for his point of departure, and specifically the hopes he had for *Madame Bovary* as he was starting work on the novel. He confessed at the time (1852) that he wants to write "a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style . . . a book which would have almost no subject, or at least where the subject would be almost invisible, if such a thing is possible" (Clark 299). Clark grants that such a project for a novel, rather than a sestina or set of haikus, "has its own pathos," but, more importantly, he sets this early ambition against its end result, *Madame Bovary*: "no book has ever been fuller of the everything external which *is* the bourgeois world . . . fuller in its substance; in the weight it gives to words themselves" (Clark 299–300). The difference between nothing and "the everything external which *is* the bourgeois world" might just as well be taken for sameness, at least symbolically, but Clark's point is to show a parallel between Flaubert's realistically representational plenitude and the materials Pollock used (in the case of *Sea Change* and *Full Fathom Five*—mostly garbage, "the debris of daily life") to create an abstractly metaphysical one. It is within and between these two types of transformation or transmutation that I would like to situate Andy Warhol and Frank O'Hara's evolving appreciation of his work.

Initially, O'Hara was critical, even dismissive, of Warhol's work, although he admired Claes Oldenburg's from the start: he did not condemn Pop Art across

the board, but Warhol's experiments caused him unease. In his biography, Brad Gooch gives a number of reasons for this, of which the most relevant, in my opinion, is also the least tangible. The following passage comes from a 1989 interview with the painter Wynn Chamberlain:

> In his love of objects in his poetry and in his association with Larry Rivers he certainly wasn't antirealist. On the other hand he was very much anti-Death, which is what Warhol signified to him I think. And to all of us at that point. He was the prophet of doom. There was a complete division between the Warhol-Geldzahler camp and the O'Hara-Rivers-de Kooning camp (Gooch 396)

Gooch also mentions a party at Larry Rivers's in the late 1960s at which de Kooning screamed at Warhol: "You're a killer of art, you're a killer of beauty, and you're even a killer of laughter. I can't bear your work!" (393). Beyond simple matters of popularity, sales and prestige, Warhol's threat to the Abstract Expressionist establishment might have been something more fundamental, a revealing of what they tried to conceal or overcome in their art. This revealing might be seen as celebratory, thus calling into question the irony Warhol's paintings seem to exude. As Peter Burger puts it, "the painting of 100 Campbell soup cans contains resistance to the commodity society only for the person who wants to see it there" (61).

Death has several meanings in this context, beginning with the replacement of the brushstroke and the human presence it manifests by silkscreening, a method of mechanical reproduction. No less important is Warhol's choice of subjects: in O'Hara's lifetime, art galleries and museums showed his cartoon character canvases, as well as paintings of Coca Cola bottles, Campbell soup cans, electric chairs, Elvis Presley, Marylin Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, but also race riots and the *Death and Disaster* series. None of these betray the slightest emotion, and it is not surprising that the reactions of lyrical painters and poets were versions of Peter Walsh's words in *Mrs. Dalloway*: "the death of the soul." They may have stemmed as well from a premonition of what Jean Baudrillard would later call the interchangeability of art and industrial production, made possible by infinite multiplication: a feeling that there can be no redemption in, nor for, the culture of capitalism (Baudrillard 147).[1] To recognize this in a serious work of art must have been chilling, and the commercial success of Warhol's art may have made such recognitions all the more painful and dispiriting.

1 For a more extensive discussion of the connection between Baudrillard, Warhol and O'Hara, see Ward 139–140.

Warhol's "heroes," all of whom were media-created celebrities, have the same status as the lifeless consumer goods he depicts: reproduced images, utterly flat, they negate the very notion of heroism, as Warhol himself did by implicitly equating it with the fifteen minutes of fame in store for everyone. Modernist hero worship could not have been ridiculed more effectively and mercilessly. His suave and seemingly non-agonistic ignoring of Modernist verities makes even the most strident outbursts of anti-traditional rhetoric—for instance, Marinetti's—look like a boy scouts' game. (I have singled out Marinetti because his first manifesto relies on the presence of tradition as a figure of death). The new life of art and civilization some Modernists projected seems to have been a moot point for Warhol, who, to use Peter Burger's criteria, was an avant-garde artist thanks to his understanding of art's proximity to everyday life, and a viciously anti-avant-garde one for the very same reason: "the everything external which *is* the bourgeois world" needs no justification, nor can it be explained any better than death.

In 1959, when O'Hara wrote "Rhapsody," Warhol had yet to make his name as a painter, so there can be no question of direct response or influence in this case. Yet the poem's ending—"as I historically belong / to the enormous bliss of American death"—could point to shared opinions or recognitions. I shall discuss "Rhapsody" at length, because I think that, confused and confusing as the poem seems to be, it signals O'Hara's anxiety about the continued relevance of the High Modernist aesthetic, and perhaps anticipates his eventual admiration for Warhol's revisions of heroism as well as realism. I quote the poem in full.

515 Madison Avenue
door to heaven? portal
stopped realities and eternal licentiousness
or at least the jungle of impossible eagerness
your marble is bronze and your lianas elevator cables
swinging from the myth of ascending
I would join
or declining the challenge of racial attractions
they zing on (into the lynch, dear friends)
while everywhere love is breathing draftily
like a doorway linking 53rd with 54th
the east-bound with the west-bound traffic by 8,000,000s
o midtown tunnels and the tunnels, too, of Holland

where is the summit where all aims are clear
the pin-point light upon a fear of lust
as agony's needlework grows up around the unicorn

and fences him for milk-and-yoghurt work
when I see Gianni I know he's thinking of John Ericson
playing the Rachmaninoff 2nd or Elizabeth Taylor
taking sleeping pills and Jane thinks of Manderley
and Irkutsk while I cough lightly in the smog of desire
and my eyes water achingly imitating the true blue

a sight of Manahatta in the towering needle
multi-faceted insight of the fly in the stringless labyrinth
Canada plans a higher place than the Empire State Building
I am getting into a cab at 9th Street and 1st Avenue
and the Negro driver tells me about a $120 apartment
'where you can't walk across the floor after 10 at night
not even to pee, because it keeps them awake downstairs'
no, I don't like that 'well, I didn't take it'
perfect in this hot humid morning on my way to work
a little supper-club conversation for the mill of the gods

you were there always and you know all about these things
as indifferent as an encyclopedia with your calm brown eyes
it isn't enough to smile when you run the gauntlet
you've got to spit like Niagara Falls on everybody or
Victoria Falls or at least the beautiful urban fountains of Madrid
as the Niger joins the Gulf of Guinea near the Menemsha Bar
that is what you learn in the early morning passing Madison Avenue
where you've never spent any time and the stores eat up light

I have always wanted to be near it
though the day is long (and I don't mean Madison Avenue)
lying in a hammock on St. Mark's Place sorting my poems
in the rancid nourishment of this mountainous island
they are coming and we holy ones must go
is Tibet historically a part of China? as I historically
belong to the enormous bliss of American death.
(*Collected Poems* 325)

Rhapsody is the title of a film which O'Hara, Joe LeSueur and Gianni Bates watched together in 1954, five years before the poem was written and to which its third section explicitly refers. In his book of reminiscences about O'Hara, LeSueur recalls that he did not like its "old-fashioned M-G-M gloss," and that the others teased him for being a "stick-in-the-mud" (205). He was surprised by O'Hara's mentioning *Rhapsody* so long after they had seen it, and surprised

again, after O'Hara's death, to hear from Bates that they had had "an affair." This is the substance of his "digression," somewhat disappointing since many of the references in the poem seem to be both circumstantial and structurally meaningful—"Rhapsody" discourages close readings, so every snippet of background information might be helpful, and LeSueur's disclosures do not help us much in this case.

The poem opens with a quasi-apostrophe: 515 Madison Avenue, the street address of the Dumont Building, is not preceded by "O," nor followed by an exclamation mark, but the final line of this section of the poem contains the apostrophic "o," and in spite of the lack of a concluding "!" completes the initial one's ironically celebratory gesture. Topographically, and in many other respects, the distance between the Dumont Building and the Holland Tunnel is notable, but "Rhapsody" radically shortens it. The Madison Avenue address is synonymous with advertising, since many firms in that line had their headquarters there, so the production of desire understandably comes to mind as the poet walks or drives by 515 on his way to work. "Stopped realities and eternal licentiousness" suggest both the business of advertising and the gay poet's sense of potential pleasures to be had in this building, were he to enter it in search of acquiescent strangers, and, possibly, be late for work at the Museum of Modern Art as a result. "The jungle of impossible eagerness" suggests the "jungle" ethos of the corporate world, yet the identification of elevator cables with lianas goes beyond this cliché, since it is not the elevator cables that are lianas, but the other way round. The most primitive or elemental forms of desire have been subjected to a technological process of sublimation, and what would have naturally remained a liana is now part of a machine used for "ascending." "Your marble is bronze" inverts the chronological order of the liana/cable identification, but serves the same purpose: marble interiors merely conceal the ignoble bronze that the industry relies on, the desires it is meant to arouse and its own desire to profit by this arousal. Neither in this nor any other section of the poem is desire satisfied, nor is it represented as overpowering: instead, a melancholy sense of the necessity to defer satisfaction comes through, culminating in the switch from the phenomenal world to the textual in the "scene of writing," as O'Hara sorts through his poems "in tranquility," and substitutes for "the bliss of solitude" Wordsworth identifies with "the inner eye" the "enormous bliss of American death." This might to some extent account for the presence of multiple "o's" in the final lines of the section, orgasmic and blissful exclamations that make no sense at all if we consider them as reactions to a literal passage through the Midtown or Holland Tunnels, but add up, in the crudest sense, if we juxtapose a tunnel with a skyscraper, and take this for a figure of impossibility.

Thus the opening quasi-invocation anticipates frustration, failure and melancholy, first apparent in the impossibility of "eagerness," and next in the lianas/cables, "swinging from the myth of ascending / I would join / or declining the challenge of racial attractions." The sexual desire associated with "swinging" is immediately presented as unsatisfied, since "I would join" means "I haven't joined (yet)," while the raced "attractions" "zing on into the lynch." It is not much farther from "swing" to "zing" than from S to Z, but bringing in Roland Barthes here would be merely tiresome, while the distance between "lynch" and "lurch" is more relevant, precisely because of its racial implications. An elevator attendant, almost invariably black, could be an imagined object of desire in this cluster of images, which would explain the substitution of "lynch" for "lurch" and its implied equation of the risks blacks take when they engage in interracial relationships or encounters with the risks taken by gays in general in their pursuit of pleasure—hence the "dear friends," possibly gay and/or black, at the end of the line. And since "lurch" lurks in "lynch," the tall building, its precipitous elevator shaft, and the fall from whatever grace one hopes for, corporate, sexual or aesthetic, come together in a minor play on words. Yet the "challenge" is denied, risk and satisfaction get deferred, the putative object of desire becomes multiplied, and eight million such objects pass through a doorway, east-bound and west-bound, as love breathes "draftily," rather than "heavily," on account of the doorway, earlier called a "door" but immediately corrected to the grander "portal." The portal leads to "heaven," or paradise, where permanence or eternity obviate desire, which is precisely what advertising promises. Meanwhile, this parody of paradise, opulently marble-clad, may at any moment become the scene of a lynching—a punishment for having desires.

The second section opens with a somewhat cryptic question, although the repetition of "where" brings to mind an "*ubi sunt*" motif and the nostalgia or sadness it is usually meant to emphasize. The "summit where all aims are clear" might be a mountain as well as a state of mind: "the pin-point light upon a fear of lust" suggests the latter, but the appearance of Tibet in the final section makes the natural image of a mountain equally relevant. "Fear of lust" can be seen or experienced only at a considerable remove from Madison Avenue and everything it stands for, and so seems to be unattainable to O'Hara, and therefore desirable. The image of "agony's needlework" which "grows up around the unicorn / and fences him for milk-and-yoghurt work" defies understanding, unless more or less distant associations replace referential certainty. Since the "towering needle" in the next section refers to the Empire State Building, an American dream of impossible grandeur come true architecturally, "needlework" suggests attempts at fulfilling less exalted wishes, for instance landing a contract for advertising dairy

products. "Agony," which is often followed by death, fuses the desire for profit with sexual urges, implied by the phallic and ejaculatory imagery. The unicorn may be seen as a figure for a building like the Empire State or the Dumont, but also literally, as in the tapestries "needlework" suggests, on display at the Cloisters Museum uptown, where the historical impossibility of unicorns consorting with maidens becomes iconic reality. And since it is up to capitalism to prove what may or may not be physically or historically possible, this last connotation seems the most relevant to the poem as a whole, as well as the most fanciful. Still, the opposition between "fear of lust" and "agony" holds strong: anticipated by "lynch" in the previous section, it is pivotal for the entire poem.

The sudden change of focus to Gianni Bates and what or whom he is thinking about seems to be little more than a detour, a way of arriving at the scene from *Rhapsody* that matters most in O'Hara's "Rhapsody." A *chagrin d'amour* prompts the character played by Elizabeth Taylor to attempt suicide, and the method she chooses—sleeping pills—may have a symbolic meaning here, since advertising brings about the somnolence or death of our critical faculties: it eliminates our "fear of lust." It might also eliminate the fear of "dust," or obscure the "fear in a handful of dust" one of the voices of *The Waste Land* offers to show us: the principal consonance at the beginning of this section is clear/fear. At its end, we see O'Hara coughing in "the smog of desire," coughing "lightly." Throughout the rest of the poem, his longing for light and clarity, and the elevation that makes them possible, reappear in changing contexts. Immediately after he coughs, his eyes "water achingly" and he catches "a sight of Manahatta in the towering needle / multi-faceted insight of the fly in the stringless labyrinth." There is no Ariadne's thread to lead him out of the maze, and even all the eyes a fly has at its disposal allow only "insight," rather than panoramic views: instead of seeing Manhattan from the Empire State Building, he sees "Manahatta" in its "towering needle." This inversion might suggest that "insight" is limited to the recognition and acknowledgment of desire, especially the kind prefabricated and institutionally imposed, which becomes elevated through human subjectivity, but is as random and futile as a fly's.

The image leads to the micro-narrative of the cab driver, which could be seen as strictly topical and circumstantial, a racially-specific comment on rental prices, were it not for the section's final line: "a little supper-club conversation for the mill of the gods." "The mill of God grinds slow but sure," as George Herbert paraphrases the Greek proverb about destiny and divine justice, but it is hard to tell what this might imply for "Rhapsody," unless we assume that what the mill of the gods produces is Frank O'Hara's poems. The steep price of the apartment makes the constraint on individual liberty (not being able to walk around in it at

night) into a parodic downsizing of the constraints on desire intimated in earlier sections of the poem. This may be why O'Hara thinks the chat with the driver is "perfect" poetic material. It also indirectly introduces the notion of destiny, which comes to the fore in subsequent sections.

In her reading of "Rhapsody," Marjorie Perloff observes that "by shifting address regularly, (the 'you' is alternately '515 Madison Avenue' and the 'you who were there always,' the 'you [who] know(s) all about these things'), O'Hara distances his emotions, thus avoiding 'disgusting self-pity'" (29). It is quite another matter *who* was "there always": Madison Avenue? The gods? Desire, death, agony or fear of lust? The opening of the poem's fourth section presents a case of radical indeterminacy, made even more radically frustrating by the next line: "as indifferent as an encyclopedia with your calm brown eyes." There is no way out of this conundrum, but that's the point, and the geographical impossibility that follows—the Niger joining the Gulf of Guinea near the Menemsha Bar (in Manhattan)—ties in with the referential one. Furthermore, if we assume that the "you" of the first two lines is Frank O'Hara, or any other human, his being "there always" additionally brings in temporal impossibility. Still, there are four more "yous" in this section, which begins with an image of permanence and moves from encyclopedic knowledge to the empiricism dramatized by Madison Avenue. It seems to be an attempt to embrace, encompass or subsume the whole world in space and time, an attempt made by the engines of consumerism as well as by the poet, but for wholly different reasons. It is, in other words, at attempt to represent the sublime in a specific, historical moment. And, just as specifically, on Madison Avenue, "where the stores eat up light."

Stores, however, do not "eat up" light, even on Madison Avenue, where skyscrapers might obscure sunlight, but ground-level stores emit plenty of man-made substitutes for it. To "eat up" means to consume, and stores do not consume, but enable consumption. Like the "sight of Manahatta in the towering needle," the image of stores eating up light inverts the normal order of things to suggest what the *real* order of things may be. As we looked the other way, consumerism ate up reality, the normal order of things, the aesthetic ideals of High Modernism, the meaning of life, and so on: since this is a *fait accompli*, should we keep looking for heroism, or for the sublime, in all the familiar places? Would this, in and of itself, be a heroic pursuit, or merely a trivial one, as opposed to a brave and noble acknowledgment of historical necessity, if only in the shape of a new aesthetic paradigm? I suspect that O'Hara struggled with this question in the last years of his life, and that "Rhapsody" marks the beginning of this struggle. The poem's final section opens with a confession: "I have always

wanted to be near it," and since Madison Avenue as a reference of "it" is ruled out in the next line, the most likely one is death. Alan Feldman sees in this confession a desire

> to achieve a state of transcendent knowledge and bliss. But the 'holy' landscape in which he can experience such enlightenment is New York, not Tibet. O'Hara needs the 'rancid nourishment' of Manhattan to feed his poetry, because in the city's continual process of creation and destruction 'the enormous bliss of American death' finds its most dazzling expression. (39)

Manhattan is primarily, if not exclusively, literal in this reading of "Rhapsody." But being "near it" in Manhattan means, first of all, being far removed from nature, and thus from settings conventionally required for experiences of the sublime, such as mountains. To account for this removal, Manhattan is called "mountainous," and Tibet brought in for obvious contrast. Yet it is precisely in Manhattan that O'Hara wants to experience the sublime, to be as near death as Taylor's character in *Rhapsody* must have been after overdosing sleeping pills. Removing the sublime from its natural setting is equivalent to making it historically specific, just as calling death "American" makes its "bliss" representable and, therefore, negotiable. This is the bliss to which he belongs: a Hollywood film is more likely to inspire an experience of the sublime than any mountain-top in Tibet. Even so, the question: "is Tibet historically a part of China" insists on the historical specificity of that country and leads to other questions, thus far glossed over by critics. Again, pronominal obscurity turns interpretation into guess-work, and again, the poem's meanings rely on uncertainty: "they are coming and we holy ones must go" immediately precedes the question about Tibet. Tibet was invaded by China several times, first in 1876, when Britain swapped it for Burma, and most recently in 1949—O'Hara certainly would have been aware of this last annexation, so his question seems to be merely rhetorical. "They"—quite possibly the Chinese army invading the retreats of Tibetan monks—should have an equivalent in the world with which O'Hara is most directly concerned in "Rhapsody," as should the "holy ones" forced to "go." And since it is "we" who are the "holy ones," "our" exodus signifies a melancholy surrender to the profane masses and their aesthetics. By declaring that he "belongs" to the "bliss of American death," which is "enormous," O'Hara revisions the sublime. The poem's closure is meant to sound like a revelation, but in fact is a reasoned and grudging admission of the inevitable: even if "we holy ones" depart, we still "belong" to this bliss, in which the role traditionally played by nature in sublime experiences has been annexed by mass culture, just as determined as nature, but threatening the construct of

individual freedom which makes such experiences meaningful. The "summit where all aims are clear," nowhere to be found, marks the division between remembrance and oblivion, revelation and repetition. And so, finally, O'Hara's belonging to the "enormous bliss of American death" is neither willed nor forced, but taxonomic, part of the order of things against which he can struggle heroically, if such is his mood, or accept, in recognition of a new kind of heroism, hitherto unthinkable in America, but soon to be made manifest in the work of Andy Warhol.

Boredom Revisited

"Rhapsody" is dated July 30, thirteen days after "The Day Lady Died," and some of the earlier poem's impetus gets carried over to it, although the elegy's single-minded clarity obviously could not be repeated. Yet the structure of the poems is similar: the "debris of daily life" pile up until a dazzling, downbeat finale makes them come together like the parts of a musical composition. Semantically, however, "Rhapsody" is much more diffuse, and its patterns of imagery harder to subsume under such clear-cut categories as in "The Day Lady Died," where scenes of more or less conspicuous consumption make for most of the build-up to the climax. Referential uncertainty, flights of fancy and frequent shifts of focus may seem to serve the same purpose as the unified, pre-climactic narrative of the elegy to Billie Holiday, but the emotional enunciation of the last line of "Rhapsody" is not quite as incisive as "everyone and I stopped breathing." In the elegy, the only image that resists interpretation is O'Hara's "practically going to sleep with quandariness" as he chooses gifts in the Golden Griffin. In "Rhapsody" there are several such images, and while some of them can be subject to gleefully speculative readings, one especially stands out as purposeless. The conversation with the cab driver is too trite even to be campy, but O'Hara calls it "perfect," and in the same breath compares it to "supper-club conversation," the utterly mundane chit-chat of the middle class, made hilarious in Ashbery and Schuyler's *Nest of Ninnies*, but lacking any satirical or parodic intent in "Rhapsody." If we take this passage for a figure of boredom, however, its presence in the poem becomes less puzzling, and much more insidious, for, somewhat like "quandariness" in "The Day Lady Died," it links boredom with death, not in a literal sense, but that intended by Warhol's anxious or exasperated critics.

Mutlu Konuk Blasing finds a way of integrating the conversation into what she sees as the poem's main political concern:

> The black cabbie literally provides O'Hara with raw material for his poem; the episode is grist for his 'mill.' While the poet may live on the other side of the tracks from Madison Avenue, then, he is really not that far from it. Thus this passage loses much of its critical impact, because it depends on the same economy of exploiting certain classes and races as the system it would critique. . . . O'Hara belongs to the class of workers who ride uptown in cabs driven by 'Negro' drivers, whose very physiological needs—to 'pee,' for example—are in danger of being curtailed. Riding in the cab and listening to that story, he is himself one of the 'gods,' and not just a 'poet.' He partakes of the empire's power, ironic though he may be about his position, since from a slightly different perspective he is an outsider, too. (52)

Although Blasing's point is well taken, I still find the passage surprisingly flat in comparison to the other sections of the poem: while there is nothing objectionable about the passage itself, it breaks up the sequence of highly imaginative, visionary fragments by bringing in untransformed, mundane reality. To be sure, exploitation and injustice are part of that reality, but this does not make it any less banal and seemingly out of place. One of the reasons for its incongruousness lies in its clear and unified narrative structure: since we have to (re)construct several narratives to interpret the other sections of the poem, having a narrative handed us on a plate, so to speak, may come off as quite jarring. The impression it creates, at least on me, is of a narrative without narrative, a story that potentially contains depth and significance, but on the surface remains as pointless as "supper-club conversation." Seemingly pointless narratives of consumer desire and satisfaction take up almost all of "The Day Lady Died" and "A Step Away from Them," but their function becomes clear by the poems' end. Not so in "Rhapsody," where such assimilation is hardly possible, and quite likely was not intended, unless to make for a contrast between fantasy and the real world, and thereby expose its boredom, or, in other words, to stage fantasy's death—not the fantasy of consumerism, of course, but of Modernist art "as we know it."

Whereas in "Rhapsody" the episode with the cab driver is an interlude, later poems, especially those written after O'Hara's break-up with Vincent Warren, frequently rely on apparently straightforward representation that withholds any larger meanings, although it is possible that there are simply none to be withheld. Two poems in their entirety are made up of grammatically unconnected words ("F.O.I" and "Polovtsoi"), while quite a few others contain passages in which cohesion disappears, along with coherence. Most of these poems belong to the "F.Y.I" sequence, written for (and sometimes with the participation of) Bill Berkson, and it is uncertain whether the ones unpublished in O'Hara's lifetime

were meant to be published without revision, or at all. Still, the same approach to language is apparent throughout "Biotherm," a poem published in 1965 (and dedicated to Berkson), as well as several others of that period. It is hard to say anything more than tentative about this approach: this was, most probably, an experimental, rather than deviant and alcohol-induced, phase in O'Hara's career, during which he tried to rethink and re-construct the functions of words in poems. I mean by this individual words, not syntactic or larger units: he was interested in the word as an autonomous, aesthetic object. At the same time, he became interested in recording trivial events simply because they had occurred, although he never limited any of his longer poems to such chronicling, and the shorter ones that do so usually have enough charm and grace to eschew tedium. Yet a trend may be discerned in the poems of the last five years of his life, a series of moves towards an odd mixture of representation and non-representation, narrative and non-narrative, abstraction and diaristic realism. In "Personism: A Manifesto," written a month after "Rhapsody," O'Hara presents the genealogy of this "movement," "verging on a true abstraction for the first time, really, in the history of poetry," as a revelation, his "realizing that if I wanted to I could use the telephone instead of writing the poem," before making the grand claim that this might augur the "death of literature as we know it" (*Collected Poems* 498–499). The scandalous entwining of abstraction's implicit refinement with a telephone conversation that is at least as good as a poem makes his late work harder, and in many ways less rewarding, to read than that of 1956–1959. What we should not look for in the late work is the kind of thematic cohesiveness that unifies the earlier poems, searching instead for points at which semantic coherence gives way to the autonomy of individual words or images, although this is just one of several possible approaches.

"Should We Legalize Abortion" is one of ten poems O'Hara sent to the Dutch artist Jan Cremer in 1964 as part of an intended collaborative work. I quote the poem in full:

Now we have in our group a lot
of unscrupulous
doctors. As they do
in any profession. Now
(again) at the present time
a rich person can
always get an abortion,
they can fly to Japan
or Sweden.

Not any more, I was in Sweden lately
and they don't like
the idea that an American
would visit their country
just for an abortion!
What about the patient?
I think in the case where
a person has been raped or is insane
it definitely
should be allowed.
But the decision is not up
to the patient.
Would you like the exact wording
of the penal code?
I don't think so.
I will always
go along with therapeutic abortions,
golf tournaments
and communion breakfasts.
And pot. Pot and hash
are very relaxing and worthwhile.
If you wanted
To go the Scandinavian way
it would be a terrific
socio-economic mess!
Strange...
those eyes again!
and they're radioactive!
so stop thinking about how
badly you're hurt…Stop coddling yourself. You can
do something about all this and I'm here to help
you do it! I'll start by getting your clothes off…

What the…
THERE'S NOBODY AT THE CONTROLS!
Forget
we ever met.

(*Collected Poems* 482–483)

The first 23 lines sound like a transcript of a television or radio debate, predictably inane, and the rest of the poem consists of what seem to be quotes from other inane conversations, as well as films and cartoons—if the poet says

anything himself, it is unrecognizable as such. The broad comedy saves the poem from being merely dull, and in its closing lines O'Hara may have alluded to the quasi-erotic relationship he had with Cremer. But in all likelihood this is just a collection of found linguistic objects, arranged into a "narrative" that would more or less fit into a comic strip. The "narrative," however, begins where the putative transcript ends, thus calling into question its functionality—and vice versa, unless we assume that the boring television chatter is a necessary introduction to the action-packed finale. Yet the whole point of the poem, I believe, is to do away with such distinctions. There is no qualitative difference between the discussion about legalizing abortion and what follows it. In other words, the poem eliminates the distinction between background and foreground which enables narrative, even though it consists of narrative fragments. These may be made to develop into larger entities in readers' minds, thanks to their suggestiveness, as is the case with celebrated Romantic "fragments," yet the ones present in O'Hara's poem would limit such exfoliation to identifying the quotations, a parody of the hermeneutic procedures required by many High Modernist texts: a television debate, comic strips or B movies are all that a scholarly enquiry might turn up. "All," of course, may mean "everything relevant," but relevance itself is at issue here: the text's relation to its referential background, or origins, would not change significantly if its voices were identified, dated and otherwise ordered, precisely because history as narrative consciousness has been replaced by icons, and "the debris of daily life" no longer commemorate anything but themselves.

In his letter to Cremer, O'Hara comments on the attached poems: "for some reason a lot of the poems refer to cowboys, Western outlaw heroes (Wyatt Earp), etc." Brad Gooch puts this in context:

> The poems were filled with cowboys because O'Hara, now owning a small black-and-white television set, was writing these days while watching his favorite TV shows. 'We were watching a Western on T.V.,' Joe Brainard has remembered of the composition of one of the Cremer poems, 'and he got up as tho to answer the telephone or to get a drink but instead he went over to the typewriter, leaned over it a bit, and typed for four or five minutes standing up. Then he pulled the piece of paper out of the typewriter and handed it to me to read. Then he lay back down to watch more T.V. I don't remember the poem except that it had some cowboy dialect in it.' (410)

The scene of writing is not at all like the one in "Rhapsody," and the poem produced was forgettable, at least for Brainard, as if it did not in any meaningful way go beyond a transcription of movie dialogue. Around that time, Brainard was collaborating with O'Hara on a series of cartoons, most notably *Red Rydler and*

Dog, published in *C Comics* in 1964. The collaborations, Lytle Shaw writes, "gave O'Hara an arena to work out a new relation to some of the main techniques of pop-art . . . [which] reintroduced narrative into art (229). While it is hard to take the comic strip texts as poems, the language of the comics was making its way into what most certainly were O'Hara's autonomous, non-collaborative poems: along with television and movie language, it introduced a referential framework much like Warhol's (although superficially closer to Lichtenstein's or Rosenquist's), rarely seen in the earlier work. Frequently, a micro-narrative that seems to be personal or autobiographical is capped or punctured by the intrusion of quotations from such sources, as if this were the best way to make personal experience understandable, or even taken to be subjective at all. And while subjectivity stubbornly stays put in the late poems, the originality of its expression changes from linguistic invention to more or less inspired pastiche, or repetition. To conclude, a few lines from "The Lunch Hour:"

so then I lurch out into the sun to do some
shop(forallthe worldlike DianeDiPrima)ping
I buy
eggs mushrooms cheese whitewine grapes
and then
I feel less apprehensive so I cook it all up and we eat
and we talk all afternoon about death
which is spring in our hearts
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE
(*Collected Poems* 421)

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Alicja Piechucka

"Saint Brother and Saint Sister": The Motif of Fraternal Incest in Gladys Huntington's *Madame Solario*

> She was like me in lineaments—her eyes,
> Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
> Even of her voice, they were like to mine;
> But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
> She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings…
> And tenderness—but that I had for her.
>
> –George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Manfred*

"On ne saura jamais qui a écrit *Madame Solario*!" (Minor 148), exclaims the female protagonist of a French novel whose title is almost identical with the subordinate clause of the exclamation: *Qui a écrit Madame Solario?* The enigma which puzzles the heroine, Arsène, as well as, one may suspect, the author of the novel, psychoanalyst and writer Nata Minor, surrounds one of the most intriguing literary works of the twentieth century. *Madame Solario* is an English-language novel, first published in 1956. Its fascinating plot and ambience alone would suffice to captivate and mystify generations of readers. However, the mystery which over the decades built up around the book was largely due to the fact that *Madame Solario* had been published anonymously. This, in turn, led to all sorts of speculations—sometimes wild ones—as to the identity, or at least the sex, of the author. The most extravagant of these is perhaps offered by Minor, who suggests the novel may have been written by none other than Winston Churchill. Despite such bold hypotheses, towards the end of her micronovel, published in 1992, Minor despairs of the possibility of ever identifying the writer who—for reasons best known to himself/herself—chose to remain nameless. Recently, however, Minor was proven wrong. Over half a century after the publication of the mysterious work, the question which constitutes the title of Minor's novel, "Who wrote *Madame Solario*?" is no longer unanswerable.

Twenty years after Minor carried out her fervent investigation, we know for sure that—contrary to what some reviewers argued—*Madame Solario* was written

by a woman. Her name was Gladys Parrish Huntington. Like her sex, her origin defies expectations: though some believed the author of the novel to be British, Huntington was an American, the scion of a wealthy, respectable Quaker family from Philadelphia. Like her protagonist, the eponymous Natalia Solario, Huntington led a cosmopolitan existence. She spent much of her life in Europe, regularly holidaying in Italy as a young woman, and gardening in Sussex, where she had a house, later in life. A woman of the world—again like her protagonist—Huntington also maintained international social relations. Married to a successful editor, she harbored literary ambitions, which resulted in two stories and three novels, the most famous of which is, of course, *Madame Solario*. As the research done by Bernard Cohen for an interesting article published in *Libération* demonstrates, the puzzling decision to conceal the novel's authorship was motivated by Huntington's fear of failure as well as the strategy of her publisher, well aware of the fact that the aura of mystery boosts book sales. When *Madame Solario* received critical acclaim and became a literary sensation, Huntington became more inclined to reveal her identity, but eventually failed to do so. Interviewed by Cohen, the writer's descendants suggest that one of the causes of Huntington's suicide three years after the publication of her *magnum opus* may have been the fact that she was prevented from fully enjoying the literary fame she had won (Bernard Cohen, pars. 1–23).

Bernard Cohen, the author of the aforementioned article on Huntington, is merely one of the many French admirers of her novel. Given the fact that it was originally written in English and that for decades so little was known about the circumstances of its creation and publication, *Madame Solario* seems to be surprisingly popular—if only with the initiated few—in France, as both Minor's book and brief mentions occasionally recurring in the French press testify. Recently, this popularity was confirmed by the release of a film adaptation, directed by French filmmaker René Féret. The Belgian-born French-American writer and member of the Académie Française Marguerite Yourcenar is said to have kept at least two copies of *Madame Solario* by her bedside (Bernard Cohen, par. 2). In the postface to *Comme l'eau qui coule*, a collection of three stories published in English under the title *Two Lives and a Dream*, Yourcenar touches upon the theme of incest in literature. Having briefly commented on examples derived from Byron, Chateaubriand and Thomas Mann, she adds in a footnote:

> Finally, one ought to analyze, as a story of the same type, the extraordinary anonymous novel which appeared in England in 1956, *Madame Solario*, which, although a best-seller, has never been closely studied. However, the extreme complexity of the psychological themes which are interwoven in this story make it difficult to isolate that of incest. (232)

In the present article, I have decided to undertake the task deemed so challenging by Yourcenar, and examine the incestuous ties which bind the protagonist of Huntington's novel to her brother. In doing so, I shall draw on psychological and anthropological studies of this phenomenon and the incest taboo, as well as on their cultural symbolism.

Though published in 1956, *Madame Solario* is set five decades earlier. The action of the novel takes place in Italy: mostly in Cadenabbia, "a fashionable resort for the month of September" (Huntington 5), situated on the shores of Lake Como, and later in Florence and Milan. Among those spending the end of the summer in the spellbinding Como surroundings is Natalia Solario, a beautiful, twenty-eight-year-old woman, domiciled in Paris, but not French by origin. Born in England to a half-Swedish mother and an English father, who died when his daughter was still a child, Natalia grew up in the United States. Her widowed mother remarried and moved to Paris with her new South American husband, de Florez, and her two children from her first marriage. At first, the stepfamily led an idyllic existence in a luxurious Parisian townhouse, made possible by de Florez's fortune, but also by the fact that Natalia's mother truly loved her second husband, who seemed to have developed fatherly bonds with his stepchildren. However, after a few years, the dream turned into a nightmare: attracted by teenage Natalia's breathtaking beauty, de Florez seduced her and carried on a sexual relationship with her, of which both his wife and their servants were aware. When Natalia's brother, Eugene, accidentally found out the truth, he attempted to shoot his stepfather. Wounded, de Florez survived and took measures to hush up the scandal: he sent his eighteen-year-old stepson abroad and married Natalia to a South American friend of his. Despite his wife's pleas, de Florez refused to pardon Eugene and put an end to his exile. Devastated by the betrayal and humiliation she had had to endure as well as by her beloved son's fate, de Florez's wife died prematurely. Natalia's arranged marriage to the man who gave her the surname under which she is known did not stand the test of time. Twelve years after the tragedy which tore her family apart, she finds herself alone in the elegant Italian resort, separated from her husband and pursed by Count Kovanski, a former lover whose obsession with her has become threatening. Soon, however, she is joined there by her long-lost brother, embittered and resentful, expecting his sister to make it up to him for the suffering and miserable wandering of which she was the cause.

Huntington's novel is divided into three parts, and it is only at the very end of Part One that Eugene makes his first appearance, disembarking from a steamer which brings guests to the Hotel Bellevue, where most of the action is set. His arrival takes all the holidaymakers—including Natalia herself—by surprise. This *coup de théâtre* closes a section of the novel in which Madame Solario is

presented from the point of view of Bernard Middleton, a twenty-three-year-old Englishman fresh out of Oxford, for whom a platonic infatuation with the mysterious beauty will be an initiation into adulthood. When, overcoming her initial shock, Natalia announces by way of explanation: "This is my brother. Let me present my brother, Eugene Harden" (109), her words are just the prologue to the novel's central section, in which Middleton recedes into the background and the pair of siblings take center stage. What follows is a series of confrontations between the brother and the sister, the psychological intensity and complexity of which merit a separate analysis. Though the reader is already familiar with the siblings' family history, about which the hotel guests gossip early on in the novel, it is only in Part Two that its full impact can be felt, magnified by the contrast between how Natalia and Eugene are perceived by the elegant Cadenabbia holidaymakers and what they discuss in private. As Harden puts it, "Has your admirer—But you may have several. Have your admirers been thinking about you, do you suppose? However much they may have tried to imagine what you were doing, they won't have arrived at this interview!" (133). The relationship between Madame Solario and her brother evolves: his hostility and her reserve gradually give way to a sense of complicity and bonding, which culminate in sexual intimacy. The third—and last—section of the novel, in which Bernard Middleton reappears to, so to speak, again lend the reader his consciousness, through which the events are filtered, shows the consequences of the scandal which breaks when the Cadenabbia society starts suspecting the true nature of the siblings' relationship, as well as Natalia's unsuccessful attempt to break away from her brother's influence.

Throughout the novel, Huntington repeatedly evokes and emphasizes Natalia Solario's ideal, almost unreal beauty. She does the same, though to a lesser degree, with Eugene, described as strikingly handsome. "At once he became a focus of feminine interest, for he was well dressed and very good-looking," Huntington notes in the arrival scene (108). Not only do the siblings match each other in terms of physical attractiveness and elegance, they also resemble each other. Harden's "golden-brown" moustache (108) seems to echo the golden beauty of his blonde-haired, violet-eyed sister. Although Eugene is two years Natalia's senior, they are perceived as twins by the Cadenabbia society:

> They came out into the road, and, calm and slightly abstracted, so that, though close together, they were not speaking to each other, they approached the hotel and the guests assembling in front before luncheon. The first to see them was the American Wilbur, and they were so much the fashion that he was delighted to connect himself with them by hailing their appearance.
> 'Here are the Gemini!' (211–212)

The brother and sister complete each other, and it is in aesthetic terms that the union between them is first presented:

> Their public entrances together, side by side, were becoming more, rather than less, effective with every one of them; starting with her beauty, the affinity in their looks and their perfect proportionateness to each other had something of a work of art, and that is the more admired for being admired often. And when they came out of the hotel late—the others having forgathered—with the absence of conceitedness that, being hers, was also his, they were accepted for general admiration as a pair, and for more admiration than ever. (181)

Despite her unquestionable beauty and the innumerable tributes paid to it by her admirers, Madame Solario has no narcissistic tendencies. In a scene showing her at her vanity table, "her eyes, looking at herself in the glass, had the same calm thoughtfulness as when she looked at other people. The inquiry was not more interested or acute" (178). However, the only mirror in which she comes to contemplate herself intently is perhaps, as Nata Minor suggests, Natalia's brother: their twinship, manifested in their physical resemblance and the effect of harmony it produces and culminating in the incest they commit, provides either of them with a mirror reflection taking the shape of the sibling's face. The idea of mirror images is in fact put forward by Eugene in one of the novel's most important scenes, which ends in the brother and sister spending their first night together. Considering the possible consequences of Natalia's marriage to Count Kovanski, which could improve her social status as well as that of her brother, Harden imagines himself visiting his prospective brother-in-law's Russian estate, spending time with his sister and even—in jest—joining the Orthodox Church:

> 'We'll make such a pair that day that we may figure afterwards on icons—for you are so beautiful you must be a saint, and I—Don't ask me to say it. They'll put our two faces side by side, in thick gold haloes. Two saints in the Orthodox Calendar! But under what names? Under our own?'
> 'Why not just Saint Brother and Saint Sister?' She said it with demure, not open humour, and he was transported. (263)

Among the recurrent motifs in *Madame Solario* a particularly prominent one is that of dance. There are two ball scenes in Huntington's novel. One of them occurs early on, in the middle of Part One; for the other the reader has to wait until Part Three, as it is placed in the second of the eight chapters which make up the book's final section. In both scenes, dance serves as a pretext for

displaying Natalia Solario's marvelous natural grace and her exquisite dancing skills. However, in keeping with the famous saying which has it that "Dancing is a vertical expression of a horizontal desire," both scenes also have a strong sexual subtext. In the first one, Madame Solario spends most of the evening dancing with Ercolani, an attractive Italian who courts her in Cadenabbia and happens to be an excellent dancer:

> Ercolani was placing his arm about her; her arm in its long white glove was rested upon his, and they yielded together to the languorous strains of 'Valse Amoureuse.' After that he could not see her without seeing, too, Ercolani's straight back and flat shoulders, and his head turning a little to right and left over hers—the minimum amount for looking and guiding, which he did without a fault. Everything else faded before this spectacle, because this was the perfection of waltzing. One shouldn't waltz at all if one couldn't do it like that! (61–62)

The sexual symbolism of the first ball scene is confirmed later on in the novel, when, in a conversation with her brother, Natalia admits that she was attracted to Ercolani and regretted his departure. The connection between dance and sexuality is also reinforced by other elements of the scene. The tunes to which the guests dance include not just *Valse Amoureuse*, Rodolphe Berger's Belle Époque hit, but also *Elixir d'Amour*, presumably an aria from Gaetano Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*. As if to emphasize the erotic overtones, among the favors distributed during the cotillion there are miniature copies of *Cupid and Psyche*, Antonio Canova's famous sculpture, whose replica by Canova's disciple, Adamo Tadolini, is exhibited in the nearby Villa Carlotta. Madame Solario is in great demand as a dancing partner and the men in the ballroom have to wait to dance with her and become "competitors" (Huntington 64). This state of affairs mirrors her personal situation: that of an irresistibly beautiful woman, whom men obsessively desire and wish to possess at all costs, even if the satisfaction of their desire should lead to transgression and tragedy. "Her vogue was such that it had become a matter of pride to dance with her" (65), the narrator notes, pointing out that there was an air of competition and jealousy at the ball: "As Madame Solario's success drew more partners to herself it left fewer for the others, and he [Bernard Middleton] seized the falsity of the other women's smiles when they were included in the same figure with her" (65). In fact, what Bernard witnesses at the ball is merely a case of history repeating itself: much later in the novel, Eugene recalls the furor his sister caused as a little girl when she attended a dance class, in which all the boys dreamed of being paired with her. Accordingly, the scene leaves Bernard Middleton, the silent observer in the passages quoted above, who knows that—if

only due to his youth and inexperience—he cannot aspire to become Madame Solario's lover, with a feeling of personal inadequacy. The two conversations in the course of which he cites his poor dancing skills as the reason why he fails to ask Natalia to dance that evening while she gently attempts to comfort him acquire a metaphorical dimension. Bernard's limited terpsichorean abilities may in fact stand for his lack of male self-confidence and ignorance of *ars amandi*. "I haven't been to many balls," Bernard puts it simply, to which Madame Solario replies, "But you will go some day, and enjoy them" (82).

Customarily "impassive" and "guarded" (Huntington 63), Madame Solario derives evident sensual pleasure from dancing: at some point in the first ball scene, Bernard notices "her deep enjoyment as though it were breathing from her, and the smile that didn't part her lips gave to the corners of her mouth a mysterious look of greed" (63). When he later asks her if she likes dancing, she replies, "One enjoys it when one has a good partner" (82). The harmony between her and Ercolani, the "perfect grace of those two dancing together" (65), is, however, superseded by the beauty of the couple Natalia and her brother make at the other ball, the one depicted in Part Three. The siblings dance the night away, and Eugene's facial expression is that of a happy man. It is again Bernard Middleton who, reduced to the position of a spectator, looks on the magnificent spectacle, in which, as he now knows, he will never become an actor:

> Madame Solario was dancing with her brother. They came down the length of the room towards him, were close to him, passed, were lost among other couples, and reappeared to his sight far away, the whole room between him and them. From sheer humility he felt he would remain invisible to them, and that they would never see him, however long he watched them. She had produced that feeling in him before, at the cotillon; however unapproachable she could be at other times, it was never so much as when he saw her dancing. She and her partner became another order of beings from himself, not only as he was now but as he always would be—lacking in some quality, some element. Her chosen partners had it—Ercolani, and now her brother, so that it was a quality not dependent on other kinds of attraction, an element that belonged to an order of being. (280)

If Bernard is, once again, made to realize his own inadequacy, he is also, to a certain extent, comforted and reassured by the fact that Natalia and Eugene are linked by family ties rather than, as was the case with Ercolani, by sexual attraction. It is to their physical resemblance and to the close emotional bond between the brother and the sister that he attributes the supreme grace and larger-than-life aesthetic compatibility which elevate them to superhuman status:

> And she and her brother made an even more harmonious couple than she and Ercolani. They were better suited in height, for Ercolani had been rather too tall, and from a likeness of proportions, and probably their relationship, there resulted an even more perfect attunement, a more freely flowing motion. His jealousy of Ercolani was allayed. He knew that it had been to some degree needless when he saw her dancing with her brother and it was proved that the harmony she and her partners could attain was godlike. There was that element in them that was not in him, but, even though invisible to her, he could feel a satisfaction, which was that she danced more divinely with her brother than with Ercolani. (280–281)

Later that evening, Natalia and her brother dance again. Significantly, they do so to *Valse Amoureuse*, to which Madame Solario previously waltzed with Ercolani. Seeing them, Bernard has a strong sense of *déjà vu*: Natalia seems to reenact what she did with her Italian admirer, this time in her brother's arms. However, since the fact that they are siblings appears to guarantee the innocence of their relationship, Middleton is not alarmed by what he witnesses, seeing it as a symbol of family reunion which puts an end to the tragedy that befell Natalia and Eugene in the past: "This must be the final reconcilement. They were in such perfect accord that it seemed an intrusion to watch" (283). He remains unaware of the true significance of this "perfect accord" even when Missy Lastacori, a young upper-class girl whom Eugene courts in the hope that he will marry into her rich and prominent Florentine family, storms out of the Villa d'Este, where the ball takes place, enigmatically exclaiming, "His sister! His sister!" (287), and when the members of the Italian high society, visibly shocked and outraged, start gossiping in their native language, which Bernard does not understand.

This brings us to one of the crucial aspects of Huntington's depiction of the incestuous relationship central to her novel: it is not explicitly referred to, let alone graphically described. The word *incest* never appears in the text. Nor can we be certain as to when exactly the two siblings become lovers. However, Nata Minor is probably right when she argues—through her protagonist Arsène—that the scene which closes Part Two ends prior to the moment the illicit passion linking the siblings is consummated. The scene in question ends with Eugene entering his sister's room, locking the door and uttering words which have acquired a sinister and perverse meaning in the novel: "*Comme votre papa est bon pour vous*" (268). The ominous words, which could be translated as "Your daddy is so good to you," are in fact those used by a French governess on seeing de Florez leaning over to look at Natalia's notebook. Unaware of the fact that she had actually surprised her employer in the act of seducing his young stepdaughter rather than helping her with her homework, she naively commented on his fatherly attachment to

the girl. Eugene is familiar with the particulars of the scene which marked the beginning of Natalia's affair with her stepfather because, shortly after his arrival at Cadenabbia, he compels his sister to reveal the lurid details of her relationship with de Florez. The fact that he repeats—or, to use the expression employed in the novel, "gasp[s] out" (268)—the governess's words as he locks himself in with his sister in the middle of the night seems to suggest that Minor has a point.

Madame Solario is set on Lake Como, arguably one of the most picturesque locations in the world. On numerous occasions, Huntington evokes the beauty of the Lombardian lake district, with the waters of the Como glittering in the sun, the hills and rocks, ornamented with elegant villas and gardens, descending towards the shores, and the azure Italian sky to complete it all. While the scenery helps to create an aura of magic and enchantment, it also serves to enhance the novel's symbolism and bring out the psychological relations between the characters. One of the local residences, Balbianello, a "love-haunted villa" surrounded by "secret gardens" (Huntington 23), plays a crucial role in the novel. The story goes that the villa belongs to an Italian aristocrat's beautiful widow, who moved to Paris following her husband's death. The villa was thus abandoned by its owner, but did not fall into a state of neglect thanks to the efforts of an elderly servant, who keeps waiting for his employer's return. The beauty of the villa, which is not open to the public, is jealously guarded. The aura of romance and nostalgia which has built up around Balbianello corresponds to the vagaries of love as depicted in Huntington's novel. Bernard Middleton first hears the villa's nostalgic story from Ilona Zapponyi, the young daughter of a Hungarian countess. Courted by Count Kovanski a few months before coming to Cadenabbia, Ilona is still hopelessly in love with him. However, in the meantime her Russian admirer transferred his affections to Natalia Solario, and his new passion, mad and overwhelming, dashes his former love interest's hopes. Bernard feels sorry for Ilona when she confesses that she expected Kovanski to accompany her to Balbianello, but he failed to do so. Having broken Ilona's heart, Kovanski himself is now lovelorn, as Madame Solario abandoned him, tired of his obsessive attentions and unpredictable behavior. As the novel unfolds, Bernard learns from Natalia that Kovanski wanted to buy the villa, and the irritation to which she momentarily gives vent when she suggests that the property's astronomical price makes the purchase sheer folly lets Bernard suspect that the Count "was trying to buy Balbianello to take Madame Solario to it" (81). The romantic associations the villa has prompts Bernard, who cannot help thinking Balbianello is a place meant for lovers, to ponder the fatality of amorous deception: "There it stood, waiting, it would seem. Ilona had been there alone—that is, without the one who should have gone with her—and he himself had never been, and Madame Solario would not go with Kovanski.

None of them would ever go" (81). Later on, when Madame Solario goes for a stroll in Bernard's company, the young man is on the point of asking, "Would you let me take you to Balbianello?" (107), but refrains from doing so, hoping he will have a better opportunity soon. However, "the question that was charged with meaning for him" (107) is never to be asked.

In Huntington's novel, the visit to Balbianello thus becomes the equivalent of a trip to Cythera, the mythical island of love. However, contrary to what the passage *loco citato* may imply, the villa does not only stand for unfulfilled love and frustrated desire. In the opening chapter of Part Three, Bernard notices Madame Solario as she returns from a boat trip. To Middleton's relief, the man accompanying her is Eugene, rather than any of her admirers:

> Her brother gave her his help, and she took it and rose to her feet. They both stood in the boat for a moment, together, looking up, and their two faces were singularly irradiated.
> 'Where have you been?' Colonel Ross called down.
> 'To Balbianello,' answered her brother.
> Ah, what a waste! thought Bernard with a pang. (276–77)

Reassured by Eugene's "asexual" status, Bernard fails—as he later does in the second ball scene—to realize that the brother and sister's visit to the villa has the same symbolic significance as if Madame Solario went there with a lover. It is in fact his own innocence that the young man projects onto the pair of siblings, his inexperience blinding him to what is an unmistakable sign of erotic fulfillment and to the fact that the pair is actually a couple, albeit an illicit one. It is ironic that of all the emotional and erotic configurations in Huntington's novel, the only one that is happy and fulfilled should be an incestuous one, that for the protagonists amorous fulfillment is inextricably linked with breaking a time-honored taboo and bringing disgrace on themselves. To further complicate the novel's psychological dimension, the blissfulness of the sexual relationship between the siblings, doomed to be seen as perverse and abhorrent by the society, is in itself questionable. Towards the end of the novel, Madame Solario attempts to run away from her brother, though it is together that they eventually leave Italy, having driven Kovanski to suicide and deprived Bernard of his youthful illusions.

When in the course of his investigations into Gladys Huntington's life, Bernard Cohen inquired about the possible biographical reasons for the writer's interest in the subject of incest, one of his interviewees replied that the Parrishes were a Quaker family, suggesting it was not a matter for speculation. Cohen infers from this that Huntington may have been affected not so much by some actual

incestuous experience as by the somewhat claustrophobic and at times stifling experience of living in a closely-knit family (par. 13). While we may ask ourselves what motivated the author of *Madame Solario* to place incest at the heart of her novel, it is equally—if not more—interesting to raise the question as to why her characters engage in an incestuous union. If it seems farfetched to treat what is, after all, a fictional story as a clinical case, it may nevertheless be worthwhile to speculate about what drives Eugene Harden to have sexual relations with his sister. Importantly, such speculation also enables the novel's exegete to note that Huntington's characterization bears witness to her considerable psychological insight. In the three paragraphs which follow, I shall attempt to briefly present psychological and anthropological views of incest, its causes and meaning, which correspond to what I see as the central theme of Huntington's novel, namely the way disastrous and traumatic personal experiences, family tragedy and familial breakup lead to antisocial and isolationist tendencies, which, paradoxically, cause the protagonists, especially Eugene Harden, to insulate himself from the outside world and look for shelter within the family or, to be precise, what is left of it.

In *Madame Solario*, Huntington examines what is expertly referred to as adult sibling incest, a phenomenon which—unlike other types of incestuous relationships—still remains unexplored by researchers (Feldman 218). Although "many of the foundation myths of ancient civilizations have involved sibling incest," which "has held a strong place in cultural myths about the beginning of the world and is a potent part of our imaginative heritage" (Coles 60), "sex between siblings is a phenomenon that remains poorly understood and infrequently researched" (Ascherman and Safier qtd. in Coles 62–63). Since such incest is generally believed to be voluntary, as opposed to incest cases involving children, which tend to be unequivocally regarded as "based on a power imbalance or the use or threat of emotional or physical force" (Feldman 218), opinion is divided as to whether it should be prosecuted (Feldman 218; David Cohen, par. 10), and in some countries, such as France, it is not penalized (David Cohen, par. 11). Additionally, the popular view that sibling incest is inevitably harmful and traumatic is contested by leading authorities on the subject (Coles 60–61, 63). This, of course, does not prevent society from considering sibling incest between consenting adults to be morally unacceptable nor from wondering what it stems from. In keeping with the etymology of the term, derived from the Latin *incestum*, which denotes not just *incest*, but also *moral sin*, and *incestus*, which means *unchaste* ("Incest"), this type of brother-sister relationship is seen as impure, taboo and transgressive.

Why sibling incest occurs is open to question. When the mental health of one of the siblings involved is debatable, psychiatrists may be inclined to think that "unable to choose a more appropriate sexual partner," the individual "may have

regressed to a childlike way of thinking about sex and sexual partners" (Feldman 221). Experts claim that unsatisfied "emotional needs" coupled with "fear of rejection and intimacy" lead one to turn to "safe relationships, which may include incest" or to "social isolation" (Gromska, Masłowski, and Smoktunowicz 268, trans. A. P.). They also add that certain factors, such as "an unstable family situation" leading to the formation of "antisocial or narcissistic tendencies," "an immature personality or even personality disorders," are inextricably intertwined with incest "irrespective of the culture" in which it occurs (271, trans. A. P.). According to Ascherman and Safier, sibling incest may be a response to "unmet needs" such as " a desire for affiliation and affection; a combating of loneliness, depression, and a sense of isolation; and a discharging of anxiety and tension due to stress" (qtd. in Coles 61). Though the above quote refers to incest between siblings who have not reached adolescence yet, Coles extends it to adolescents and adults, claiming "that the need for a sexual relationship with a sibling, at any age, grows on the backdrop of parental neglect and abandonment" (64). Using the example of Lord Byron's relationship with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, which flourished when they were in their mid- and late twenties respectively and is believed to have inspired the poetic fragment which serves as the epigraph to the present article, Coles argues that incest is particularly likely to occur between siblings who "had appallingly fractured childhoods and very little parental support as they grew up" (64). Coles backs her views with a reference to Bank and Kahn's book *The Sibling Bond*, whose

> underlying thesis is that brother and sister incest has played a potent part in myth and literature because it describes, psychologically, a failure of parental care and attention. The children's need for affection and attachment have not been met, and as a result, they have had to turn to each other. Sibling incest involves the search for a more primitive merged state [.] (63)

The notion of the "primitive merged state" brings to mind the Jungian view of incest as expressive of a longing for completeness and harmony (Pajor 19–20), and ultimately symbolic of unity with oneself (22). Unlike Freud, who believes that "*an incestuous love choice* is in fact the first and regular one" (qtd. in Wolfe 5), sees incest as inextricably linked with the Oedipus complex and insists on the existence of a primary incestuous instinct (Pajor 12, 17) manifested in a child's sexual fantasies, Jung focuses on the non-literal, symbolic dimension of such fantasies and their place in the collective unconscious. If sexuality is tantamount to leaving the family in order to become independent (16), incest symbolism should, conversely, be read as a representation of the need to return to security (18).

While one must be careful to separate actual, clinical cases of incest from its symbolic or metaphorical dimension (21), the parallels between the Jungian view and the possible causes of incest cited earlier in this paragraph are inescapable.

When looking for the sources of the incest taboo, it is impossible to ignore exogamy, which "according to anthropologists, is the oldest human law" and favors outbreeding, counteracting the "intimacy laws" and "strongest biological ties" inherent in the family (Gromska, Masłowski, and Smoktunowicz 270, trans. M. P.). "The incest taboo, as regards siblings, appears to have two sources," therapist Paul Brown observes. "The first is genetic and relates to the degeneration of the species that results from inbreeding. The second relates to the psychological health of the individual, and concerns people separating from their families in order to become independent adults" (qtd. in David Cohen, par. 3). In a study of incest and inbreeding, Arthur P. Wolfe retraces the twentieth-century scholarly debate on the roots of the incest taboo (2–6). In the process, he cites the arguments of both sides: those who believed man to be equipped with an inborn defense mechanism to prevent the degeneration incest is likely to entail, and those who did not, turning to, among others, Freud (8). Among the views quoted are those of Leslie White and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who see incest as the enemy of socialization and intermarriage as a way "to build, out of the artificial bonds of affinity, a true human society, despite, and even in contradiction with, the isolating influence of consanguinity" (Lévi-Strauss qtd. in Wolf 7), arguing that inbreeding precludes "cooperation *between* families" and that the incest taboo serves "to unite families with one another, and social evolution as a *human* affair was launched upon its career" (White qtd. in Wolf 7).

In one of *Madame Solario*'s last scenes, Count Kovanski, determined to marry the eponymous heroine, the scandal notwithstanding, refers to—without naming it—the incest committed by Natalia and Eugene. However, neither of the siblings admits to it, and Harden actually tries to feebly deny it, claiming the rumor to be merely a figment of Missy Lastacori's wild imagination. Though Eugene's own behavior when he shouts at Kovanski, "She's mine, only mine. *You* won't have her—she's mine!" (375), evidently shows that he cannot control himself even in public and that there is more than a grain of truth in the allegations, he is stable enough to realize that the relationship between him and Natalia is transgressive by the standards of the society in which they live. However, throughout the novel, Huntington makes it clear that the brother and sister seem to lead a parallel existence in a world of their own, to which the codes and conventions of ordinary society do not apply. In Harden's words, "One is shamed, if ever, only because of what one is in the eyes of other people. And what one does is judged by what one is—in *their* eyes, in the world" (210). Siblings, however,

must not judge each other by the standards of the outside world: "You can't look at me with the eyes of other people" (210), the brother tells his sister. Of the two, Eugene is incontestably the architect of this separate world, into which he gradually drags his sister. "We both lost our supports in the same catastrophe, Nelly. And we are *together* out here in the open—different from everyone else" (147), he declares shortly after his arrival at Cadenabbia. Symbolically, this separateness is represented by the interactions which take place between Madame Solario and Harden in his or her hotel room: "On his shutting the door they had entered into the atmosphere that was theirs, that of their place of privacy where they were as no one in the world knew them, and for him that meant entering, comparably to entering the room, into the drama of the past" (150–151).

It is impossible to consider the motif of incest in *Madame Solario* without taking account of "the drama of the past." Whatever one thinks of Eugene Harden, his psychological condition and his motives, the fact remains that his attempt to shoot his stepfather ruined his prospects and that the potentially brilliant future he probably had ahead of him ended before it began. Left to himself at a very young age, helpless, isolated, unable to fall back on his family's support, Harden spent twelve years leading a miserable existence which he compares to that of a "shadowless" man: a man with no qualifications, no credentials, no connections and no fortune. Relating his past to Natalia, Eugene draws an analogy between himself and the eponymous hero of *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*, a culturally influential children's story written in German by Adelbert von Chamisso, a French aristocrat expatriated in Germany after the French Revolution (*Britannica*, pars. 1–2). Published in English under the title *The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl*, it tells the story of a man who sells his shadow to the Devil. The deal liberates him from financial worries, at the same time dooming him to ostracism, lovelessness and a nomadic existence. Having read the tale as a child, Eugene still remembers it seventeen years later. When—following the initial hostility and resentment—his relations with his sister become warmer and more friendly, the Peter Schlemihl scenario takes an unusual turn. As the siblings sit on a bench in a secluded piazza, holding hands and discussing plans for the future, the sun emerges from behind the clouds, making it possible for their two silhouettes to cast their shadows. "Look! You have given me my shadow!" Harden bursts out (225). Elaborating on the idea, he seems to anticipate the incest committed later in the novel when he imagines that their two shadows assume a life of their own: "We would see them walking away together, and they would stand against the wall . . . and we would sit here and see them *over there*, and see them kiss each other" (225).

The shadow metaphors present in the novel show that Eugene gradually comes to perceive his sister as the one who completes him and is able to provide him with what he has hitherto lacked. This conviction as well as the incest to which it eventually leads inscribe themselves into the notion of family, which in itself plays an important role in *Madame Solario*. Significantly, family is one of the cornerstones of the inimical world in which, as Eugene feels, there is no place for him. He envies the wealthy and prominent holidaymakers he mingles with at Cadenabbia not only because they enjoy the social and economic status he lacks though still hopes to achieve, but also because they have never had to struggle for their social position, having been born into the "right" families. Although he regretfully knows it to be the only option available to him, the idea of being a self-made man does not appear particularly appealing to Harden, for it only seems to widen the gap between a parvenu like himself and men such as Count Kovanski or Bernard Middleton. It is this deficiency that Eugene attempts to make up for by scheming to use his and his sister's sexual attractiveness so that they can ally themselves with influential people. "I wish I could have made you the mistress of a pope, Nelly, but one does what one can" (208), he tells Natalia while planning the conquest of Roman high society, to which the Marchese San Rufino, attracted to Madame Solario, and his wife, infatuated with Harden, could be a passport. Preposterous as the comment may seem, it reveals Eugene's penchant for Machiavellian plots, his flamboyance as well as, arguably, his instability. More importantly, however, it also serves to enhance the theme of incest in the novel. Giving free rein to his imagination, which borders on madness, Harden casts his sister in the role of a papal mistress. This, in turn, brings to mind the story of the Borgias, one of the richest and most powerful families in history. Like Madame Solario, Lucrezia Borgia was a ravishingly beautiful blonde with artistic inclinations rumored to have sexual relationships with both her father, Rodrigo, who took the name Alexander VI on becoming pope, and her brother, Cesare, on whom the ruler in Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* was modeled. Unscrupulous and power-hungry, Rodrigo and Cesare Borgia rushed Lucrezia into politically advantageous marriages (Jensen 328–330) at the expense of not just her happiness, but human lives as well. Both the famed Renaissance beauty and the eponymous heroine of Huntington's novel are caught in a web of manipulation, intrigue and sexual scandal, in which the strings are pulled by the closest male relatives. In Madame Solario's story, the incest and the plotting seem to go hand in hand: the brother and sister plan Natalia's marriage to Kovanski on the same night on which they consummate their relationship, becoming "collaborators, partners in an enterprise" (Huntington 260) as well as lovers.

It is also within the family that the tragedy which marked the siblings' lives originated. At this point, it is perhaps worth mentioning that, as Nata Minor observes in *Qui a écrit Madame Solario?*, the incest in Huntington's novel is in fact double. De Florez's seduction of Natalia may be considered incestuous if not in biological then certainly in moral and psychological terms, since he was like a father to the siblings. According to Minor, Natalia committed a kind of "mock-incest" with her stepfather prior to experiencing "the real thing," that is incest proper, with her brother. However, while de Florez betrayed the trust put in him by his new family, the close emotional bond between the siblings is supposed to give them a sense of security. Eugene asserts his firm belief that he can feel safe with his sister. He sees her as the only person capable of truly understanding him because of the past they share despite having been physically separated for so many years. "Whatever happens we will never be shamed to each other; we cannot be, because we are brother and sister," Harden declares, adding that he and Natalia "have everything in common," that is "Every ancestor, every relation," "all the places and conditions of our childhood" (209). This sense of a shared heritage results in knowledge of each other and in the kind of transparency which seems impossible to obtain with other people, doomed to remain strangers. "There are no secrets, no ambiguities" (209) between the two siblings, who do not have to pretend when they are together, whereas they are obliged to do so in front of other people: "If I were sitting here with another woman, at some point I would be bound to dissimulate," Eugene confesses. "But here we are, not able to dissimulate, even if we told lies to each other" (210). Harden obviously thinks of his relationship with his sister as a buffer between the two of them and the hostile world. The "perfect attunement", the total identification which is possible between them and which makes him say, "I am with myself when I am with you" (210), translates itself into a sexual union. Their intimate relationship is the physical expression of a unity which, Harden argues, is immanent in the fact that they are siblings: "We know everything because we know what we are, what is behind us both; because we derive from the same source and by that *we are the same*" (210).

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Shelley Armitage

Black Looks and Imagining Oneself Richly: The Cartoons of Jackie Ormes

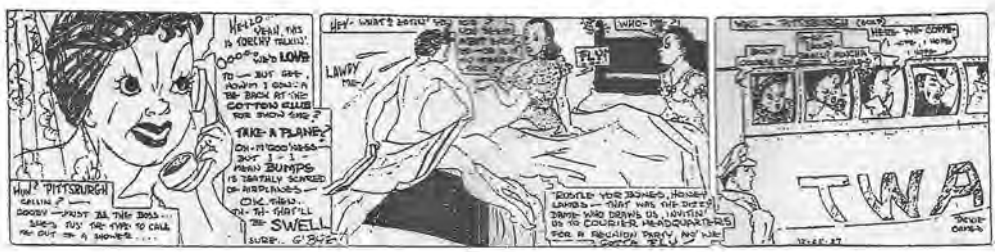
In his "The Damnation of Women" (1920)—some twenty-seven years before Jackie Ormes created Torchy Brown, her plucky cartoon heroine—W. E. B. Du Bois exposed a "world which studiously forgets its darker sisters" (741). "The future woman must have a life work and economic independence. She must have knowledge. She must have the right of motherhood at her own discretion.… The uplift of women is, next to the problem of the color line and the peace movement, our greatest modern cause" (750). Historically, Du Bois identified the persistent effect of slavery which resulted in negative attitudes about the beauty, virtue, cleanliness, morality of African American women (741). Noting that the world still expects a woman to be "primarily pretty," as "beauty is its own excuse for being," he wrote: "the white world objects to black women because it does not consider them beautiful" (741). Yet Du Bois observed that negative or dismissive attitudes about African-American women have a positive side. The decree that no woman is a woman unless by the white standard of beauty, he says, allows black women to escape the expectation of being merely ornamental because they "have girded themselves for work, instead of adorning their bodies only for play" (750). No wonder that in his 1926 review of Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, he praised her heroine Helga as a model of the modern African American woman: "There is no happy ending and yet the theme is not defeatist.… [I]n the end [Helga] will be beaten down but never utterly surrender to hypocrisy and convention. [She] is typical of the new, honest young fighting Negro woman on whom 'race' sits negligibly and Life is always first" (760).

In many ways, the cartoonist Jackie Ormes's depiction of black women and culture embodies Du Bois's ideas. Her earliest creation, "Torchy Brown," first appeared in the black-owned Pittsburgh *Courier* in 1937 and later in fourteen syndicated newspapers. Possessing no special powers or gadgets, as was typical of many adventure heroines of her day, Torchy drew on her own passion for life and expression of self-worth as the naïve but assertive teenager seized opportunities to make it from "Dixie to Harlem." Torchy Brown's battles were personal but historically based, reflecting the Great Migration of black folks from the

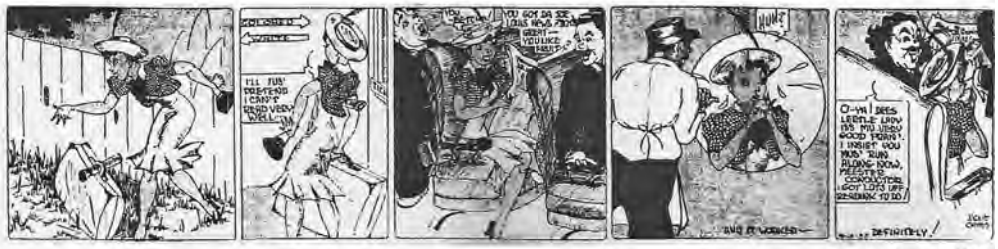
South to the North and paralleling Ormes's personal observations of Chicago's growth. The Torchy Brown series, which began with "Torchy Brown from Dixie to Harlem" in the l930s and ended with "Torchy Brown's Heartbeats" in l957, bookends Ormes's cartooning career, Torchy's transformations paralleling the spirit of Ormes's experiences as a proactive woman. In one of her last interviews, Ormes remarked of her protagonist, who had many love affairs during the life of the strip: "[She] was no moonstruck crybaby, and she wouldn't perish between heartbreaks. I have never liked dreamy little women who couldn't hold their own" (Goldstein 45). The Torchy character combines beauty and action. By the l950s, Torchy battled segregation, racism, bigotry, sexism, and environmental racism—topics absent from most other cartoons of the period. Contrary to Larsen's character, who despite her intelligence and will, slides into physical and psychological limbo by novel's end, Torchy and Ormes's other characters, Candy, and Patty-Jo, possess agency and subjectivity. Ormes creates a venue for what belle hooks calls "black looks"—not only the concept of black beauty but the transformation of the way in which a readership views such a concept. And in so doing, she revises Du Bois's stand. Black women are not ornamental beauties but do express, through kinds of physical beauty, activism, truth-seeking, and pride.

The difference in the Harlem writers and the role of their white sponsors and primary white readership and Ormes's black audience is key to Ormes's dynamicism. In a segregated America, including the American press, Ormes's savvy, dynamic, fashionable, yet hard-working heroines played to readers familiar with the predominant negative stereotypes of African-Americans in the white entertainment media. At the time that Ormes first drew "Torchy Brown," the popular comics portrayed African-Americans in gross stereotypes. If blacks appeared at all in non-black authored strips, they were maids, manservants, pickaninnies, and loafers, drawn with exaggerated lips and ears, speaking in a crude dialect which mocked African-American regional speech patterns. Along with other trailblazing black cartoonists whose work spanned the period of the l930s-l950s—Ollie Harrington ("Bootsie" and "Jive Gray"), Wilbert Holloway ("Sunnyboy Sam"), and Sammy Milai ("Bucky"), and the various artists who drew "Bungleton Green"—Ormes brought dignity and grace to African-American comics and their characters. To do so, she took up the simultaneously stereotyped characters—for example, the maid, the child (or pickanniny)—reconstructing them as savvy, saucy, smart, knowledgeable individuals in the two single panels, "Candy" and "Patty- Jo 'n' Ginger." The importance of such images to how African Americans might view themselves is reiterated by belle hooks: "We mostly see images that reinforce.... the subjugation of black bodies by white bodies.... Our eyes grow

Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem



Dec. 25, 1937



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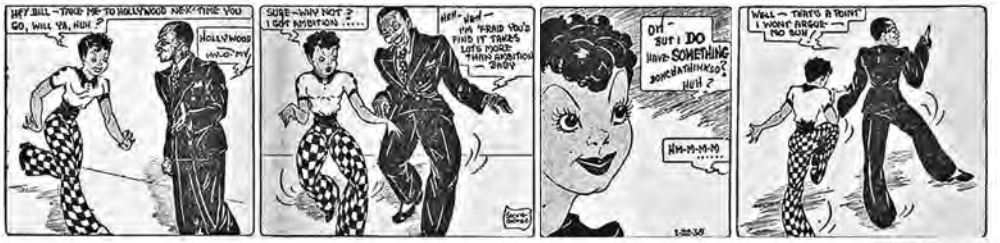

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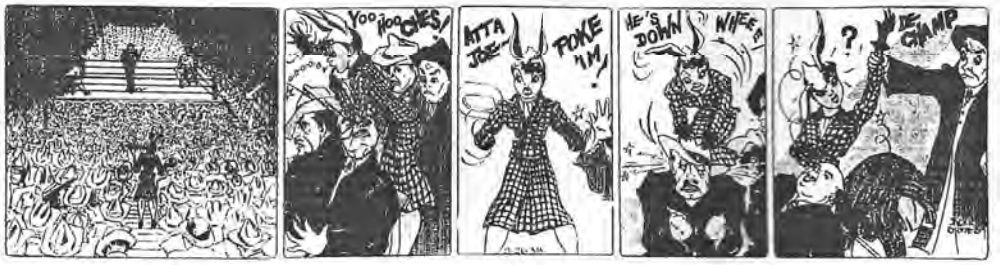


Feb. 26, 1938

accustomed to images that reflect nothing of ourselves worth seeing close-up.… Given this cultural context, we are often startled, stunned even, by representations of black images that engage and enchant" (96). Working during the heyday of the black press, Ormes accomplished both. In "Torchy Brown from Dixie to Harlem" (l937–1940), "Candy" (mid-l940s), "Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger" (l946–55), and "Torchy Brown Heartbeats" (also called "Torchy in Heartbeats," l950–1955) each features a female protagonist who provides a link between the domestic scene, individual lives of women and social, political, and cultural issues. Though Dale Messick is lauded as an originator of the adventuresome career woman, Torchy Brown predates Dale Messick's girl reporter by three years. Unlike Starr, whose entanglements were mostly romantic, Ormes's characters deal with all manner of real-life stresses and demands. The contemporary cartoonist, Barbara Brandon, who draws "Where I'm Coming From," echoes hooks as she notes the crucialness of Ormes's images to not only a black readership but African American artists: "You get so much out of it. It's visual. It's verbal. It's telling us how we talked, how we looked, what concerned us" (Goldstein 67).

If we were only talking about the cartoon work itself, Brandon's remark is significant enough. But when we consider Jackie Ormes's own life, her on-the-job training as a journalist, her activist work in the NAACP, Urban League, and with charities like the March of Dimes, and her own career choices exclusively as an artist of African-American materials—even surviving an FBI file kept on her because of her attendance of an event of communist sympathizers—we see the work in a richer, socially-resonating light. Jackie Ormes was born Zelda Jackson in Pittsburgh in l911. When she was six, her father died in an automobile accident, and she and her older sister lived with their grandmother while their mother worked as a live-in maid. Her grandmother, mother, and stepfather (her mother later remarried and the family moved to Monongahela, outside Pittsburgh) encouraged Jackie and her sister to get an education and pursue their talents. As a girl, Jackie always drew—pictures on raincoats, work for school papers. Her sister, Dolores, became a singer (Torchy is named for her musical style). The creative lives of both these young women were inspired by experiences where they learned more and from which they modeled themselves. As a girl, Ormes's public school curriculum included four years of English, languages, sciences, and math, and a French club. But for the maturing Ormes, this special place of learning was the daily, urban newspaper.

When Ormes was still in high school, the Pittsburgh *Courier* published her first article. She had pressed them for a job, an early indication of her ambitions and awareness of her creative talents. After graduation, the newspaper hired her as a cub reporter. Immediately, along with predictably covering events for the

social page, she was asked to be a sports reporter. She found herself responsible for covering fights, for example, thus going typically where few women did. In l936, she married Earl Ormes, an older man; they moved to Chicago to make their home. There she joined the staff of the *Chicago Defender* as a news reporter, covering the city's major racial stories, including segregation at the Great Lakes Naval Academy, riots at the St. Charles Penitentiary, and a number of court cases. By the time she began drawing "Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem," Ormes was working political beats atypical of women's newspaper assignments. During this same period she began to spend many of her off hours working for various causes ranging from the NAACP to the Urban League on whose board she eventually served. Though as a successful black woman, artist, and journalist these activities would appear to situate Ormes in a world where preoccupation with women's roles, sexism, and racism might be lessened, most critics agree that the public Torchy suggests the private Jackie who was not quite admitted to the fray. As she quickly became known primarily as a cartoonist, she had to confront the typical marginalizing of that art form as well as the prohibitive attitudes towards women cartoonists. She apparently was underpaid for "Candy," and had to weather fads in cartooning which challenged the romantic and even political concerns of her female protagonist. In the l950s, when she was very well known, the *Chicago Tribune* tried to woo her away from the *Defender*. But Ormes declined, fearing that the white-owned and directed newspaper would attempt to compromise the content of her strip by absorbing the racial themes she felt free to express to the black readership of the *Defender*. The positive sense of self Jackie Ormes expressed in her latter years she attributed to the creation of the public and popular Torchy Brown, and to a lesser degree, her other characters, as they advanced the concerns of other black men and women.

The opening episode of "Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem," a weekly four-panel black-and-white strip, Torchy, "who doesn't know a thing about life, but suspects an awful lot," is living on a farm in Mississippi with her aunt and uncle, while her mother, "a gay divorcee," lives in the North. Torchy soon grows bored with farm life, and prompted by a visit from a stylish Northern relative, sells her animals to buy a train ticket, and heads for New York. She becomes a dancer at the famous Cotton Club, where she encounters the likes of Cab Calloway, Bill ("Bojangles") Robinson, and the Nicholas Brothers and finds romance and danger. "Dixie to Harlem" is obviously the work of a young woman but all the more interesting for that. Torchy is tall and sexy with big, alluring eyes and long, long legs. Like so many of her generation, she wants nothing more than to leave the farm behind for the glamour of the city. Though her feelings are quite individual and personal, the treatment of the "Great Migration" theme and by implication,

the opportunities available for migrating blacks surely struck an authentic chord with her audience. Jackie Ormes had never been South or to Harlem as a young woman, but she used her reporting skills and the available national news in the *Courier* to establish the verisimilitude of experiences.

Though amateurish and rather simple in its narratives, "Torchy" established a youthful hope and a positive identity for black women primarily due to its autobiographical aspect, which contributed to its authenticity. With the exception of the long legs in the cartoons, five-foot-one Jackie Ormes used herself as model to draw Torchy Brown, Candy, and Ginger. Not only Ormes's newspaper and civic work, but also her husband Earl's jobs as a banker and later manager of major hotels in Chicago, enabled the couple to live a comfortable middle-class life—one which put them in touch with major political figures and performers of the day, such a Cab Calloway and Lena Horne. Ormes was extremely fashionable, a beauty, later training models and directing style shows for charities. The cartoons are an embodiment of their creator—a positive image of black working women.

[B]ell hooks has written extensively about the crisis of black identity, focusing much of her analysis on the power of images in identity formation. In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, she reminds us:

> Many audiences in the United States resist the idea that images have an ideological intent. This is equally true of black audiences. Fierce critical interrogation is sometimes the only practice that can pierce the wall of denial consumers of images construct so as not to face that the real world of image-making is political—that politics of domination inform the way the vast majority of images we consume are constructed and marketed. (5)

Recent sociologists have paid particular attention to the phenomenon they call "misrecognition," a process by which we formulate what is reflected through images in the construction of identity. An early theorist, Charles Taylor, allows: "Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people of society mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (27). The term has been particularly helpful in understanding internalized racism and the responses to images by whites which are blatantly stereotypical. Though she does not mention cartoons, hooks examines the effect of misrecognition in Hollywood films on generations of blacks. Referencing the power of spectatorship—particularly the white male gaze—she argues, for example, that this kind of popular entertainment privileges white female beauty while relegating black females almost exclusively to roles as

maids or mammies, or, as Toni Morrison notes in *Playing in the Dark*, by completely omitting the black experience. Most importantly, hooks is interested not solely in critique but in transforming the image—"creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews" (4). She advocates the "transgressive image," a political act which raises the questions about the perspective from which we look, "who.… we identify with, whose image do we love" (4).

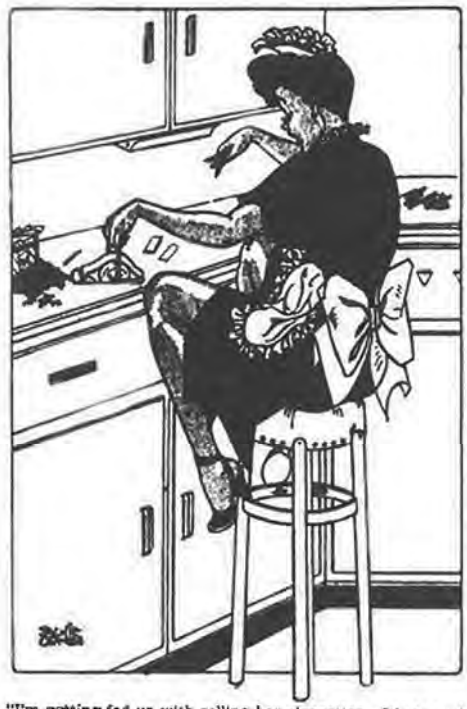
Most of hooks's argument assumes the power of the colonizing culture and, in so doing, inadvertently necessitates a somewhat reactive stance. Black identity is tied largely to the countering of images constructed by others. But Ormes's cartoons are proactive, striking an attitude of personal power, culturally derived. The creation of strong, glamorous, smart black characters for a black audience shapes a perspective of "recognition" of the black experience. Without the prohibitions she would have faced had she drawn for white newspapers, Ormes raised the normally forbidden topics of violence against women and drew semi-nude characters without sensationalizing or exoticizing them. Her spunky and savvy primarily middle-class heroines were individualistic yet representative. They were desirable because despite the obvious tropes of the strips—adventure, mystery, and romance—they were forceful in their autobiographical/realistic references. Ormes's adult females were not only the mirror of her own looks—beautiful figure, the latest hair and dress styles—but of the artist's "looking" which established the viewpoint for the audience. A measure of this authenticity came from the detailed interiors and settings, the accuracy of the fashions coupled with compelling and newsworthy issues. Due to the popularity of her Torchy Brown cartoons, Ormes was regularly greeted on the street as "Torchy." The gorgeous heroine was real. And her actions and adventures, if Ormes's life is any sign, argued a measure of verisimilitude as well.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue for the power of embodiment in autobiography. The body is the site of memory and agency. Given the history of many African-American women for whom slavery and its continued influence was defining, positively possessing one's body is key to self worth. Critic Nellie Y. McKay argues that Zora Neal Hurston in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*, transgressed the "race-representative text of oppression" (101). Such "narrative identity," according to McKay, "rejected the primacy of slave history and the supremacy of white racism over black lives" (101). Historically, African-American autobiography has been a prime genre for reimagining the self, for women in particular. "The black self-story.… sees autobiography as a weapon in the continuing search for black freedom" (101). As Toni Morrison says, that self is presented as both "solitary and representative" (101). In the case of the panel, "Candy," (modeled

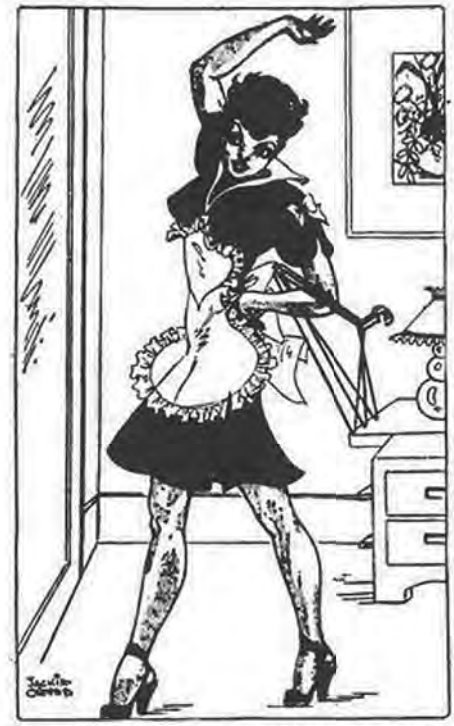
physically on Ormes) featuring the wise-cracking and svelte maid (in service to a white matron), she is certainly "eye Candy," but also espouses political insights and sound perspectives. She appeared at a time when the *Defender* campaigned for improved wages and conditions for black women in domestic service. She also provided black servicemen with a pin-up girl during a period when convention prevented them from posting the popular white pin-up girls in their barracks. After Candy's run was over in the *Defender*, Ormes received a letter from a serviceman praising Candy as "wholesome American womanhood" (81). Ormes cleverly connects beauty to intelligence and pluck in these panels.

Though "Candy" is certainly of interest as a single panel during the l940s, it is particularly so when juxtaposed against the artist's own experiences of that decade and when considered as part of the cartoon art and journalism contemporaneous to it in the Chicago *Defender*. As Ormes became heavily involved in Civil Rights issues, the cartoon at first may seem by contrast merely play or diversion for her. Candy, after all, is a good-looking, shapely maid of a white mistress and all the "action" occurs around the single figure of Candy who comments in one-liners about her boss, social conditions, class and race relations, and womanhood. As a self-trained artist drawing a panel each week, Ormes only sustained "Candy" for four months. But during that time the maid demonstrated that although she had worked for Mrs. Goldrocks, she was prettier, smarter, more resourceful, and independent than her boss ever dreamed of being. As Candy strikes one gorgeous pose after another, she makes comments like these: "I'd better answer this GI mail for Mrs. Goldrocks so she'll have something to brag about at the meeting"; "Mrs. Goldrocks admits her biggest thrill is black-market bargains—That's because she's convinced they're really exclusive"; "Im'getting fed up with rolling her cigarettes. It's enough to make me break down and share my tailor-mades." In cartoon after cartoon, Candy inverts class and race divisions demonstrating that the black community often has superior ways of approaching problems and thoroughly demonstrating that black America, as the major service group of the country, enables the privileged class to function. "Oh, Mrs. Goldrocks, one of your guests took my mink scarf home by mistake.… will her face be red" (she holds a fox fur). Another theme is the superiority of black womanhood. Candy says: "So that is the great Swoona Stagrow. Hmmmph.… I've seen gals with more by accident than she's got on purpose!" Or: "This job's good for me.… The more I see of her friends, the more I appreciate my own." In fact, Candy reverses the expected roles completely: "Course, Mrs. Goldrocks, you realize these first weeks you will be on probation?"

Candy ran on the same opinion page with W. E. B. DuBois, Walter White, S. I. Hayakawa, Langston Hughes and other esteemed writers of the day, functioning



"I'm getting fed up with rolling her cigarettes. It's enough to make me break down and share my tailor-mades!"
June 2, 1945



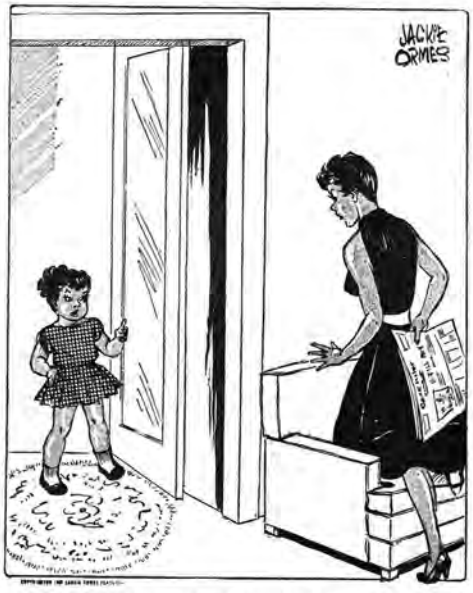
"Gee, I hope Mrs. Goldrocks doesn't gain any more weight. I can't possibly wear a size larger."
March 31, 1945

not so much as light fare as a kind of political cartoon. She often shared the page with Jay Jaxon, another cartoonist who addressed other social aspects of race relations. Both cartoonists followed a page which usually had political cartoons prominently displayed at the top, and the strips, "Speed Jaxon" and "Bungleton Green" ran concurrently. Toward the end of the time in which Ormes drew Candy, Jay Jackson appears to have imitated the classic female form she originated.

Though cartoons or comics often are said to be effective because of their general rather than specific appeal, Ormes empowered women through images of a black subjectivity at once visualized in the authorial body and by focusing the spectators' gaze on characters who bear subjective witness. The definition of black beauty as related to intelligence marks all her strips. But instead of objectified, exotic black women, her curvy and glamorous Torchy, Candy, and Ginger are innocent of their allure, enjoying the pleasure of their own bodies—charmers but not seducers. Historical objectification of black bodies has been successful because it denies the central ingredient of subjectivity—intellect. But these beautiful women are smart, well-informed, and speak their minds.

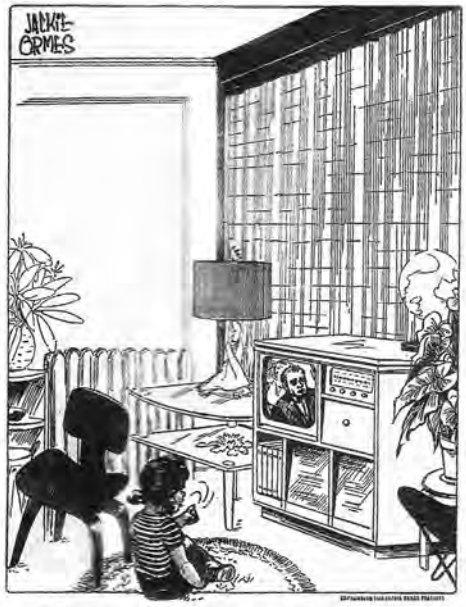
Because Ormes drew during the height of the black press, she enjoyed particular popularity and exposure. In l947 the *Courier*'s circulation figure was 286,686, the *Defender*'s 161,253. The next year the circulation for the *Courier* climbed to its highest, 358,000. Langston Hughes in his "Colored and Colorful" column for the *Defender* once commented: "If I were marooned on a desert island.... I would miss Jack Ormes's cute drawings" (Goldstein 75). Not until the Civil Rights struggle of the l950s prompted the mainstream presses to cover African American subjects more and the advent of television caused the *Courier*'s circulation to plummet to 159,238 in l953. According to Nancy Goldstein, "the *Courier*'s news page often featured articles about individuals who had risen from humble beginnings to success, and editorial pages regaled readers with instructive pieces on such topics as the virtues of thrift, ambition, and sacrifice," alongside current political debates and issues (40). Torchy Brown "Dixie to Harlem" can be read as a rags-to-riches story. And Candy is certainly a maid who has done well for herself. The fact that Candy looks better in her boss's clothes than she does suggests much about the Emperor's clothes.

The most popular and certainly longest running cartoon was the single panel "Patty Jo 'n' Ginger," which ran from the mid-l940s to the mid-l950s. Featuring the spunky and smart little sis, Patty 'Jo' and big sis Ginger, who never speaks, the weekly tracked the stylish sisters engagement with topics from the Truman doctrine to neighborhood segregation. Working from the perspective of a middle-class black family, in three of the earliest cartoons, Patty-Jo converses with a soda-jerk, a store-keeper, on the city streets, and in the school yard. Though several of the panels take place within the sisters' home, often the commentary has to do with the outside world, as both sisters show they are concerned citizens who see the limitations of certain attitudes and political positions. In one panel, Patty-Jo is the head of the Junior Defense Squad, and pronounces a businessman, who has been hit on the head with a toy plane launched by one of Patty-Jo's friends, "the first American AIRRAID casualty of World War 2 ½." The joke is on Mr. Pushbottom, who obviously has to be forced off his chair to do his patriotic duty. Often it is the child's view, of course—fresh, direct, without pretense or guile—which makes the adults see their own complacency or hypocrisy. Sister Ginger is the straight woman to Patty-Jo's observations. Patty-Jo, wearing a soap-box-like costume, comes into her sister's bedroom to say: "It was a game over at Benjie's house.... I thought it was a matter of record that God an' General MacArthur decided the NATIVES didn't have a Chinaman's chance in Asia!" In these scenes, the older and supposedly wiser sister is not. In fact, she is always absorbed with her appearance, checking her nails, trying on lingerie, or being courted by a good-looking man. The desirability of romance is not lost on Patty-Jo, however.



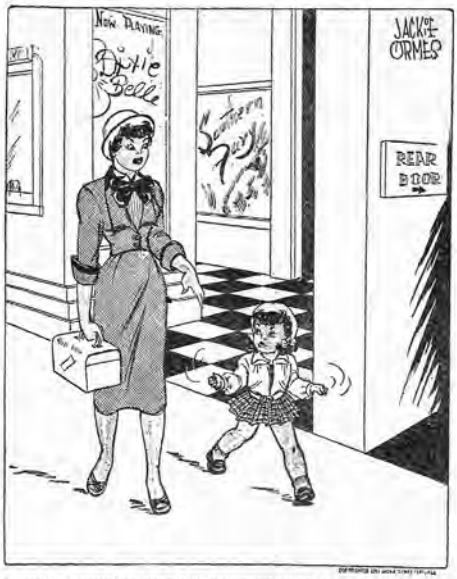
"I don't want to seem touchy on the subject . . . but, that new little white tea-kettle just whistled at me!"

Oct. 8, 1955



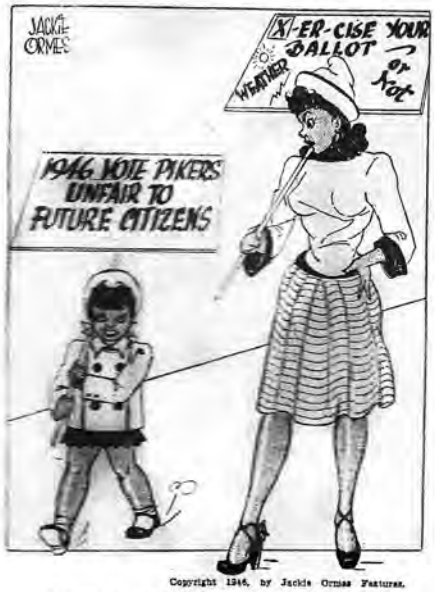
"It's a movie starring CINAMACARTHY again. . .continued from last week."

May 8, 1954



"It would be interestin' to discover WHICH committee decided it was un-American to be COLORED."

April 7, 1951

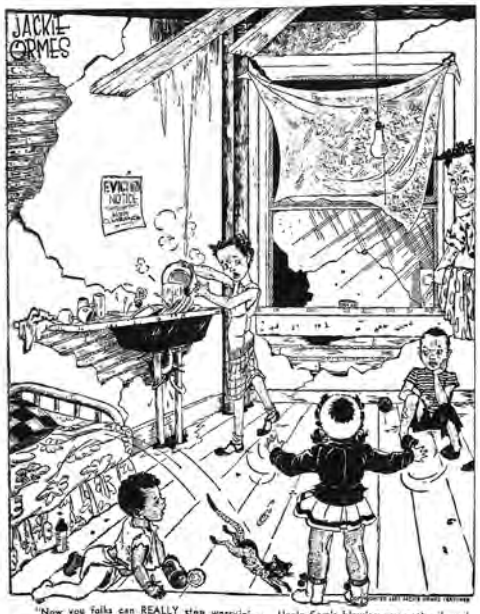


"This oughta bring em out to do something even if it's wrong."

Nov. 2, 1946

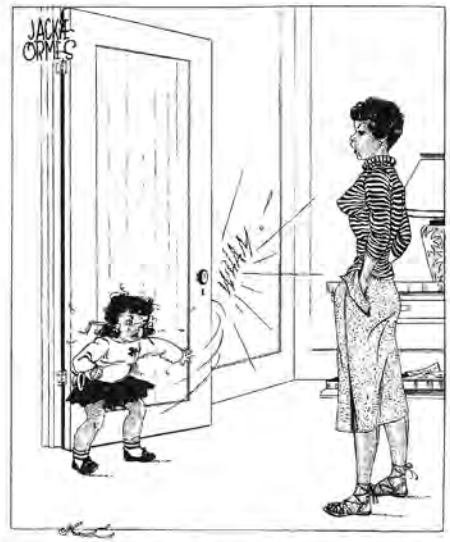
She says at one point: "Does your type come in smaller sizes," referring to Ginger's handsome suitor. But mostly Patty-Jo has done her homework, and when big sis picks her up from school, she notes: "We kids got up a petition for the new Congress.... protesting guaranteed SOCIAL INSECURITY. We claim it's heading us for a DESPAIR STATE an' robs us of our ambition as adults." Certainly some anticipated perspectives on political and social arguments are revealed here. But Patty Jo's precociousness goes beyond the certain positions which may reflect Ormes's own thoughts. In one panel, she takes on the repopularization of biological determinism as applied to minorities and the complexities of race construction. Playing with a monkey from the circus, she says: "Lookit, Ginger.... It's Zambia from the circus.... We discovered we're KINDRED SOULS on account both of us love popcorn so much." To the side of the door Patty-Jo enters is a sculpture resembling that of Augusta Savage, suggesting contributions of African-Americans to the fine arts. The juxtaposition of primitive imagery and the fine arts is another Ormes hallmark. Throughout the strip, Patty Jo's insights imply multiple and complex meanings through visual and verbal play. As Nancy Goldstein points out, Patty 'Jo's language is a pastiche of adult vocabulary and "low, slangy vernacular. Her speech is not quite the way people talk, regardless of age, but is constructed in a way that defines her personality as childlike yet shrewd" (85). Patty-Jo even knows her music, and in one scene she refers to "Ode to Spring" and directs with a Stravinsky-like style. Like a host of entertaining child stars who one-upped their elders, Patty-Jo exposes their ignorance through her ironic tone, but is never mean. Her opinions provide insights into the compelling issues of the times: union strikes, segregated communities and schools, school curricula, America's imperialism as Ormes saw it expressed in the Korean and other Asian conflicts, the actions of the House on Un-American Activities, voting rights and responsibilities, responsibilities toward charities like the March of Dimes, and many others.

From the popularity of Patty-Jo came the first African-American doll in the late 40s and 50s, advertised as "America's only Negro character doll." Margaret Goss Burroughs, the founder and director of the DuSable Museum of African-American History in Chicago, which houses some of Ormes's work, notes: "Jackie devoted her life to turning around the stereotypical images which have been so long used to degrade and depict African-Americans as mammies and picknanninies. It was she who started the trend which resulted in more humane portrayals and images of African-American people" (qtd. in Goldstein 64). Ormes's doll often appeared alongside Patty-Jo in some panels, her stylish outfits mirrored in Patty-Jo's dress. Since the panel could be enjoyed by both adults and children, the doll was another way of physically materializing positive images within the black community. For

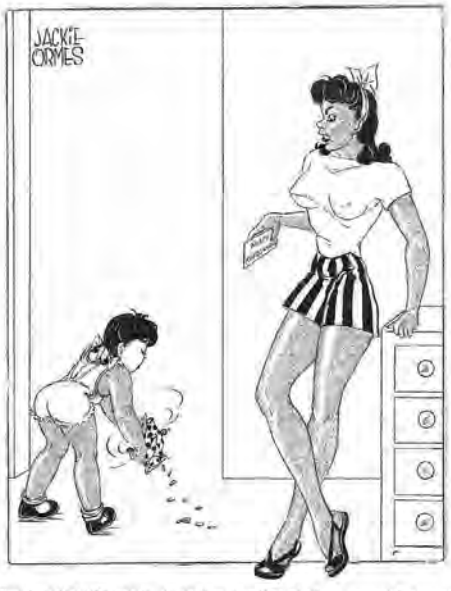


"Now you folks can REALLY stop worryin' . . . Uncle Sam's blowing our national wad on an H-bomb for your PROTECTION . . . course, that don't spell HOUSING, but you gotta admit it ain't HAY, either!"

Feb. 13, 1950

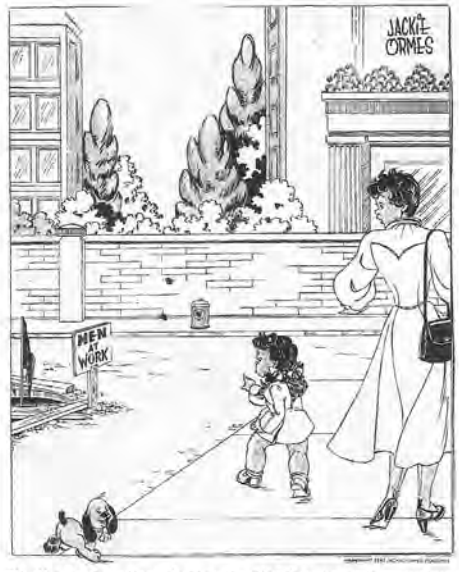


March 18, 1950



"I'm joining the NAACP tonight. . . Maybe if we all get 'On the ball' now, we won't find ourselves behind that ol' '8-ball' Daddy talks about!"

Oct. 5, 1946



"What'd I tell you? . . .underground workers. . .jus'wait till the un-American Committee hears about this!"

Feb. 11, 1950

Ormes who had lost her only child, a daughter, Patty-Jo was a sort of surrogate child—a creative progeny of this creative woman.

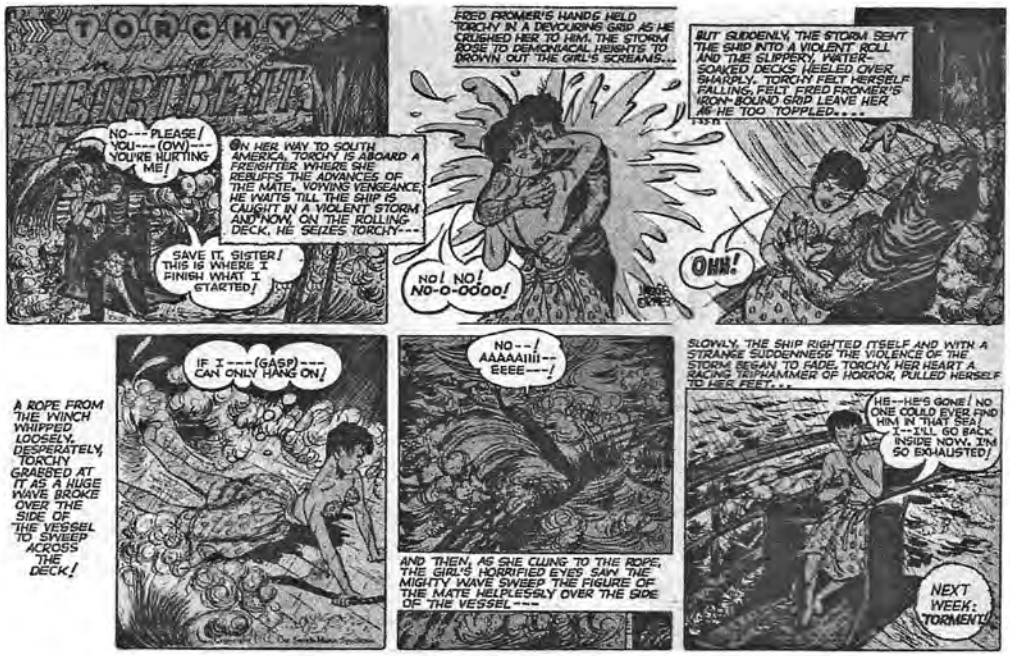
Returning to her Torchy character for the advent of the colored comics page in the *Courier*, "Torchy Brown Heartbeats," Ormes echoed in narrative and style the successes of local radio soap operas, plays featuring black historic figures by the W. E. B. Du Bois Theater, and adventure and romantic strips like "Terry and the Pirates" and "Brenda Starr." Like "Brenda Starr," Torchy was beautiful and shapely and fell in and out of love, though her romantic interests were more likely to be gamblers and jazz musicians rather than the so-called Mystery Man. Yet Jackie Ormes, as in the case of "Candy," was, if not sexually explicit, at least more earthy than her white counterparts. Her heroine appeared in various states of undress, even in nude-bathing scene, and she was seemingly always fighting off would-be rapists and forces that would undermine her. She used these ostensible formulae to attract an audience yet the images and narrative had serious intent. The "adventure" strip suggested that meaningful female action had to do with self-protection and self-expression (rather than dependency and victimhood), and though these behaviors and attitudes certainly had to do with men, they were not determined by them. As an initiator and self-reliant person, Torchy grew as a non-conventional character redefining certain stereotypic notions of womanhood during these years, even as she embraced the desire for love and romance.

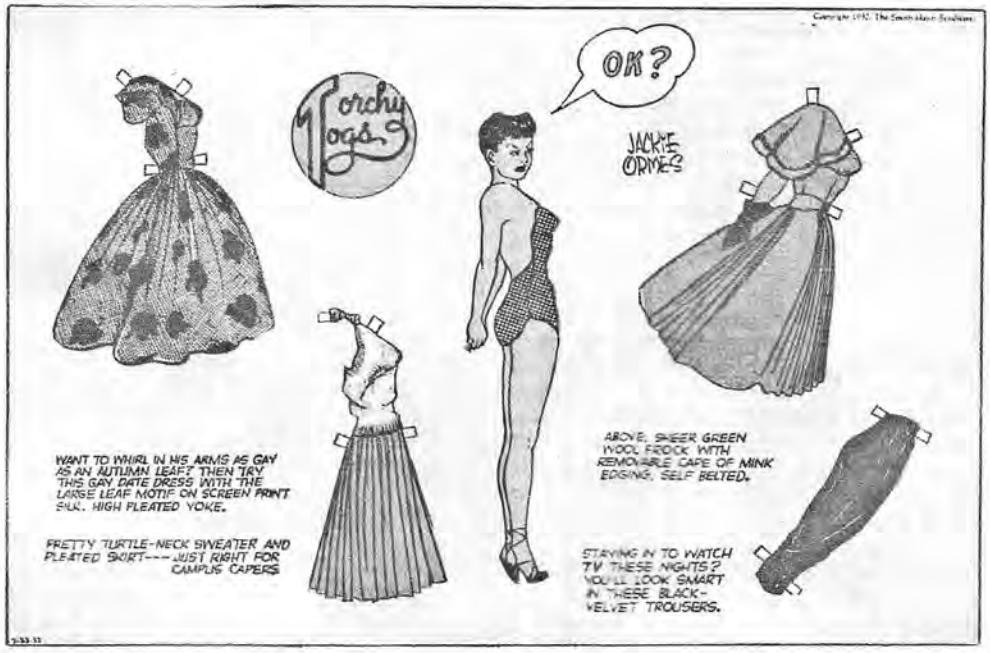
As an example, in 1953, the Torchy strip took an even more marked turn. Rather than creating action due to a shift in perspective on female attitudes and behavior or due to settings, which included the high seas and snake-infested jungles, Ormes began to write about bigotry and pollution, subjects no white cartoonist would treat for another twenty years. At the same time, what had been a rather decorative style became more gritty and realistic in the strip.

The plot during this period of refocus in the strip goes something like this. Torchy escapes from a failed romance on a dark, rainy night and decides to take a bus to wherever it stops. The bus caroms off a lonely mountain road and Torchy encounters Earl Lester, a young jazz pianist whose hands had been crushed. Torchy persuades Earl to have an operation that will allow him to play again. She nurses him back to health and falls in love. But Earl's first love is his art, and Torchy realizes she can't play mistress to his music. Fleeing him, she signs on for a mysterious job in South America, and a second saga begins. En route, she escapes an attempted rape aboard ship—Ormes's subject here a taboo for contemporary cartoons of the day. Once there, she discovers that her "job" is to be mistress to the evil plantation owner LeGran, a tyrant who controls his workers by terrorizing them. She soon meets the handsome Paul Hammond, also

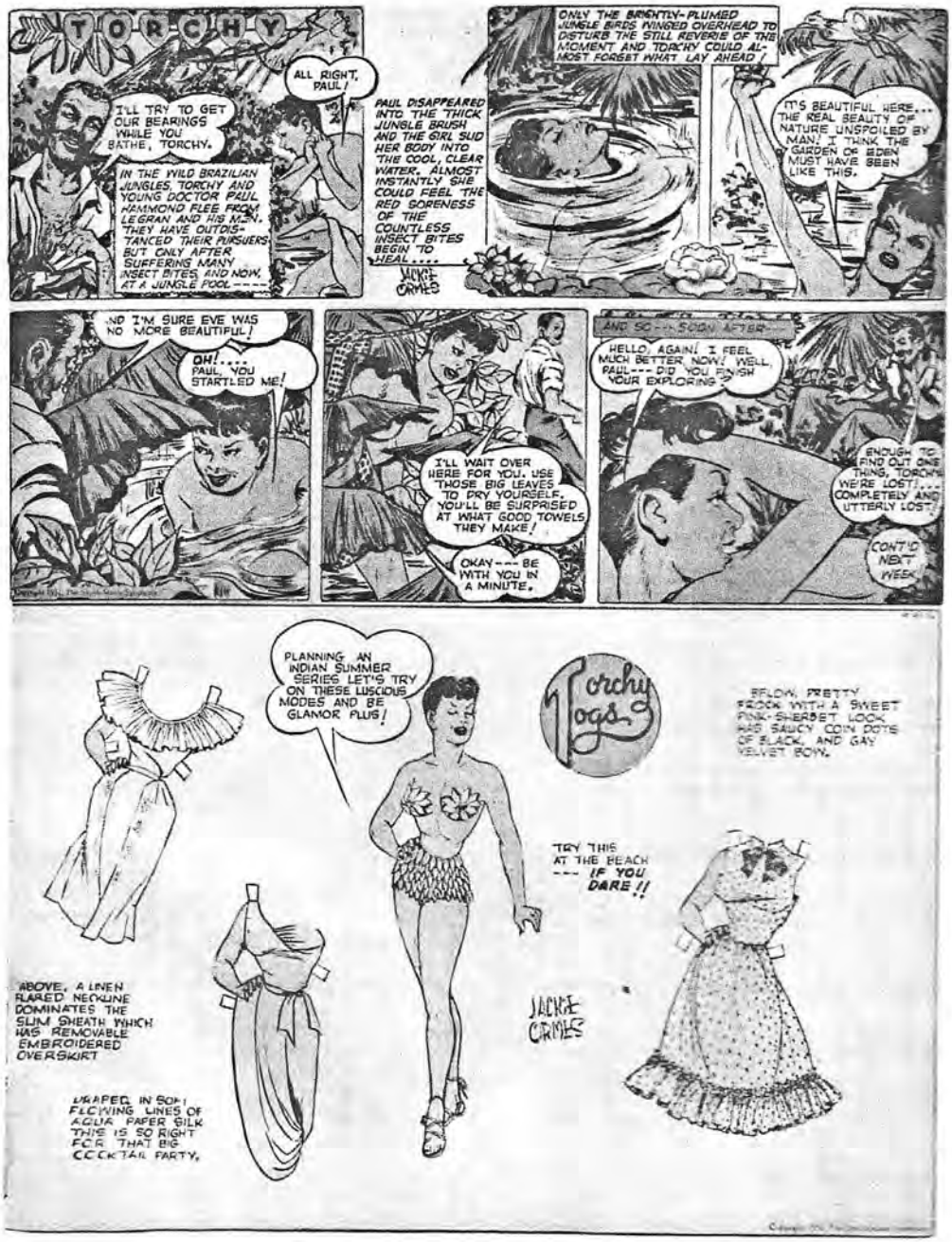
Torchy in Heartbeats

Feb. 23, 1952





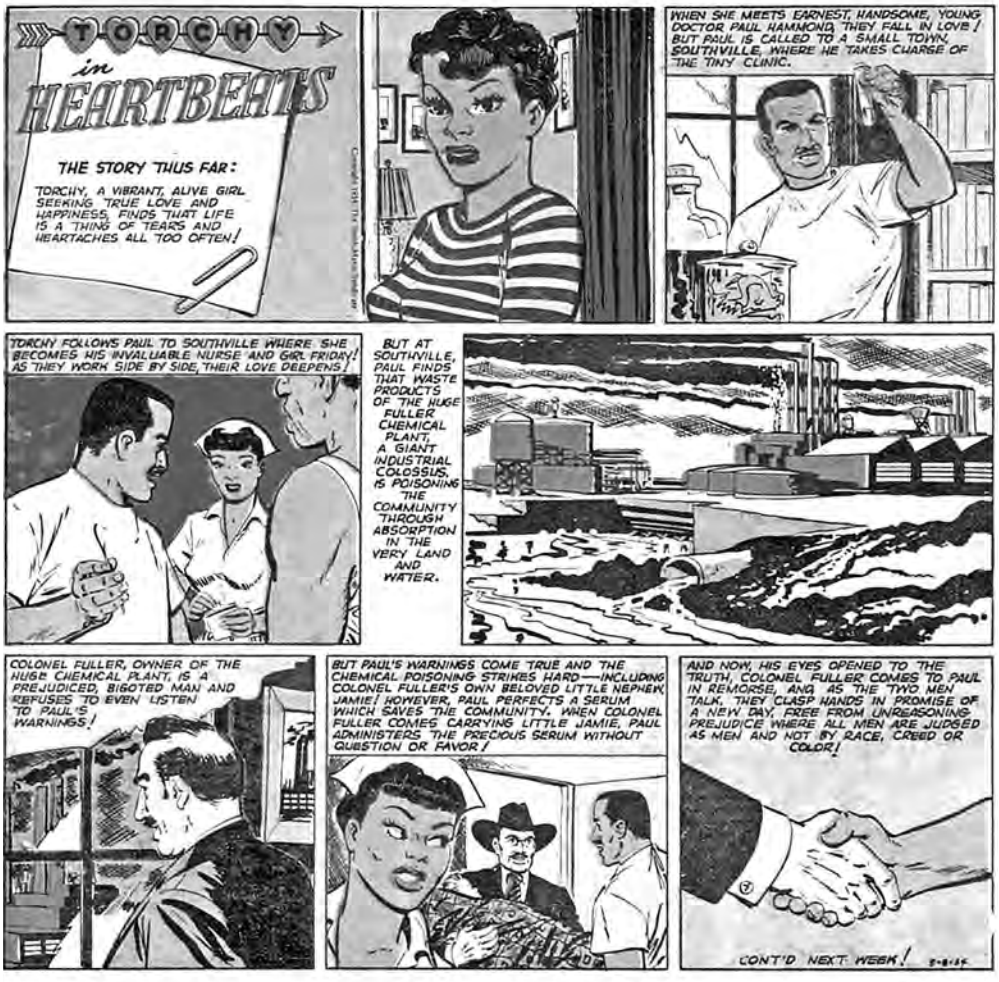
Oct. 25, 1952


TORCHY
ALL RIGHT, PAUL!
I'LL TRY TO GET OUR BEARINGS WHILE YOU BATHE, TORCHY.
IN THE WILD BRAZILIAN JUNGLES, TORCHY AND YOUNG DOCTOR PAUL HAMMOND FLEE FROM LEGRAN AND HIS MEN. THEY HAVE OUTDISTANCED THEIR PURSUERS BUT ONLY AFTER SUFFERING MANY INSECT BITES, AND NOW, AT A JUNGLE POOL ----
PAUL DISAPPEARED INTO THE THICK JUNGLE BRUSH AND THE GIRL SLID HER BODY INTO THE COOL, CLEAR WATER. ALMOST INSTANTLY SHE COULD FEEL THE RED SORENESS OF THE COUNTLESS INSECT BITES BEGIN TO HEAL....
JACKIE ORMES
ONLY THE BRIGHTLY-PLUMED JUNGLE BIRDS WINGED OVERHEAD TO DISTURB THE STILL REVERIE OF THE MOMENT AND TORCHY COULD ALMOST FORGET WHAT LAY AHEAD!
IT'S BEAUTIFUL HERE... THE REAL BEAUTY OF NATURE UNSPOILED BY MAN! I THINK THE GARDEN OF EDEN MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE THIS.
AND I'M SURE EVE WAS NO MORE BEAUTIFUL!
OH!... PAUL, YOU STARTLED ME!
I'LL WAIT OVER HERE FOR YOU. USE THOSE BIG LEAVES TO DRY YOURSELF. YOU'LL BE SURPRISED AT WHAT GOOD TOWELS THEY MAKE!
OKAY--- BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE.
AND SO--- SOON AFTER
HELLO, AGAIN! I FEEL MUCH BETTER NOW! WELL, PAUL--- DID YOU FINISH YOUR EXPLORING?
ENOUGH TO FIND OUT ONE THING, TORCHY! WE'RE LOST!... COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY LOST!
CONT'D NEXT WEEK
PLANNING AN INDIAN SUMMER SERIES, LET'S TRY ON THESE LUSCIOUS MODES AND BE GLAMOR PLUS!
Torchy Togs
BELOW, PRETTY FROCK WITH A SWEET PINK-SHERBET LOOK HAS SAUCY COIN DOTS OF BLACK, AND GAY VELVET BOW.
TRY THIS AT THE BEACH --- IF YOU DARE!!
ABOVE, A LINEN FLARED NECKLINE DOMINATES THE SLIM SHEATH WHICH HAS REMOVABLE EMBROIDERED OVERSKIRT
DRAPED IN SOFT FLOWING LINES OF AQUA PAPER SILK THIS IS SO RIGHT FOR THAT BIG COCKTAIL PARTY.
JACKIE ORMES

LeGran's prisoner, with whom she escapes through the perilous Brazilian jungle. Of course they fall in love.

Eventually Paul and Torchy go to Southville. Torchy, by now trained as a nurse, is Dr. Hammond's assistant in a town where Colonel Fuller runs a poisonous chemical plant and where Hammond is forced to set up his clinic in a run-down shack, because he is black. Colonel Fuller is a raving bigot, controlling the town and its people. Moreover, there is an epidemic in the town, which Hammond traces to wastes from Fuller's factory that contaminate the town's water supply.

May 8, 1954



Fuller, of course, refuses to listen to the black doctor. Hammond must then work tirelessly to develop a serum to cure the pollution-poisoned townfolk.

Meanwhile, Torchy has made friends with Fuller's lonely little nephew, Jamie, even though Fuller, of course, has forbidden Jamie to speak to black people. Predictably, Jamie gets sick from drinking the polluted water. Doctor Hammond saves the child's life with a serum he has developed, and at the end of this sequence Fuller has a change of heart. The Southville episodes embody Ormes's view of the modern South in the l950s. Plantations have been replaced by factories, but conditions remain the same: a poor black underclass is exploited by a racist overseer. Only a dedicated and fearless African-American physician and loving woman save the workers and begin to transform this racist and "poisoned" atmosphere.

Due to her light skin tone, Jackie Ormes could have passed as white and the issue of passing, which she addressed humorously once in the first Torchy strip, possibly could have insured a job in the mainstream press early in her career. Late in her career when the *Chicago Tribune* did offer her a position, she refused, citing the complex collaborative process involving more than the single artist. For creative as well as political reasons, Ormes could never freely treat the issues she valued working for a white press and moreover for a white readership. The inclusion of a black girl character in l965 in "Brenda Starr" led to its temporary removal from circulation in the Southern states. And when the African-American Lieutenant Flip joined "Beetle Baiily" in l970, the strip was dropped by a number of Southern newspapers. In the l970s the *Chicago Tribune* did get a strip featuring an African-American woman, actually another creative woman who was a photographer and who got herself into some of the same scrapes as Torchy Brown. But "Friday Foster" was drawn by two men, Jim Lawrence and Jorge Longaron. Other male cartoonists had featured black women previously, but never centrally as Ormes. That she had imitators is demonstrated in these strips, but her legacy is deeper. Performers such as Allen Ally have cited Torchy as inspiring not only because of the timelessness of the cartoons and their subjects but because of the depiction of the body in movement in the art itself. Ormes's inspiration as an artist—the way in which female agency was visualized—is as important as the themes she treated. Her last great challenge physically was her own accelerating rheumatoid arthritis which ended her career as an artist.

As for the question of color, after only one instance in "Torchy from Dixie to Harlem," Ormes uniformly treated pigmentation—all of her black characters highlighted the same. She was not interested in issues of color and class, as emphasized in Milai's cartoons, for instance; she championed equity and natural grace. Creating a "black" perspective is not simply "uplift." As hooks has said,

"black looks" has to do not only with the subject itself but with how a black audience (and artist) looks at that subject. The work of contemporary Africana artist, Renee Cox, offers some insight into the effect of Ormes. She constructs self-portraits about embodiment which problematize the perceived subject and subjectivity. "Cox derives a public figure borne out of her own experiences as an embodied black woman," says Bob Myers, which could be said of Jackie Ormes. "She [Cox] reclaims the public space where women are denied" (32). One way Cox accomplishes this reclamation is in her celebration through nudity, of essential womanhood. Cox says "nudity is about coming out as a woman" and in her self-portraits displays an attitude of self-possession, creating what Myers calls a "transient subject"—one that transforms objectifying looks. Similarly Ormes, specifically for a black audience, consistently created characters who celebrate black womanhood through the attitudes of Torchy, Candy, and even Ginger, who revel in their semi-nude poses.

For belle hooks, interrogating "black looks" means not only transgressing so-called dominant perspectives and image-making, but investigating and reconstituting how African Americans see representations of themselves. Despite her emphasis on fashion and middle-class life, Ormes depicts a range of black life, social positions, and "class" situations. Patty-Jo and sister Ginger appear well-situated in the black middle class, but Patty-Jo is not blind to the situations of other African Americans nor is her daily life separate from them. The cartoon which Ormes selected to represent her work in an encyclopedia of cartooning has Patty-Jo visiting a poverty stricken inner city family, commenting ironically: "Now you folks can REALLY stop worryin'. . . . Uncle Sam's blowing our national wad on an H-bomb for your PROTECTION. . . . course that don't spell HOUSING, but you gotta admit, it ain't HAY either." Patty-Jo regularly addressed world, national, and local issues against a realistic backdrop of Chicago neighborhoods and locales, featuring a host of characters faithfully depicted. An example is her playmate Benji, son of a "right-winger" and Bumps, an overweight girl. For the black press with its reach to a variety of readers, such visual and verbal range always encouraged what "misrecognition" scholars, Martineau, Meers, and Thompson call "imaginative recognition of the other," suggesting a resistance to essentializing the black experience (Montineau 6). Black looks need not suggest one view but rather an attitude of viewing—including people whose lives are not one's own.

In this way, the most recent problematizing of misrecognition theories offers that such a view, such a look, if you will, is not rational. That is, it is not psychologically based-needs based. Rather, it is a moral dimension in the struggle for recognition, "to have one's moral status as a person appropriately

recognized" (Montineau 6). Part of imagining ourselves richly is to imagine others who are strangers—and to do so is an act of love. Thus what belle hooks calls "loving blackness" is predicated on black looks which emanate from and engage the individual's imagination in seeing oneself as morally worthy and whole and acknowledging that right for others. One might argue that Ormes's overarching theme is human rights—a loving blackness which advocates personal responsibility and rights for all. In drawing adventure strips, romance-based narratives, and in having the voice of social justice come from the mouth of a child, Ormes plays upon and extends the imagination, offering such a look but at the same time challenging her audience to engage their own imaginative play of identity. She accomplishes what hooks regales: work that engages and enchants.

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Józef Jaskulski

Dissecting the Commodified: The Frontier as Hyperreality in Robert Altman's *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*

Robert Altman's *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* premiered on June 24, 1976, days ahead of the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence, and almost simultaneously with Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. Similarly to Eastwood's picture, though in different aspects, Altman's film is characteristically "strange and daring," to use Roger Ebert's phrase ("*The Outlaw Josey Wales*"), in that it breaks away from the generic formulas of the Western, at the same time attempting a revision of the discourse of mass-culture historiography. Even though Altman shrugged off the notion that he had intended his picture as a befitting commentary on the occasion, it is more than tempting to see *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* as a revisionist indictment thrown in the face of the jubilant nation (a speculation which may, perhaps, help to account for the film's disappointing box office ratings and scant critical acclaim—after all, despite its cinematographic shortcomings, ill timing, and the waning popularity of the Western at the time of its release, it is hard to discard *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* as a failure in filmmaking). Despite the prevailing disregard for the picture as an unfortunate lapse following some of Altman's most renowned projects, i.e. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* and *Nashville*, the film's original generic framework may be appreciated as an intriguing, if dragging, merger of a revisionist Western and a behind-the-scenes ensemble piece which peeks into the lives of stage performers to dissect a prevalent epistemological discourse. Not only does such a combination allow Altman to embrace the falsified grandeur of Buffalo Bill's Wild West and uncover the detestable practices beyond the show's heroic rendition of the genocide of Native Americans, amounting to an apathetic "death march of commodified suffering" (Atkinson), but it also serves as a premise to a more general questioning of the mass culture aesthetics of representation through reconstruction.

It is apparent throughout the film that Altman's (re)vision is predominantly informed by the categories of artificiality, appropriation and irony. In this paper, I would like to explore how *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* governs these categories

in its reading of what has become the commodified representation of Frontier history, fabricated by Cody to reinforce his status as America's first mass-culture celebrity and satisfy the ideological requirements of industrialized popular culture (Slotkin 17), as well as to probe the film's interpretation as a critique of America's obsessive discourse of recreation through carnal reproduction. The paper places particular emphasis on Altman's representation of Buffalo Bill as a demiurge historian of Manifest Destiny, dissection of the hyperreal qualities of Cody's enterprise, and the contrapuntal positioning of Sitting Bull as an ironic historian, at odds with the concept of Cody's "object lesson."

Buffalo Bill, the Prophet of Frontier Simulacra

Altman's adaptation revolves around Sitting Bull's four-month stint as performer at William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West. The revue's regulars feature Cody himself, former soldier, buffalo hunter, scout, showman, character from and writer of dime novels, and a self-appointed historian of the Frontier, sharp-shooting champion Annie Oakley and her husband Frank Buttler, as well as countless stunts and conjurers. The Hunkpapa chief, misrepresented in nineteenth-century pulp narratives as the "killer of Custer," is invited to the show for a series of guest appearances and, upon tough and tiresome bargaining, decides to accept the offer. However, instead of providing uncritical contributions to the show's program as envisioned by its producer (Salisbury) and owner (Cody), Sitting Bull's presence (mediated through his interpreter, William Halsey) turns out to disrupt the coherent vision of the Frontier's history and mar the ego of its number one star. Not only does Sitting Bull fail to comply with his responsibilities as a performer but he also undermines the ideology behind the script and implements his own political agenda, ending in a futile confrontation with president elect Grover Cleveland, who pays a visit to the camp as part of his honeymoon journey. As the president refuses to hear him, Sitting Bull leaves the show and (following a fast-forward to December 1890), news of his sudden death at the hand of tribal militiamen reach the Wild West, culminating in Buffalo Bill's nocturnal breakdown and its ensuing repression.

Simple and episodic, the plot in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* is of minor importance, as the film is primarily a metafiction about America's iconic representations of the past, in this case the popular discourse about the Wild West, particularly the genocide of the Indians of the Great Plains and the rise of America's proto-superhero. Altman's depiction of Buffalo Bill is a transition in which the self-referential character, whose identity revolves entirely around myths, to

the point where Bill no longer distinguishes between his scenic image and his actual life out of stage, proceeds from the mode of self-reassurance to that of self-questioning, gradually losing his faith in the adequacy of the historiographic value of his enterprise. Thus, Altman's Cody is elevated from an unambiguously pompous, self-conscious, fake superman to a figure capable of "metafictional re-thinking of epistemological and ontological relations between history and fiction" (Hutcheon 121). Altman utilizes the dime novel *oeuvre* surrounding Buffalo Bill the epic demigod to dig deeper and uncover Buffalo Bill the miserable demiurge.

In Altman's film, Buffalo Bill is a repulsive character of immeasurable artificiality, struggling to maintain his make-believe identity. We learn from the context that the film spans the initial period of Cody's activity as the proprietor of and chief performer on the "Wild West" (roughly from 1884 to 1890), which allows Altman to scrutinize the formative years of Buffalo Bill's legend and present him as a figure of totalistic vision, carefully designing his stature and weaving the narrative of his "Wild West Reality." Altman's Cody is a confidence man trampolined to stardom by the efforts of dime novelist Ned Buntline, whom Bill releases of his duties as soon as he discovers his own sufficiency as the show's editor. Carefully disposing of any nay-sayers from the board of editors, Cody surrounds himself with yes-men who cultivate his homogenous vision. A narcissistic (re)creator modeling history in concord with the sweeping ideology of westward expansion, he is the Euro-American child of Manifest Destiny, walking in the footsteps of what Louis Owens takes to be the subject of Whitman's "Facing West from California's Shores": "universalist, self-centered, exclusive of heterogeneity, and pleased and joyous about the whole endeavor" (16).

In crafting his image, Altman's Buffalo Bill can be read as a predecessor of America's passion for the hyperreal. Even though, as his employees observe, "he tells a pack of lies in front of witnesses like it was the truth and takes credit for the acts of heroism that he couldn't have done," he nonetheless passes as seemingly credible to his audiences. For, however incredible, Cody's vision emerges in response to America's desires for a ready-made and easily comprehensible creation story, solidifying its still insecure sense of identity at the end of an era (i.e. the closure of the Frontier). Within the show, Buffalo Bill acts as a heroic compaction of frontiersman qualities and a travel guide for those willing to embark on a vivid, feel-good journey through (the plastic recreation of) history. He nurtures his image, instilling reassurance against the crisis of selfhood of his Wild West consumers, staging his authenticity as a faithful reenactment of pioneer values. These machinations are particularly traceable at Cody's meeting with the newly elected president Grover Cleveland and his wife, to whom Buffalo Bill offers the comfort of his private suite:

> **President Grover Cleveland:** Where will you sleep, Buffalo Bill?
> **Ed Goodman:** You can sleep with me, Uncle Will.
> **William F. 'Buffalo Bill' Cody:** No, Ed, I will sleep out on the prairie underneath the moon and listen to the lullaby of the coyotes. You see, I ain't always been a comfortable man.
> **President Grover Cleveland:** You know, it's men like that that made this country what it is today!

Evocative of the dime-novel rhetoric and ironically feeding off the code of rugged masculinity, the bombastic dialogue not only further establishes Buffalo Bill's stature in the eyes of America's leader but, through Cleveland's unfeigned admiration for Cody's staged humility, also symbolically anoints him as the nation's moral leader. In fact, even though Bill spends the night drinking himself to sleep in the adjacent bar, his escapist binge and the fact that the very same night he dismisses Buntline, the maker of his myth and a mocking reminder of the unmanageable heterogeneity of Buffalo Bill's "real" story, does not prevent Cody from retaining his unified, public image, for all of this takes place behind the scenes, where access to the consumers of the hyperreal is prohibited.

Such a "sense of fullness, the obsessive determination not to leave a single space that doesn't suggest something . . . the insane abundance that makes the place believable," as Eco puts it in his famed essay on America's infatuation with realistic recreation (23), is indeed tempting to Buffalo Bill's propensity for magnitude, eventually prevailing in Cody's struggle for his own identity. Throughout the consecutive episodes of the film, Cody expands his superhuman repertoire by implanting his on-stage self with the attributes of general George Armstrong Custer, the cultural sublimation of white America's fearful fascination with the Frontier and a personified justification for the completion of the extermination and dispossession of the Plains Indians. Cody craves Custer's fame, knowing it will boost the attendance at his performances, add splendor to his own figure and lend historical credence to his figurative representations of the past. He stages countless reenactments of the battle of the Little Bighorn starring himself as Custer and, later on returning as Buffalo Bill to avenge the general's death in a duel with "the killer of Custer," i.e. Sitting Bull (in the actual Wild West performances, the role of the savage scape-goat was ascribed to Yellow Hand, a Cheyenne warrior killed in an accidental skirmish with Cody, who served as an army scout following Custer's fatal attack on the gathering of tribes at the Little Bighorn), taking the symbolical "first scalp for Custer" and providing the audience with a sense of closure. To successfully establish himself as the righteous heir of Custer's status in popular imagination, and to construe a sign that

will simultaneously be the thing, Altman's Cody attempts to mold himself into Custer's incarnation, growing facial hair, wearing a blond toupee and buckskin jackets, riding a white horse (an awful rider that Altman makes him to be), even adopting Custer's "Indian name" of Pahaska-Long Hair, and reassuring himself of one day becoming as genuine as "the real thing" ("Some day, my hair's gonna be as long as Custer's").

Thus, it is tempting to take Buffalo Bill for the foremost exponent of American mass culture's infatuation with history through carnal reproduction. To paraphrase Eco (7), in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, Cody constructs a full-scale model of Custer, with special care paid to the material (physiognomy, clothing, gestures, and—however unconsciously—character), but with everything more polished, shinier, protected against deterioration. He helps to absorb historical information through the reincarnation of the infamous general. Willing to speak of things he expects to be connoted as real, Cody spares no pains to make them seem real. Cody ultimately achieves the goal of positing himself as a chronicler of "real history" when, in the frenzied finale, he scalps "Sitting Bull" (played by William Halsey, in the eyes of the beholders, a more polished, shinier incarnation of the Hunkpapa medicine man, thus more convincing than Sitting Bull himself). The "completely fake" creation is identified with the "completely real" qualities and absolute unreality is offered as real presence.

Altman undermines Buffalo Bill's evolution as mythmaker and chronicler of fake reality in numerous episodes which strip Cody of his arduously developed aura of a man on familiar terms with "the real thing." Attempting to maintain his stage image outside of the arena and thus blur play and illusion into oneness, Cody's life is marred by absurdity and itself becomes a farcical reincarnation of his adventures, contributing to the ultimate fragmentation of Bill's identity. Two episodes are particularly indicative of his charlatanry as the prophet of Frontier simulacra, both of which challenge the idiosyncratic ideology adopted by Buffalo Bill in his "history lesson." The first is what Cody haughtily calls "a tough posse" in search of the aging Sitting Bull who has secretly left the show. In a brief, three-minute sequence, Altman piles up absurdities, exposing the conmanship behind the show's efforts to authenticate Bill as a paragon of Frontier skills and virtues. "Looking for an old man, a giant and five boys," Cody throws himself into a real-life staging of his revue, transforming the "absolute unreality" of the chase into a "real presence" of a makeshift Indian war and setting it up as another cowboy-and-Indian showdown in which Sitting Bull allegedly attempts to "outfox the fox" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). Cody leaves the camp in a Custer-like aura, accompanied by a farewell march of his orchestra, standard bearer carrying a customized Wild West banner, and fueling the paranoia of besiegement among

the staff, vowing to hunt down "the dangerous ones" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*) and "protecting" his nephew from participation in the pursuit ("Down off that horse! Your mother would never forgive me"). For all its pomposity, the chase is bound to turn into a spectacular debacle, with Cody unintentionally yet brutally reducing himself to a parody of the myth he tries to live. His discomfort with the adopted hyperreal identity is apparent as he sourly regards the polished and shiny buckskin Custer jacket when preparing for departure ("Where the hell's my real jacket?"). As one of Bill's wingmen falls off the horse, the "escaped" Lakotas disappear on the horizon only to return on their own terms, forcing the posse to get back to the camp empty-handed. Reporting the event to the authorities, Cody's henchmen swiftly come up with a makeshift excuse for the failure, blowing the Hunkpapa's leave out of proportions ("Sitting Bull escapes in the middle of the night after first trying to burn down the arena") and nourishing the myth of the savage killer of Custer, still capable of endangering the civilized center. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill disgruntledly gazes at his portrait, a look of quiet doubt and disbelief on his face, as if grudgingly recognizing that the sign cannot become the thing.

The second sequence features the aforementioned staged fight between Cody and Halsey-Sitting Bull, entitled "Challenge for the Future. Buffalo Bill vs. Sitting Bull," which might be read as the showman's further questioning of the adequacy of his enterprise. In the film finale, the camera closes up on Cody's face as he presents Halsey's war bonnet to the raucous crowd. The artificiality of Buffalo Bill's grin is ambiguous, strongly hinting at a sense of defeat, bitterness and terror, as if he comprehended the enormity of fabrication attained by the Wild West in its search for veracity. Buffalo Bill's triumph and the complete fakeness of the duel's scenario abolish the show's pretense to absolute authenticity and turn Cody into a proto-celebrity fed by the desires of the masses and disjointed from the real he so meticulously seeks for. Cody's fabrication has just become a self-perpetuating simulacrum, and Paul Newman's face is that of a demiurge haunted by the vacuity of his creation.

A Failed History Lesson: The Futility of the Discourse of Carnal Reproduction

In the opening credits of *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, the venture is labeled "Robert Altman's Absolutely Unique and Heroic Enterprise of Inimitable Lustre," an ironic jab at the stilted rhetoric utilized by the original Buffalo Bill's Wild West, and a foretoken of Altman's dissection of Cody's discourse of carnal re-

production. Indeed, one of the film's main achievements is its ability to critically scrutinize the historical conditions conducive to the demand for productions in the grain of Buffalo Bill's show. After all, in Altman's retrospective it is not Cody who is the villain, for—as he maintains in one of the trademark monologues of Newman's career—Bill merely "give(s) them what they want" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). Supplying the American imagination's demand for "the real thing," Altman's Buffalo Bill resorts to the rhetoric of authenticity and coherence (controlled and reinforced by the Announcer's voice flowing from a bullhorn in the stands), which is mainly attained through the appropriation of Otherness within the narrative founded on the ideology of Manifest Destiny. His prospective audience is that of an insecure "country obsessed with realism, where, if a reconstruction is to be credible, it must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a "real copy of the reality being presented," as Eco puts it (4). The audience's craving for the real may have resulted from America's troublesome sense of identity as a former colony established in defiance of the British rule, attempting to anchor itself in history and tradition despite its youth, yet simultaneously struggling with its expansionist drive. This self questioning was no doubt deepened by the resonance of the concurrent announcement of the closure of the Frontier by F. J. Turner. In view of these ambiguities, Cody's show offered a comforting reassurance in its preservation of the familiar and relatively unambiguous system of reference which propelled the prevalent narratives on the history of the US within the context of its westward expansion.

Altman's picture uses the revision of Buffalo Bill's legacy as an occasion to question the adequacy of the historicizing discourse of mass-culture based on carnal reproduction, founded on the mainstream ideology of progress which obscured America's genocidal and racialist practices. To use Linda Hutcheon's words, such a strategy "does not move the marginal to the center. It does not invert the valuing of centers into that of peripheries and borders, as much as use that paradoxical doubled positioning to critique the inside from both the outside and the inside" (69). Contrary to the viewer's expectations, the film—as an ensemble composition—does not feature a clear-cut central character and thus eludes a crude, revisionist flip of the center/periphery coin. Rather, as Hutcheon posits, Altman uses postmodernist poetics to reassess the futility of the myth of the Frontier internally and externally, respectively through his rendition of Buffalo Bill's artificial settlement as a degenerate utopia and by the insertion of Sitting Bull as the unwelcome co-narrator dodging Cody's overbearing efforts.

In his essay on Disneyland, Louis Martin defines a degenerate utopia as "an ideology realized in the form of myth" (qtd. in Eco, 43). In the light of this concept, Buffalo Bill's Wild West may be seen as first among America's numerous

attempts to implement a degenerate utopia, a trend launched by Cody and maintained by his successive peers in sweeping vision and imitative determination, crowned by such contemporary jewels of self-reference as the Neverland Ranch, Deadwood Historic District or Holy Land Experience. Paraphrasing Martin, Buffalo Bill's Wild West was a hyperrealistic undertaking, intended by Cody as "a picture to the eye" which no longer made its audience believe that what they witnessed was a mere reproduction of reality, but rather "the real thing" itself. Watching Altman, however, it is evident that Cody's vision is merely a seemingly coherent simulacrum of the past, a consumable sublimation of Euro-American desires and phobias, petrifying the aesthetics of the dime novel despite its best intentions to present "the foundation that was not built from heroes, but from the anonymous settlers, their home but a shack roofed in the sod" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). Altman's account of Buffalo Bill's theatricality exposes the appropriation of Otherness and the overriding of any encountered inconsistencies. The Wild West has been pronounced dead, yet Cody strives to salvage its experience by encapsulating it in his private microcosm, pierced through the pervasive nostalgia for the past palpable throughout the film.

Altman's Wild West show could also serve as a case in point of Baudrillard's claim that "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning . . . there is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity" (qtd. in Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* 25). Sensing the end of an era and an ensuing ideological crisis, Buffalo Bill's revue offers consolation through the fabrication of myths (the posse and the duel with Sitting Bull) and a multiplication of semblances of the real. Altman's Cody struggles to attain the sense of reality by constructing a miniature Frontier bowl as envisioned by the canonical signifiers of colonial historiography. The show's premises are a conflation of Wild Westerners-turned performers: former scouts, gunslingers and sharpshooters, cowboys and Indians, buffalo hunters and buffaloes themselves, conmen and dime novelists who mastermind the operation, as well as material tokens of the past (the Deadwood Scene, Settler Cabin, Indian Village). Both the former and the latter are appropriated to Buffalo Bill's vision and certified as "the real thing" by Cody's protection of "all photographic rights and historics" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*), his careful selection of the Lakota employees ("I'm buying no ordinary Indian"), and the labeling of the displayed artifacts (each of the teepees on the show is authenticated by an enormous "Buffalo Bill's Indian Village" stamp). Peeking behind the Wild West's scenes, Altman's film gradually unveils a critique of the mainstream industry of historical reproduction and re-enactments as a product of ideological appropriation and preservation of the dominant discourse under the veil of objectivism. Altman shows the inner life

of the enterprise as a recreation of the fantasy of settler America, inhabited by Euro-American colonists, Native tribes and blacks, the latter two neatly segregated and governed by the implicit laws of racialism and miscegenation taboos. In one of the film's more hilarious and yet still bitter scenes, Altman gives a metafictional, parody account of the circumstances in which the famous group picture of the troupe was taken. The personnel pose for a group photograph, ominously reminded that "a hundred years from now, this picture will still be in existence, remember that. This is the way people will remember you" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). The show's editors painstakingly stage the photograph to be remembered as a faithful representation of the group, but the carefully devised composition is spoiled by Sitting Bull and his interpreter Halsey stubbornly standing directly next to Annie Oakley.

> **William F. 'Buffalo Bill' Cody:** I don't wanna Sitting Bull standing next to Annie Oakley.
> **Nate Salisbury:** Why?
> **William F. 'Buffalo Bill' Cody:** Because I don't wanna Sitting Bull standing next to Annie Oakley. Fans won't like it. He should stand over there with the other Injuns.
> **William Halsey:** Sitting Bull will stand by Annie Oakley.
> . . .
> **Nate Salisbury:** What do you want to do?
> **William F. 'Buffalo Bill' Cody:** Let him stay where he is. We're gonna put Halsey's head and the hat on Buck Taylor and Sitting Bull's on Johnny Baker and vice versa. That way, those two Injuns will be over there with the other Injuns. And don't show'em the photograph!

The photograph scene succinctly ridicules any claims of Buffalo Bill as to the authenticity of his enterprise. The picture passes over the black handymen on the show, consequently immortalizing them quite literally as invisible men, their contributions to the show taken for granted, while the Lakotas, despite their cunning resistance and bargaining, are neutralized in their efforts to subvert the policy of miscegenation. If we assume what Hutcheon posits—"to parody is not to destroy the past; in fact to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. . . . It opens the text and challenges its canonical reading" (126)— then, instead of reading the picture canonically as commemorative of "the only producers with courage to show the red and the white without taking sides" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*), we may decode the picture as an artifact of racialist editing and a simulacrum devoid of its actual referent and marking the absence of what it

seemingly represents. In Altman's film, Buffalo Bill's segregationist plotting and bizarre editing which surround the landmark photograph forebode Snyder Act, disenfranchisement and segregation, at the same time serving as a metafictional sneak preview of Hollywood's hyperreality of eugenics and photo editing. As for the authenticity of the show's methodology of historical recreation, it "is not historical, but visual. Everything looks real, and therefore it is real; in any case the fact that it seems real is real, and the thing is real even if, like Alice in Wonderland, it has never existed" (Eco 16). Still, just as history, so does the show's multiplicity escape Cody's absolutism. The camp buzzes with a chaotic rumpus of voices, an effect of Altman's signature overlapping dialogues, a polyphony of disjointed, personal narratives which inadvertently anchor the show in history. The real thing is there, albeit uninvited.

"Bad Bull," or an Ironic History Lesson

In an interpretation of Altman's *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* as a critique of attempts at historicization with the aid of carnal reconstruction, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of the Lakota tandem of Sitting Bull and William Halsey. Within the scope of such a critique, their role in Altman's ruminations on history is seen as twofold. First, the two constitute a contrapuntal current to the discourse of historical appropriation implied by the formula of the Wild West. Second, Sitting Bull's and Halsey's intrusion allows Altman to suggest a different, far more complex and inclusive reading of history with the use of irony.

In *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, the eponymous Indians stand out from among the ensemble thanks to their ability to undermine the epistemological value of Cody's enterprise and transcend its racialist typology. They are the Others that the historiography produced by the desires of mass-culture fails to convey. Defying the expectations of the dominant narrative, the two are "anything but proper types: they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, peripheral figures," criticizing the center from the outside (Hutcheon, 114). Contrary to the projections of the show's personnel, Sitting Bull turns out to be disappointingly devoid of the aura of savagery and nobility that his employers project on him. Dwarfed by the towering Halsey, he is a "little fella," seemingly "getting smaller every year" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). The Hunkpapa chief challenges the notion of the epic Indian, bound to perish, inscribed in the past and reduced to a commodity in the present. Instead of meekly playing out his role as scripted by Buffalo Bill and serving as the show's mascot, he remains a thorn in white America's Frontier fable—a "bad Bull," as Cody's nephew mockingly names him, scolding the chief

for starting Buffalo Bill's private jukebox at daybreak and waking everybody up. Sitting Bull's defiance in Altman's film is driven by his awareness that "these bosses think they know what an Indians should look like. He should be tall and lean. He should have nice clothes. He should look only into the distance and act as though his head is in the clouds. . . . Of course, he knew it was all fake" (Welch 51). There is a striking contrast in Altman's depiction of Sitting Bull as a member of the show's cast and as Buffalo Bill's nocturnal projection of Indianness. While the actual Sitting Bull is a withered, skinny aging man, shabbily clothed, mounting a scraggy horse, yet empowered by his resistance to subjugation, the hyperreal Hunkpapa becomes its direct opposite as Altman's gaze turns into that of Cody's, cladding Sitting Bull with imposing "Indian" attributes (such as the richly embroidered buckskin shirt, flamboyant war bonnet, and a bone breastplate; to top all these, the Hunkpapa is fiddling with the standard of the 7th Cavalry) and reducing the chief to an aestheticized fantasy and a mute witness to Cody's hallucinatory monologue. Sitting Bull successfully counters this misrepresentation by continuing to venture what the white personnel deems as unthinkable, failing to accept his defenselessness against the exclusive practices of Buffalo Bill's "history lesson." His unpredictability as guest star on the show is a reminder of the inconvenient truth of genocide and dispossession accompanying the progress of Euro-American civilization, which the epic history misconstrued by Cody obfuscates, even if this reminder is repressed and "doesn't make any difference," as president Cleveland argues, obstinately refusing to recognize the subjectivity of Sitting Bull and preferring to conveniently discard the chief by labeling him "a wonderful comedian" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*).

The second function traceable in the presence of Sitting Bull and William Halsey in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* is their significance in Atlman's subversion of the commodified history of the Frontier. Altman's critique of the legacy of Buffalo Bill's Wild West is pervaded by irony. To identify its origin, we may refer to Hayden White's seminal hierarchy of figurative modes of historical discourse, among which particular importance is attached to irony, a superior mode of language thanks to its links to self-awareness, critical distance towards one's own claims, and its origins in the dissatisfaction with a reality which failed to fulfill high expectations sparked by revolutionary ideas (Domańska 17). In Altman's picture, irony stems from a profound dissatisfaction with the ideology of Manifest Destiny, implying the obliteration of any obstructions to America's westward expansion. The Lakota duo in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* act as ironic commentators on Cody's coherently emplotted history of the Wild West, questioning what a common consumer of Buffalo Bill's "object lesson" takes for granted. Their skeptical language is utilized by Altman to dissect the fallacy of

mass-culture representation of US development into a superpower at the expense of marginalized minorities. According to Sitting Bull, such a version of history is "nothing but disrespect for the dead" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). As their irony often employs ambiguity, the Lakotas' apt commentary on the inadequacy of Bill's enterprise is trivialized as "murky logic" (*Buffalo Bill and the Indians*). Dismissed by Buffalo Bill and his entourage, this murky logic of irony still exposes the numerous faults of a homogenous approach to history and rejects the appropriation of the periphery on the verge of annihilation. In Sitting Bull's and Halsey's bitterly ironic interludes, we may encounter traces of Gerald Vizenor's concept of "Postindian warriors of simulations" (*Fugitive Poses* 4) struggling for the retention of tribal presence in the discourse of the center, employing the simulations of fake Indianness contrived by that discourse to combat cultural subjugation and restore a sense of empowerment to their people.

As a revisionist western, Altman's work is flawed, mainly due to its formal ambiguity and the "murky logic" of its narration. *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* fails to deliver what may have been expected of it following the success of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. And yet, even if its resonance was initially drowned by more powerful pictures of the period, *Sitting Bull's History Lesson* may still be appreciated for its unique, if flawed, composition, as well as its attempt to incorporate tricksterism into the Hollywood mainstream, a notable figure of speech usually overlooked in Euro-American representations of the Native American genocide. Continuously worthy of attention is also the film's extensive portrayal of Buffalo Bill's Wild West as a pioneering enterprise in the nationwide business of reproduction of history, propelled by America's obsessive quest for "the real thing."

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Krzysztof K. Kietzman

Between Eden and Utopia: Techno-Innocence and Cyber-Rapture in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

Constructs of Innocence in Cyberpunk Fiction

Cyberpunk surfaced as a subgenre of science fiction in the 1980s to popular and critical acclaim. Among the writers who laid the genre's foundations were Pat Cadigan, William Gibson, and Bruce Sterling. In the 90s, the flagship writers of cyberpunk and its latest offspring—postcyberpunk—were Greg Egan and Neal Stephenson. As of the most recent decade, its legacies are continued in the writings of Paolo Bacigalupi, Ian McDonald, and Charles Stross. Furthermore, cyberpunk has garnered considerable interest among postmodernist critics. Brian McHale asserts that while "there are few… absolute novelties in cyberpunk SF" and all its motifs have had "precedents in earlier SF," the subgenre's novel character stems rather from its "shift of dominance" to particular motifs and its dismissal of outmoded motifs within the general science-fiction repertoire (150). In other words, cyberpunk foregrounded a specific "motif complex" (McHale 150), one neither featured nor practiced before in this particular fashion within science-fiction literature. Scholars appreciated cyberpunk for its foregrounding of (dis)embodiedness, its social-liberationist political potential (D. Haraway), and its textual exploration of ontological motifs (B. McHale).

Despite cyberpunk's stellar success, the subgenre had been in fact born out of failure—the failure of science-fiction literature prior to the 1980s[1] to live up to its core promise. For the dedicated readers of science fiction, its touchstone had always been its successful efforts at extrapolating from the present and making accurate predictions about the future. In this respect, cyberpunk's emergence could be understood as the consequence of and the answer to science fiction's disenchanting failures at extrapolation.

1 Which William Gibson dismissed wholesale as the "Gernsback Continuum," named so after the editor of *Amazing Stories* pulp magazine, Hugo Gernsback.

Prior to cyberpunk, science-fiction had, with some dystopian exceptions, advocated utopian boosterism. The critic Raffaella Baccolini notes a "revival of utopia in the 1960s and 1970s" (520) within science fiction literature. It is inevitable, the "Gernsback Continuum" genre had professed and prophesied, that mankind shall soon achieve its utmost potential through the belief in positivist scientism and technological progressivism. In its most generic and commodified iterations, science fiction offered mere "uncritical and uncreative technojingoism" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 414): masculine narratives of hegemonic power, colonial ambitions, and wish-fulfillment fantasies on the outer-space frontier.

However, the reality of the 1980s brought about an end to active space exploration. The continuing loss of public interest in outer space was reflected in science fiction's withdrawal from its boosterish descriptions of unbounded frontier exploration. Furthermore, continued efforts in nuclear disarmament brought about an end to most postapocalyptic science fiction. In consequence, the genre could have perhaps returned to "pure" scientific extrapolation and once again be judged not on the basis of its cassandric forecasts and forewarnings, but rather, its successful social and technological extrapolations of the present. However, in hindsight it began to be apparent that science fiction has failed to predict the impact and scope of the information revolution and the groundbreaking emergence of the Internet in particular. Because science fiction failed to predict the ensuing techno-cultural paradigm shift, the genre turned to cyberculture as its next source of inspiration.

In consequence, readers' belief in science fiction's pretensions to actual powers of extrapolation had waned with time. This disillusionment is best described in the words of the critic Sadie Plant: "Once upon a time, tomorrow never came. Safely projected into the reaches of distant times and faraway galaxies, the future was science fiction and belonged to another world" (348). In other words, science fiction's utopian grand narrative of "a future perfect that never was" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 411), developed throughout the decades in countless works of fiction, had been proclaimed a naïve misunderstanding.

As a result, cyberpunk announced science fiction's strategic retreat from its frontiers in outer space and committed itself not just to a downward movement towards Earth in general, but rather, to its shadier districts, slums, and backstreets in particular. This process resulted in "The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground" (Sterling xi). Its outcome had been a considerable enrichment of the science-fictional repertoire, one in which "the contradiction" of rural, romanticized, anti-science, anti-tech counterculture with cutting edge technologies "had become an integration" (Sterling xii). The ensuing "cultural Petri dish" (Sterling xiii) appealed to both postmodernist

critics and pop culture pundits alike. However, because of its retreat and in spite of the thematic broadening of science fiction, cyberpunk could also be diagnosed as a symptom of science fiction's state of psychological recoil following its (and mankind's) grand disillusionment with the ideas of science and progress.

In consequence, cyberpunk holds an ambivalent position within the science-fiction continuum. On the one hand, in the preface to the seminal *Mirrorshades*, Sterling is of the opinion that "the cyberpunks as a group are steeped in the lore and tradition of the SF field" (x), emphasizing the subgenre's continuities with the prior tradition of science fiction. On the other hand, Sterling adds that cyberpunk is in fact "a new movement in science fiction" (ix), "a modern reform" (xv), one which, not unlike punk music, is "in some sense a return to roots" (x-xi), and thus discontinuous with older SF.

In renouncing most prior science fiction of the "Gernsback Continuum," building upon its failures, and beginning anew from the position of "clearing the ground" and "breaking with the past" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 413), cyberpunk marks another figurative return to Eden within the American narrative tradition[2]. In other words, older science fiction is to cyberpunk what Europe had been to America in its inception: an aborted past, an inconvenience, a shameful

2 In the American tradition the notions of innocence and escapism are embodied in constructs of the Self which have their origin in the figure of the American Adam. The figure appeared in literature in response to the formation of a national American culture distinct from its European counterpart. It embodied a sentiment shared throughout America in the nineteenth century that "the authentic American" should strive to emulate Adam, the first Biblical man: "A figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history" (Lewis 1). The idea of Americans as new men in a virgin land was first put forward by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). Due to American culture's Biblical frame of reference, the notion of a "pure" man in a "virgin" land soon became associated with the image of Adam in Eden and developed as such in American literature. Works of fiction combined Biblical and political discourse into a textual amalgam which led to the formation of American exceptionalism and individualism. Furthermore, the figure of the American Adam was awarded considerable critical recognition in the writings of R. W. B. Lewis. In his *The American Adam. Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), Lewis claimed that the recurrent motif of Adamic innocence in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville shaped the subsequent thematic landscape of American fiction. The innocent American has also been featured as a staple of American fiction in the criticism of Leslie Fiedler and Ihab Hassan. Both critics enumerated the subsequent permutations of the Adamic figure, which include the juvenile male protagonist, the Fiedlerian Good Bad Boy, the alienated intellectual, and the Hassanian radical rebel-victim. All of the aforementioned character templates in American literature have their origin in the figure of the American Adam.

heritage under erasure. In consequence, cyberpunk could be understood to stand for a literature of "second chances" for science fiction, one which renounces the genre's prior accumulated experience and returns to a state of innocence with all that this notion entails in the American tradition. Despite the genre's postmodernist surface, its protagonists are more often than not the avatars of the unified humanist subject: the American Adamic Self. Not unlike Adam, the cyberpunk protagonist is out to explore a new world, one unburdened with the heritage and stock solutions of the prior SF tradition, but rather, one in which the individual is free to participate in its sub-creation. Following the tradition of the American Adam, the cyberpunk hero is a frontiersman. His is the most recent and relevant frontier, cyberspace, as he has realized that *outer* space as an SF frontier is long past its ideological prime, much too haunted with the "semiotic ghost" of "outdated futures" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 411), and much too crowded and civilized for his tastes.

Although considered a "Movement writing" (Sterling x), cyberpunk never had its singular manifesto[3]. However, cyber*culture* in general has had its self-proclaimed manifesto in the form of John P. Barlow's "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," an online document written in 1996 in the rhetorical mode of a declaration of independence, which made its rounds on the then-just-expanding Internet, reaching out to both dedicated proponents and distanced opponents of radical Internet libertarianism. The document begins with a direct address to those against whom cyberculture reaches out to "dump some tea in the virtual harbor" (pref. par. 2) in the all-American gesture of renunciation *par excellence*, and from whom it wishes to declare independence: "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of the Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather" (par. 1). The document continues in such a rhetorical fashion throughout its sixteen paragraphs. What is apparent in this short excerpt alone is a discourse of semantic differentials, which assigns superior hierarchic value to a) the mind over the flesh; b) the ethereal over the corporeal; c) the individual over the collective; d) us over them; e) freedom over rule, and, what is most important from the perspective of this article: f) to the future over the past. In renouncing the past, cyberculture

3 Although self-proclaimed members of the cyberpunk subculture adopted Christian A. Kirtchev's 1997 "A Cyberpunk Manifesto" as their own and are working at present as a volunteer group on a revised third edition. However, this manifesto does not concern literature in particular.

marks a new beginning, a second chance, a figurative return to Eden. Such a return entails a complex of ideological and ethical undertones.

In his *Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice*, Ross approaches the aforecited document as advocating "unfettered individualism at the core of Net libertarianism" (12), which "translates into a general phobia about any government activities" (10). The declaration's rhetoric reveals "the desire for self-liberation from the social life of mortals" and "the retrofitted nostalgia for a Rousseauesque state of nature," which once again signifies a return to Eden. Because the declaration proclaims cyberspace to be an independent "act of nature" which "grows itself through our collective actions," its discourse falls back on the American tradition of pastoralism and subverts Leo Marx's Machine in the Garden metaphor into the flattened image of Machine=Garden. The proclamation results in a "clean, messianic break with the world most of us inhabit" (Ross 12), echoing Hassan's notion of social recoil, Fielder's flight, or Lewis's deinitiation[4]. As documented in the scholarship of the three critics, such desires and declarations are part and parcel of the American tradition of innocence and individualism. In consequence, cyberculture in its most radical manifestation marks a recoil from the social order in search of sublime, ethereal otherworldliness, a motif which the critic Rob Wilson calls "neo-transcendental" "techno-euphoria" (211). The discourse of its proponents is secular, albeit verges on the metaphysical.

Another aspect of cyberpunk's return to the Edenic (and thus Adamic) paradigm of American innocence and individualism is its understanding of the Self. Notwithstanding the genre's postmodernist surface and its postmodernist decentering of the subject in some respects, its protagonists nonetheless struggle to remain unified, centered Selves. One of the critics who point to the powerful and positive image of the cybercultural individual as a centered and self-reliant Romantic subject is Timothy Leary. In his rather poetic article "The Cyberpunk: The Individual as Reality Pilot," he deconstructs the word "cybernetics" in order

4 All three critics describe different mechanisms of escapism in their scholarship. In the words of Lewis, "the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation into society, but, given the character of society, an initiation away from it: something I wish it were legitimate to call 'deinitiation'" (115). According to the logic of deinitiation, innocence is prone to degrading into social Adamism, which could be understood as social alienation and atomism. Hassan claims in a similar fashion that the natural reaction of the modern Self to the world and its victimizing character is that of "recoil," that is, the radical renunciation of outwardness (35), "the ego's estrangement from the collective conscience" (18). Fiedler, in turn, describes the figure of the male hero in literature as taking flight from the social/sexual in order to retain his manhood and innocence, or rather, out of a fear of experience and the feminine.

to emphasize its empowering semantic and pragmatic undertones. Leary traces the term's etymological origin back to the Greek word "kubernetes," which translates as "pilot" (254). The prefix "cyber-," therefore, evokes agency, movement, and action. According to the critic: "The Hellenic origin of this word is important in that it reflects Greek traditions of independence and individual self-reliance which, we are told, derive from geography" (254). Leary, therefore, traces the tradition of American individualism even farther back than to the Adamic origins of the American Self alone in the world (which also "derives from geography"). He traces this tradition as far back as ancient Greece, which he treats as the figurative birthplace of later American frontier thinking and frontier navigation.

Other concepts associated with cyberpunk also reveal unified approaches to the Self. Before the term "cyberpunk" garnered widespread acceptance, its authors had once been called "the Mirrorshades group" (Sterling xi) after the icon of cyberculture which later served as the title of Bruce Sterling's collection of stories. The significance of mirrorshades in cyberculture is best described in Sterling's own words:

> Mirrored sunglasses have been a Movement totem since the early days of '82. . . . By hiding the eyes, mirrorshades prevent the forces of normalcy from realizing that one is crazed and possibly dangerous. They are the symbol of the sun-staring visionary, the biker, the rocker, the policeman, and similar outlaws. (xi)

Mirrorshades shelter the eyes from the exterior world. The "eye," of course, is a metaphor of the entrance into the "I," the Self. In this respect, cyberpunks are practitioners of Hassanian strategic recoil in their attempts to remain impenetrable, self-sufficient, innocent Selves. However postmodern, they undertake excursions into the world with the use of all possible technological means, but nonetheless strive to prevent the world's incursions into them.

The Edenic/Adamic motif of individualism is only a part of the American paradigm of innocence that cyberpunk reaches out to in its traditional thematic remnants. The critic Ihab Hassan is of the opinion that because of their radical disconnection with the present, American literature and culture take the form of "a running debate between Utopia and Eden," since both are "a form of radical innocence" (Hassan 37–38). In other words, the allegories of Eden and Utopia seem inseparable. In fact, a future Utopia is implicit in Eden in and of itself since the teleological Christian narrative, of which Eden is the inception, is finite and implies a final Rapture. Such salvational narratives end in a blissful coda. Adam and his heirs, having left Eden, await Utopia: the post-endtime, post-Rapture reconciliation with God. When a literature is bound in Edenic allegories of onset, it

seems inevitable for such literature to assume an allegorical salvational endgame as well. Hence cyberpunk's preoccupation, its secular surface notwithstanding, with the Christian notion of Rapture.

In their article "Bad Endings: American Apocalypsis," the anthropologists Kathleen Stewart and Susan Harding point to the fact that "America had always been an eschatological hotbed" with both "a sense of crisis and millennial hope" (289). The critics assert that the colonization of America had been a Christian "millennial and apocalyptic project" (288), the discourse of which continues on in present times. Apocalypticism and millennialism are defined in their respective aspects as: "The dark and light sides of a historical sensibility transfixed by the possibility of imminent catastrophe, cosmic redemption, spiritual transformation, and a new world order. The apocalyptic/millennial mode of attention is fascinated by endings, overturnings, and originary moments" (286). The critics note that such anxieties have intensified in American culture as the millennium drew nearer, "inhabit[ing] and structur[ing] modern American life across a wide range of registers" (286). Such inhabiting is also apparent in cyberpunk. As a product of the 1980s and 90s, cyberpunk reflects both apocalyptic/dystopian and millennial/utopian paradigms.

For the most part, cyberpunk reflects the apocalyptic/dystopian mode. Stewart and Harding note that apart from religious apocalyptic thinking, millennial visions in America have also become secularized in a process which imbued cyberculture with radical "technophilia and technophobia" (289): secular, albeit semi-religious mindsets reflective of millennial and apocalyptic paradigms. In their opinion, apart from religious eschatologies, American culture offers two secular endtime narratives. The first is contained in the notion of a "technological apocalypse, in which technological progress brings both devastation and salvation" (Stewart and Harding 290). Such an endtime narrative is contrasted with what could be labeled a postmodernist end*game*: the "ironic apocalypse, the dystopian, postapocalyptic view that history has exhausted itself, coupled with a playful celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290).

Nevertheless, despite cyberpunk's preoccupation with the apocalyptic/dystopian mode, the genre reaches out to Utopia as well. In her article "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction," Raffaella Baccolini asserts that Utopia has found an afterlife in even the most dystopian of literatures. On the one hand, the critic confirms that "our times . . . have produced what a series of scholars have addressed as a 'dystopian turn' in Anglo-American science fiction" (520), of which cyberpunk is the direct consequence. On the other hand, however, Baccolini also believes that recent science fiction "maintains a utopian horizon in the pages of dystopian science fiction and in these antiutopian times" (518).

Despite its secular surface, cyberpunk's affiliations with Utopia are religious in nature. As mentioned before, cyberpunk's religious "utopian horizon" within its secular dystopian dominant is centered on the Christian notion of Rapture. In his work *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, the cultural critic Mark Dery introduces the discursive construct of "escape velocity" (42). Within physics, escape velocity is the speed required for a vessel to escape the gravitational well of a planet in order to reach outer space. Within Dery's criticism, "escape velocity" is a metaphor of the "eschatological zero hour" (42): the point in time in which the vigilant, technophile "true believers" will be "raptured" from this world into a cyber-Utopia of one kind or another. In Dery's view, "escape velocity" is "techno-transcendentalism's version of born-again Christianity's 'rapture,' in which true believers are lifted out of the mundane, into the parting clouds" (48–49).

Dery's idea is similar to the critical mechanisms of escapism of his predecessors (Lewis, Fiedler, and Hassan) in that it signifies "transcendentalist fantasies of breaking free of limits" (8) and "a promise of deliverance from human history and mortality" (11). In their offer of escape from the "mundane" historical and social realms, such escapist fantasies both seduce with the bliss of Utopia and require the innocence of Adam in Eden. The incoming Rapture is limited to the "true believers," hence such a discourse, like most other American constructs of individualism, is entangled in elitism, exceptionalism, and social solipsism.

To recapitulate, cyberpunk as a subgenre of science fiction perpetuates American constructs of innocence in a twofold fashion. First of all, despite its postmodern surface, it features traditional, ego-centric, juvenile, self-reliant protagonists, who resort to escapism or recoil in order to avoid the burdens of social life and retain their innocence. Such figures derive in the American tradition of innocence from the image of Adam in Eden. Furthermore, cyberpunk perpetuates American timelessness: the escape from the present into an ancestral Eden or a future Utopia, both of which are also images of innocence. Such constructed motifs of innocence can be found in Gibson's seminal cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*.

William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* was published in 1984, just when the present had caught up with a previous exemplar of dystopian fiction: George Orwell's titular *1984*. Needless to say, 1984 had not turned out to reflect the world as prophesied in Orwell's cassandric opus, perhaps to the satisfaction of dystopian fiction's detractors. Nevertheless, Gibson soon filled the resulting void with his own seminal dys(u)topia. As a work of fiction which reflected both the hopes and the fears

of its time, *Neuromancer* was the first novel to have been awarded the so-called "triple crown" of science-fiction awards: the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Philip K. Dick Award.

Despite *Neuromancer*'s positive reception as both a science-fiction novel and a piece of postmodernist prose, Gibson himself had later called his first novel "an adolescent's book" (Neale). However dismissive this comment might sound, it nonetheless opens up *Neuromancer* for interpretation within the American tradition of juvenile fiction, escapism, and innocence. The critic Norman Spinrad points out that the title of the novel itself, a portmanteau of "neuro-" and "necromancer," could also be (mis)read as "new romancer," opening up the novel for interpretation as a new instance of traditional Romance fiction (Spinrad 111).

In terms of its structure, *Neuromancer* indeed remains faithful to traditional "cause-and-effect plot development" (Sponsler 636). The plot structure of *Neuromancer* resembles point for point the generic plot of a heist movie[5]. Heist movies tend to follow a three-act structure, which consists of: assembling a team of conspirators and making preparations for the heist, the heist itself, and the heist's aftermath. In *Neuromancer*, the instigator of the heist is an Artificial Intelligence code-named "Wintermute," whose source code is stored on the private servers of Tessier-Ashpool SA, a detached and secretive corporate clan. Wintermute had been designed to be but a half of a potential larger AI. Its sibling counterpart had been code-named "Neuromancer." Both AIs were forbidden from ever forming a single holistic mind, for fear of their becoming too powerful. Their potential to combine and develop further is limited due to a recent change in the politics of Tessier-Ashpool, which abandoned its prior plan of combining both AIs in favor of keeping them apart, as well as the jurisdiction of the Turing police, a special-forces bureau supervising AIs on a global scale in order to prevent their growth. Resorting to financial motivation, psychological manipulation, and coercion, Wintermute assembles a team of conspirators to do his bidding: Armitage, Molly, Case, the Finn, the Dixie Flatline, Peter Riviera, and Maelcum. The novel's plot consists of two consecutive heists. The first group objective is to steal the Dixie Flatline (one of the prospective team-members, a ROM module) from the servers of the media consortium Sense/Net. This heist serves as a test run for the heist proper. In a surprising plot twist, it turns out that Wintermute's second objective for the conspirators is to steal Wintermute itself from the servers of

5 Gibson himself had commented on *Neuromancer*'s traditional cause-and-effect plot in an interview: "I knew I was so inexperienced that I would need a traditional plot armature that had proven its potential for narrative traction. I had these different things I wanted to use, but since I didn't have a preset notion of where I was going, the plot had to be something I already felt comfortable with" (McCaffery 137).

Tessier-Ashpool in order for Wintermute to combine its source code with that of Neuromancer and enable both AIs to become a greater, God-like being.

In addition to its heist structure, *Neuromancer* also reveals its adherence to the American Adam metanarrarive: the individual's initial interaction with the world, his Fall and loss of innocence, his subsequent escapism and recoil, his being granted a second chance, and his ensuing attempts at reconciliation and integration. The character who embodies this Adamic motif in the novel is Case, the narrative's sole focalizer. Case is presented as a rather stable individual, in contrast with the novel's unstable ("postmodern") peripheral characters: Armitage, the Dixie Flatline, Peter Riviera, 3Jane, and Wintermute. In the words of Sponsler, "in a seeming contradiction to the decentering of the subject that occurs with many of his minor characters, Gibson's protagonists still fit the well-known mold of the free-willed, self-aware, humanist subject" (637).

Within the time-frame of the novel, Case is introduced *in medias res*: in the aftermath of his initial incursion into the world and his ensuing victimization and recoil. However, several retrospective passages reveal his past and the particular circumstances of his Fall. Before his introduction in Chiba, Case had been "a cowboy hotshot," "a rustler," and "a thief" (*Neuromancer* 11–12). Such self-proclamations point to what Stockton understands to be a "remythologiz[ation] of an earlier, powerfully autonomous subject," which results in the perseverance of the traditional image of the "swashbuckling pirate and/or American cowboy" under the conditions of postmodernism and cyberculture (588). As an elite member of the meritocratic subculture of hackers, Case had offered his services to various corporate clients and stolen packets of data from their competitors' servers. In having done so, Case reveals his adherence to the Western images of the freelancer and the maverick (as well as the Eastern ronin archetype), which, according to Leary, all converge in the postmodern image of the hacker: the strong, stubborn, creative individual who "explores some future frontier" and "collects and brings back new information" (252). Case's occasional excursions into the social order, that is, his makeshift alliances with the corporate world, had all been of expedient nature and none have resulted in Case's integration into the corporate social notation. To use Leary's words: "Cyberpunks are sometimes authorized by the governors. They can, with sweet cynicism and patient humor, interface their singularity with institutions. They often work within the 'governing systems' on a temporary basis. As often as not, they are unauthorized" (260). In return for his services, Case had been provided with finances, firsthand access to "exotic software," as well as the promise of "permanent adrenaline high," the respect of his partners-in-crime, and "the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (*Neuromancer* 12). In other words, he had been provided the sufficient means of masculine self-confirmation and wish

fulfillment within an environment akin to Fiedler's Great Good Place.[6] Prior to his Fall, Case had frequented the bars of the Sprawl, masculine zones where "mothers do not come" (Fiedler 174), and shared word of his achievements with his male associates. His pride, however, had led him to break the unwritten commandments of his craft and steal from his benefactors, transgressing the rules of his Garden and reaching out for its forbidden fruit. In retaliation, the benefactors had crippled his nervous system with a toxin, preventing him from ever returning to cyberspace. This victimization, which in the narrative's deep structure signifies an expulsion from the Biblical Garden, is in fact described outright in Biblical terms in the novel itself: "For Case . . . it was the Fall" (12) (note Gibson's capitalization). Within the Christian creed, "the Fall of Man" is defined as "Adam's sin of yielding to temptation in eating the forbidden fruit, and his subsequent loss of grace" (*Webster's* "Fall"). The initial plot of *Neuromancer* reveals this Biblical motif in its deep structure: Case yields to temptation in stealing from his benefactors and thus loses grace in being expelled from cyberspace.

The Biblical Fall signifies a passage from an immortal life of grace to a mortal life of hardship and toil. The post-Fall expulsion from the Garden of Eden leads Adam to the earthen world of mortals. In *Neuromancer*, however, Case conceptualizes his own expulsion in much more radical terms than the Garden and the world proper. He sees his Fall as a direct descent from Heaven to Hell, the mundane world of mortals excepted. As mentioned before, cyberpunk reflects the apocalyptic/dystopian mode. Within this mode, there is no place for moderate conceptualizations of space such as those of the Garden and the Earth. Instead, "the modern world is characterized by simultaneous overstimulation

6 According to Fielder, the *Great Good Place* is "a temporary asylum not only from 'sivilization' but from pursuit, enslavement, and death; and leaving it, the refugee plunges into further flight" (569). The critic defines this discursive construct as "some place . . . where mothers do not come" (174); in which the protagonist "[consummates the union] with his own childhood" (347). Lewis would perhaps associate this Great Good Place with the pre-historical and pre-social Garden of Eden. However, Fiedler does not delve into the deep structure as much as Lewis. Instead, he accepts the popular images of the Great Good Place in literature (campsites, rafts, ships, tree-houses, etc.) at their face value. Such places function as bastions of manhood and require "isolation" and "the non-presence of the customary" (349), that is, the non-presence of domestic, matriarchal rule. Such locales often function in literature as "masculine" elitist meritocracies, in which not the "feminine" social and familial bonds, but rather, "survival of the fittest," individual merit, and willpower define collective hierarchies. Within cyberpunk, when viewed from the Fiedlerian perspective, the Great Good Place is realized in the images of hacker cults, biker gangs, and cyberspace.

and numbness, alarm and anesthesia … and it is imagined in terms of dialectical extremes, of heaven and hell, of dreamworld and catastrophe" (Stewart and Harding 291). *Neuromancer* as a representative of dystopian fiction follows the aforecited schema. Case conceptualizes cyberspace in terms of Heaven (overstimulation, alarm, dreamworld) and the real world of "meat" in terms of Hell (numbness, anesthesia, catastrophe). Within the novel, therefore, the Adamic model of expulsion from Eden into the world proper is discarded in favor of radical millennarian/apocalyptic (utopian/dystopian) extremes.

For Case, the matrix is the epitome of "bodiless exultation" (*Neuromancer* 12), a notion which is most often associated in the Western tradition with Heaven. Cyberspace, therefore, is in Case's mind an artificial *ersatz*-Heaven and his initial expulsion from the matrix into the corporeal world could thus be read as a descent into an artificial *ersatz*-Hell. As such, Case's later excursions into cyberspace will form a part of *Neuromancer*'s religious "utopian horizon" within its dystopian dominant. The matrix offers a limitless and therefore a (techno-)sublime world for the protagonist to explore. Case's transition from the world proper to the cyber-world signifies movement from a world of limited experience (at least as far as Case is concerned) to a world of limitless potential. However grim and uninviting cyberspace might seem to the reader, for Case it doubles as a boundless frontier of action and creation. As such, it reveals utopian characteristics. Sure enough, excursions into cyberspace are described as a dangerous undertaking, but for the traditional American protagonist, the masculine monster-slayer, isn't a limitless world full of artificial monsters that strive to vanquish a masculine Utopia, or a Biblical Heaven, nonetheless . . . ?

In his work "Cyberspace: First Steps," the critic Michael Benedikt confirms that: "Cyberspace can be seen as an extension, some might say an inevitable extension, of our age-old capacity and need to dwell in fiction, to dwell empowered or enlightened, on other, mythic planes, if only periodically" (22). Benedikt adds further that the matrix is a metaphor of Heaven insofar as it is a reflection of the Heavenly City. According to the critic, such architectural Utopias share features such as "weightlessness," "numerological complexity," and "transcendence of nature and of crude beginnings" (27). All such features are reflected in Gibsonian cyberspace. Furthermore, such cities constitute "an image of what would adequately compensate for, and in some way ultimately justify, our symbolic and collective expulsion from Eden. They represent the creation of a place where we might re-enter god's graces" (27). Because cyberspace can be approached in such Biblical terms, Case's return to the matrix with the help of Wintermute will allow to be conceptualized in terms of a cyber-Rapture (Benedikt's "re-enter[ing] god's graces") in the further course of this chapter.

The Heaven of the matrix is situated in the mind of Case in direct and radical opposition to the Hell of the real—the *corpo*real—world of "meat." Within the Biblical narrative, Adam's transgression in Eden had made him well aware of his status as a mortal and fragile being of flesh (in realizing his being naked). Similarly, Case's attitude towards himself and the exterior world after his Fall is structured on this Biblical motif. Having been prevented from ever entering the matrix, Case had been made aware of his nakedness, that is, his being embodied. Because of his prior inhabiting of the cerebral and abstract matrix, Case had objectified and reduced his corporeal self-image to mere "meat": "In bars he'd frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance had involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat" (12). Case's expulsion from the matrix and the subculture of hackers mirrors Adam's expulsion from the Garden in that both figures must come to terms with their just-discovered corporeal, embodied nature. After his Fall, Case realizes that he "fell into the prison of his own flesh" (12). His regressive Cartesian approach and preference for the mind over the flesh is made apparent when he invokes the image of "the prison of his skull" (43). Furthermore, Case prefers the abstract and cerebral minimalism of the matrix over the "gratuitous" phenomenal nature of the corporeal world.

Hackers figure as "cyberspace cowboys" (11), and the "console cowboys" (39) are derived in part from the Westerns and thus share certain attributes with Western protagonists. In her work *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, the feminist critic Jane Tompkins comments on the deep bond shared between cowboys and the land: "Westerns believe that reality is material, not spiritual; they are obsessed with pain and celebrate the suppression of feeling; their taciturn heroes want to dominate the land, and sometimes to merge with it completely— they are trying to get away from other people and themselves" (6–7). Although cyberpunks share similarities with cowboys, their attitude towards "land" (matter) constitutes a radical reversal of this relationship. If Westerns believe that "reality is material," then cyberpunk fiction asserts that the real world is immaterial, if not in the literal sense of the word, than at least in the figurative: it is immaterial in being irrelevant. Furthermore, Tompkins adds that the Western genre "represents physical strength as an ideal" (11). Cyberpunk reverses this motif as well and represents as its ideal mental capacities. Because of this reversal, hackers form deep bonds with the spiritual world instead.

Case's spiritual world is that of the matrix. He acknowledges that the matrix is "a drastic simplification of the human sensorium," but nonetheless prefers its reductive, geometrical nature to the "gratuitous multiplication of flesh input" (71) of simstim (simulated senses) and the real world. Case prefers the geometric "masculine" mind over gratuitous "feminine" senses, as Gibson still resorts to such

regressive cultural associations. Because Case is operating within a radicalized, dystopian mode of perception, he finds himself incapable of arriving at a functional middle-ground between the dialectical extremes of "drastic simplification" and "gratuitous multiplication." Because he feels limited to an either/or choice, as millenarian thinking often assumes thinking in simplistic binaries, Case totally commits himself to the former. He renounces full phenomenal reception of the exterior world as a gratuitous experience (echoing Lewis's "strategic distance"), because the corporeal senses (as opposed to the abstract nature of the mind) are for a hacker of his stature a gimmick, a mere "meat toy" (*Neuromancer* 71). In conclusion, when Case had access to the cerebral dreamworld of the matrix, he had succeeded in the erasure of his own flesh. However, after his Fall he had been thrust into a world of "meat," characteristic of the "numbness" and "anesthesia" of Hell as conceptualized within the apocalyptic mode of dystopian fiction.

Apart from Case's personal conceptualizations of space, the world of *Neuromancer* itself is presented as Hell on the level of narration. However, its descriptions elude the most obvious association of Hell with hellfire. Instead, the world is presented as lacking movement and vital forces: frozen, passive, and dead. Such an image of Hell remains consistent with Stewart and Harding's description of Hell as invoking "numbness" and "anesthesia" (291). The novel offers various images of being frozen on the level of descriptive metaphor (the ICE of the matrix; hacking as breaking through ICE) and the world's sociocultural construction.

Case inhabits a frozen world in sociocultural stalemate, wherein the political and mercantile powers—the multinationals, the mafias, and the corporate clans (particularized in *Neuromancer* as the zaibatsus, the Yakuza, Sense/Net, the Turing police, and the Tessier-Ashpools)—might perhaps gain advantage one over another at a given point in time, but such local change in power signifies nothing. Traditional science fiction presented worlds in which time moved forward with the sheer force of change, progress, and extrapolation. In contrast, the sociotemporal impasse presented in *Neuromancer* is best summarized in the words of the punk movement's nihilistic mantra: "No future." This approach marks science fiction's retreat from optimistic extrapolation in favor of pessimistic recoil.

The world of *Neuromancer* grants chosen individuals prolonged lifespans, but one such long-lived character, Julius Deane, is described as having been petrified in the past with no prospects whatsoever for his future. His office, with its heterotopic collection of antiques such as "Neo-Aztec bookcases," "Disney-styled table lamps," a "Kandinsky-look coffee table," and a "Dali clock" (21), does not strike one as a living room, but rather, a museum or even a mausoleum. Deane himself is described in the following manner: "Sexless and inhumanely patient, his primary gratification seemed to lie in his devotion to esoteric forms of

tailor-worship. Case had never seen him wear the same suit twice, although his wardrobe seemed to consist entirely of meticulous reconstructions of garments of the previous century" (21). The description hints at the prospect of the future being a mere ironic and meaningless repetition of the past, echoing Stewart and Harding's postmodernist apocalypse with its "playful celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290). Deane's wearing different suits signifies mere quantitative repetition instead of actual qualitative change.

Chiba, Case's initial operating ground, is described as "a deranged experiment in social Darwinism" (14), a zone in which individual people might perhaps rise or fall in terms of their social status, but the *status quo* itself remains petrified in a stalemate: "Stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but move a little too swiftly and you'd break the fragile surface tension of the black market" (14). Similarly, culture itself is presented as an accelerated succession of meaningless fashions: "Fads swept the youth of the Sprawl at the speed of light; entire subcultures could rise overnight, thrive for a dozen weeks, and then vanish utterly" (74). *Neuromancer*'s prospective counter-cultural forces such as the Panther Moderns do not engage in actual political change, but rather, are reduced to "practical jokers [and] nihilistic technofetishists" who engage in "random acts of surreal violence" (*Neuromancer* 75). This description is at once evocative of cyberpunk's indifference to social commitment in favor of meaningless games. The most direct image of the frozen world of *Neuromancer* is contained in the individual clan-members of Tessier-Ashpool SA being frozen in cryogenic suspension for considerable amounts of time: "'I'm old, Molly. Over two hundred years, if you count the cold. The cold'. . . . 'You can get freezeburn,' she said carefully. 'Nothing burns there,' he said impatiently . . . 'Nothing burns'" (221). Such descriptions define the real world of Hell as a place of stagnation rather than hellfire.

To recapitulate, after his transgression and Fall, Case is thrust into a frozen, hellish world. There he must come to terms with his human nature: his embodiedness, his being fragile and mortal, and his dependence on sustenance and capital. His instinctive reaction to the world's hellish nature and his own victimization is that of Hassanian "recoil." Case, who at first has no means of escaping into the matrix, escapes instead into mental inwardness. According to Scott Bukatman, even the character's name invokes images of inwardness, since the name *Case* could mean "a closed object, a container, a hard case" (95). This intuition is confirmed in several passages from the novel. Case sleeps "curled in his capsule in some coffin hotel" (11), lives in the "prison of his own flesh" (12), and finds himself in a "cubicle [which] was the sort of place where people died" (28). He is described as bitter (10), paranoid (23), and in a state of "terminal overdrive" (14). Unable to nurture his addiction to the matrix, he resorts to using drugs. His

emotional recoil is diagnosed outright in the text itself in the words of Ratz, the bartender: "'And you wander back and forth in this portable bombshelter built of booze and ups [drugs], sure. Proof against the grosser emotions, yes?'" (32). Ratz also refers to Case as "too much the artiste" (9), confirming Case's status as an avatar of the figure of "the alienated intellectual cast adrift in a community of philistines" (Fiedler 439). This notion refers to the talented, albeit misunderstood individual who is aware of a potential Utopia (the matrix), but who is prevented from reaching it.

However, Case's recoil and strategic distance had not proved successful against the world's victimization, echoing Hassan's sentiment that individuals in postmodern times are no longer capable of succeeding in this struggle, as Case is also confirmed to be suicidal and on a straight path towards death: "Ninsei wore him down until the street itself came to seem the externalization of some death wish, some secret poison he hadn't known he carried" (14). In another scene in *Neuromancer* evoking the image of games, Case realizes that his recoil has led him to a mental state in which he is no longer capable of treating his life as something other than a perverse game: "Case knew that at some point he'd started to play a game with himself, a very ancient one that has no name, a final solitaire. He no longer carried a weapon, no longer took the basic precautions. He ran the fastest, loosest deals on the street" (14). Case's willingness to accept jobs involving a high risk factor represents his death drive; a repetition automatism which emphasizes the machine-like character of his life at this point in the narrative. His recoil is hopeless, albeit empowering at the same time, representing a Romantic last stand of the active Self against the world.

If one were to trace up to this point just the secular, dystopian dominant of the novel, there would seem to be no hope for Case as an individual and the world of *Neuromancer* in general. Indeed, in order for the narrative to "save" Case, it must reveal its religious and millenarian "utopian horizon" instead and resort to a traditional motif in American fiction: the God-given second chance.

In *Neuromancer*, God proper does not make an appearance, but the Wintermute AI functions, for all intents and purposes, as the narrative's secular *ersatz*-God. Case as the novel's focalizer conceptualizes Wintermute as such and the AI itself alludes to its God-like qualities in an ironic fashion. When Case first notices Wintermute in the matrix, he sees "a simple cube of white light, that very simplicity suggesting extreme complexity" (140). As mentioned before, for the cerebral-oriented hackers of *Neuromancer*, geometric shapes are the epitome of simplification, a feature which all hackers worship and strive for. As a simple cube, Wintermute invokes the impression of an advanced form of being. Although Case is aware that Wintermute is just an AI program, his instinct tells him there is more to

this particular AI so he asks: "'You running the world now? You God?'" (140). The question prompts an interpretation that despite its secular surface, the novel features in its deep structure a utopian longing for Rapture and salvation, which is typical of the American topos of innocence.

Wintermute does not confirm Case's intuition outright. However, its replies to Case reveal its awareness of the fact that it possesses God-like qualities, as it alludes to motifs from Biblical scripture and seems to be masquerading as God. In one instance, it asks Case: "'You want I should come to you in the matrix like a burning bush?'" (202) (*King James* Bible, Exod. 3.2). In another, it claims to possess God-like omnipresence in purporting to exist: "'Nowhere. Everywhere.'" Afterward it adds: "'I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show.'" (316). When asked if its presence changes the world, Wintermute replies: "'Things aren't different. Things are things'" (316). Because Wintermute is a "thing" itself, it seems to be once again alluding to the scripture, and in particular, to God's tautological pronouncement: "I AM THAT I AM" (*King James* Bible, Exod. 3.14).

As the ironic "thing that is a thing," the literal *deus ex machina* of *Neuromancer* (as science fiction is known for its literalizing of concepts and metaphors), Wintermute provides Case with a divine second chance of returning to the world which has violated him. It provides the means of restoring Case's pancreas, liver, and nervous system, allowing Case to return to the matrix (60). This "God"-given second chance reveals in its deep structure the American Adamic motif of an individual being granted a fresh start in a new world, to explore it and make it one's own. The second chance also represents the novel's "utopian horizon" within its dystopian dominant, here realized in the motif of Rapture.

Within Mark Dery's concept of "escape velocity," Case could be conceptualized as a passive, albeit vigilant "true believer" awaiting Rapture from the mundane social world into a world of greater significance. *Neuromancer* presents what Dery describes as "the cyberdelic vision of a techno-mystical apotheosis in the there and then," which "diverts public discourse from the political and socioeconomic inequities of the here and now" (48–49). Wintermute "raptures" Case into greatness, allowing him to return into the matrix and providing him with powerful software which elevates him to the status of a hacker-magician in the act of divine intervention. However, this "rapture" happens despite the fact that Case is undeserving of elevation on moral grounds.

When commenting on the immoral, asocial disengagement of cyberpunk protagonists, Dery points to Case and Molly in particular as individuals who "are utterly apolitical, aspiring to the peak of their professions—the glamorized corporate soldier of fortune—and nothing more" (251). Such indifferent characters are in recoil from the world and must therefore turn to a "utopian horizon" in

search of self-fulfillment. Case turns his utopian desires towards the matrix and it is this passive worship which grants him a second chance from Wintermute. His asocial conduct is rewarded with "rapture," which reveals one of cyberpunk's disturbing overtones: divine salvation is granted to those in particular who turn to Utopia and leave their social responsibilities behind.

However, while Case conceptualizes Wintermute as a benevolent, semi-divine being and Wintermute itself masquerades as such, other characters in the novel would rather believe Wintermute to represent a devil or a demon. Claire Sponsler notes that in contrast with Case, Wintermute embodies a "decentering of the subject" (631). In one instance, it is referred to as a "hive mind" and a "ghost" (315). In another, it is revealed that Wintermute is unable to function as a stable, holistic being, masquerading instead under makeshift masks with incomplete personalities (256). Such features reveal its origin in postmodernist thought, as opposed to Case. Wintermute's cunning, protean character marks him as a demon rather than a divine being. Within the narrative of the Garden of Eden, the devil had shape-shifted into a snake and thus deceived Adam and Eve. Within the Christian tradition, therefore, protean shape-shifting is perceived to designate malevolent beings ("tricksters," as it were). Such a Biblical intuition is common in *Neuromancer* on behalf of characters other than Case. The Dixie Flatline claims that nobody "'trusts those fuckers . . . Every AI ever built has an electromagnetic shotgun wired to its forehead.'" (159). When asked about Wintermute, Tessier-Ashpool replies: "'A name. Yes. To conjure with, perhaps. A lord of hell, surely.'" (221). One of the Turing police officers warns Case about his dealings with the AI: "'You are worse than a fool,' Michele said . . . 'You have no care for your species. For thousands of years men dreamed of pacts with demons. Only now are such things possible. And what would you be paid with? What would your price be, for aiding this thing to free itself and grow?'" (193).

In conclusion, Wintermute is an ambivalent character with both a divine and a demonic aspect, a character whom Gibson seems to have based on both God and Satan alike. Perhaps such a deep structure hints at the notion that an Artificial Intelligence as the science-fictional Other *par excellence* eludes our crude human conceptualizations and binaries. From the demonic perspective, Case could be perceived as a character based on the immoral Faustian antihero who resorts to pacts with demons in exchange for power and knowledge. In consequence, he could be interpreted as a naïve innocent who finds himself unable to see Wintermute for what this intelligence represents. In his naïveté, Case believes to be entering a beneficial covenant with an *ersatz*-God, whereas in truth he might be helping an *ersatz*-demon against all mankind. Indeed, as Leslie Fiedler has demonstrated, within the American tradition of masculine protagonists there is

"the convention of treating magic as science and thus reclaiming it for respectability in the Age of Reason; the magician Faust in his black robes becomes the scientist in his white coat" (*Love and Death* 121). The Faustian magician's pact with a demon could thus function as one of *Neuromancer*'s deep structures, particularized in the image of Case the hacker (the scientist-magician) entering into a pact with a malevolent Artificial Intelligence (a "postmodern demon" if there ever was one).

According to Fiedler, the notion of the American Adam in addition to its benevolent surface has certain disturbing overtones. One of these is its Faustian aspect. In his naïve innocence, the American Adam is premoral, and therefore outside of the social realm. Its radical Faustian counterpart is no longer premoral, as his high intelligence implies the knowledge of morals. Instead, he is amoral and no longer outside of the social realm, but above it. Case as an avatar of Adam in his Faustian aspect reveals what Fiedler describes as: "The blasphemous hope of Faustian man: the re-ordering of nature, the canceling out of the effects of original sin, the creation of life become the daily business of the laboratory, if not on today's agenda, at least on tomorrow's" (*Love and Death* 122).

Despite its dystopian surface, *Neuromancer* reveals its "utopian horizon" in developing several semi-religious motifs of utopian nature, one of which is the aforecited "re-ordering of nature" and "creation of life." Case and Wintermute are intertwined in a paradoxical relationship in which both can be claimed to be agents of power and creation. On the one hand, Wintermute can be interpreted as the omnipotent agent of the novel, the *deus ex machina* God who "raptures" Case from the frozen world he inhabits. On the other hand, however, it is perhaps Case himself who, in helping Wintermute to reach its goals, allows for the genesis of a "god" in a powerful act of subcreation. Inasmuch as the secular discourses of the West have led to the "death of God," the "utopian horizon" within cyberpunk fiction allows for the "resurrection" of God, or at least the subcreation of "a god," an omnipotent being with God-like qualities. Such an interpretation would invoke what Lewis labeled a "Yankee genesis" within the discourse of the American Adam; an act of creation in which "the creature has taken on the role of creator" (45–46).

Case enters into the role of Adam the subcreator who is to change the world around him. In deciding to help Wintermute against the warnings of other characters, Case manages to break the hellish, frozen structure of the novel's world and claim: "'I got no idea what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll change something!'" (307). In effect, Case functions both as Adam, to whom a second chance had been given from above, and as the one who himself provides the

world with a second chance through altering its structure. In a world petrified in a stalemate, Case finds himself in the position of a savior capable of doing "the real thing" instead of meaningless repetition:

> 'You're always building models. Stone circles. Cathedrals. Pipe-organs. Adding machines. I [Wintermute] got no idea why I'm here now, you know that? But if the run goes off tonight, you'll have finally managed the real thing.' 'I [Case] don't know what you're talking about.' 'That's 'you' in the collective. Your species.' (204)

In the words of Leary, one of the functions of hackers is to "guide the gene pool to the next stage" (1). Wintermute's words confirm that Case functions as such a "shepherd" figure for his collective: moving it forward, negotiating its future, and providing it with "a god."

As Adam the subcreator, Case is also modeled on the figure of "the American poet," which according to Lewis is "the type of creator, the poet *par excellence*, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him" (5). The role of Case as the hacker-magician is to "'learn the names of programs, the long, formal names, names the owners seek to conceal. True names . . .'" (*Neuromancer* 289). This motif has its origin in Adam naming the flora and fauna of the Garden, a gesture through which he becomes their master. Case's successful alteration of the world's structure (or, to use the words of Fiedler, his "re-ordering of nature" and "creation of life") represents one of the novel's "utopian horizons." It is through this change that the novel ceases to reflect the postmodern, ironic apocalypse of Harding and Stewart with its petrified "celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290) and instead turns to the productive millennarian mode with its "overturnings" and "originary moments" (286). The frozen surface of the hellish world is broken and an omnipotent being is liberated. In this gesture, *Neuromancer* returns to the utopian progressivism of older science fiction.

Baccolini claims that "utopia is maintained in dystopia, traditionally a bleak, depressing genre with no space for hope in the story, only outside the story" (520). She further claims that recent science fiction novels "by resisting closure, allow readers and protagonists to hope: the ambiguous, open endings maintain the utopian impulse within the work" (520). Accordingly, *Neuromancer* maintains such a "utopian horizon" despite its dystopian surface through its perpetuation of traditional utopian motifs. The narrative ends with Wintermute discovering another Artificial Intelligence in outer space in the Alpha Centauri system and making preparations for a first contact scenario (*Neuromancer* 316). Though just hinted at in one closing paragraph, this sudden shift (in fact: a regression) in motifs

from cyberspace back to outer space marks *Neuromancer*'s final gaze towards a "utopian horizon," its sudden re-emergence from a state of recoil, and a return to the traditional science-fictional paradigm of outer space, alien beings, exploration, and first contact.[7] This unexpected emergence of traditional plot elements is not provided with a proper closure, hence the novel resolves (or rather: does not resolve) in a promise of potential Utopia.

Nevertheless, the narrative does provide some closure to Case as a character. Case returns to working as a hacker on routine assignments and living a "normal" life: "He found work. He found a girl who called herself Michael." (317). It would seem at first glance that Case returned full circle to his precise point of departure and achieved nothing in particular, but in allowing Wintermute to grow and develop, he allowed the AI to change himself as well. Wintermute provided Case with a realization which he did not have prior to the heist: the recognition that he is capable of "passion" towards life. This productive state of mind at last enabled Case to integrate into the real world of social notation and cease functioning in a constant state of mental recoil. His growing awareness of his passion towards life is a motif which reappears throughout the novel in descriptions of his "love" and "hate" (or "rage") towards particular people and situations (love and hate being extremes on the differential scale of passion). In the course of the narrative, Wintermute and Neuromancer rid Case of what he then realizes are his most essential needs: food, warmth, shelter, sex, and love: "'I had a cigarette,' Case said, looking down at his white-knuckled fist. 'I had a cigarette and a girl and a place to sleep. Do you hear me, you son of a bitch? You hear me?'" (143).

At the onset of the narrative, Case frowns upon such simple "creature comforts," mere necessities of "the meat." In the course of Wintermute's machinations, however, he comes to appreciate them and discovers that it wasn't the absence of the abstract and cerebral matrix, but his lack of recognition of such tangible fundamentals which forced him to lead a life in recoil: "He knew then: the rage had come in the arcade, when Wintermute rescinded the simstim ghost of Linda Lee, yanking away the simple animal promise of food, warmth, a place of sleep. . . . 'Numb,' he said. He'd been numb a long time, years" (181). In other words, Case discovers that what makes him human are his embodiedness and his commitment to fundamentals, as well as his being grounded in the relative innocence of human necessities, as opposed to the cerebral transcendence of the

7 In a sense, therefore, *Neuromancer* managed in the scope of one novel to both introduce a new subgenre of science fiction, as well as provide it with proper closure in returning to traditional science-fictional motifs.

matrix. Sponsler seems to confirm this sentiment: "[Gibson's] male heroes are the characters who are the least invaded by technology. Without exception, they are resolutely 'human,' not least of all in their vulnerability" (637–638). In being vulnerable and realizing that this in particular is what makes him human, Case for the last time invokes the American tradition of innocence.

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"The Omphalos of All We Are": Re-imagining the Captivity Narrative in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

Mark Z. Danielewski includes an excerpt from a fictional early-seventeenth-century journal about two-thirds of the way through his 2000 novel *House of Leaves*. According to the narrator of this section of the novel, the journal had belonged to one of the original Jamestown colonists, a man who had left the settlement in January 1610, the colony's "starving time," with two companions to hunt for food. Apparently this quest did not end well; two of the men's bodies were found in the spring, after the snow had thawed, and the third disappeared. Using the archaic spellings and typography characteristic of the period, the first journal entry notes that the men "fearch for deere or other Game and alwayes there is nothing. Tiggs believes our luck will change . . . . Likewife we muft also believe or elfe in the name of the Lorde take charge of the Knowledge that we are all dead men" (Danielewski 410, 413, original spelling). This dark presentiment establishes the tone that persists through the other four short entries, which center on the men's growing fears of an unidentifiable supernatural force. The unnamed journal-writer calls the resting-spot they have chosen "a terrible Place" in which he and his friends are "plagued by many bad Dreames." As the days pass from January 18th through the 23rd, the date of the journal's final entry, the list of foreboding events mounts ever higher: one man, Verm, returns quickly and empty-handed from an attempt to hunt; the "Wind makes a wicked found in the Woods"; the men dream of "Bones," "the Sunne," and the "fnow about us turn[ed] Red with blood"; and the silence takes on ominous qualities (413, original spelling).

The journal's last entry reads, simply, "Ftaires! We haue found ftaires!"(414, original spelling). Read in the context of the novel's subject, a house that contains a hidden set of constantly expanding and unmappable rooms, this statement both confirms the men's bad luck—they stumbled upon the "house of leaves" in an era far predating the novel's twentieth-century events—and cuts off the possibility of discovering what happened to them. The one indisputable fact in this scenario is the men's discovery of a manmade structure that did not, in the end, offer a

means by which to save their lives. Instead, they seem to have been absorbed into it, to be recovered only when it is already too late. The diarist observes stairs only, none of the other structures associated with a human dwelling. Yet this lone sign motivates these desperate souls to act, just as the house is able to motivate extraordinary levels of curiosity in present-day observers. Its uncanny qualities permeate multiple historical boundaries as well as spatial ones, suggesting that supernatural elements also contributed to the Jamestown difficulties. The men interpret the stairs as the signifier of a conventional manmade building, a structure that ought to manifest at least some homely traits; instead, they are trapped by an undetermined entity or force for whom such stairs serve a much more *unheimlich* function.

For scholars of early American literature, the men's fate inevitably recalls the many disappearances that occurred as a result of Native American captivity, through kidnapping or military conflict. As typical settlers in one of the early colonies, and thus members of the primary group targeted for capture, the journal-writer and his friends would likely have come from upper-class households in which such duties as plowing, planting, and building were virtually unknown, rendering their survival in the New World difficult at best. Climate and supplies had severely limited Jamestown's available food by the winter of 1610, and the primitive conditions under which its inhabitants were forced to live bred disease and starvation. These fictional representatives of the colony undergo a captivity that, unlike many others of the same period, occurs without cause, resolution, or explanatory narrative; the book's contextual focus on the mysterious properties of a house situated in the same area of Virginia provides the most concrete clue about who, or what, might be responsible. Danielewski's decision to position his fictional house near Jamestown signifies both that this period of American history informs his narrative ambiguities and that the unseen forces acting on his characters, who frequently disappear from and reappear in the story, produce effects similar to the American Indians' forcible removal of settlers who had trespassed the boundaries of comfort and civility. The house manifests traits that act on not only characters' day-to-day lives but also the very structure of Danielewski's narrative, distorting actions and the style of their narration in order to conform to an as yet unknowable agenda. By equating the house's uncanny or *unheimlich* qualities with the hostility that the white settlers perceived in local Native American populations, Danielewski suggests that one of his novel's many narrative motivations exists in key questions about the role that cross-cultural contact and negotiation play in the formation of national identities. The book implicitly criticizes the captivity narrative as a genre that confirms the importance of cultural insularity without measuring the degrees of difference and unknowability that

help to define both captors and captives. Danielewski's "house of leaves" grows out of an endemic ambiguity that originated in the founding of the country itself, responding to both its settlers' colonial status and the land's potential for physical exploitation.

The core narrative of *House of Leaves* is the story of a strange house in which photographer Will Navidson and his partner, former model Karen Green, live for a time with their two children. One door in the house opens onto a seemingly limitless labyrinth of rooms and corridors, imperceptible from the exterior, that change at random. Both Will and Karen make short films recording and commenting on their experiences in the house; Danielewski's readers access these documentaries secondhand, through the perspectives of the many cultural critics, both fictional and real, whom the narrative positions as viewers of the films. These perspectives are further annotated in a manuscript compiled by Zampanò, an elderly blind man living in a small apartment in southern California. Zampanò, whose manuscript provides the primary narrative about the Navidsons' house and the films they make about it, never appears in the present-time diegesis of Danielewski's novel; instead, his papers are discovered and appropriated, within a third frame, by a young man named Johnny Truant, who annotates them with extensive footnotes that depict a series of catastrophic events in his own life. Johnny Truant discovers Zampanò's work after the latter dies suddenly in an apartment whose floor is striated by claw marks; Truant also never appears in the novel's present-time framework. Instead, a group of unnamed editors offers his footnoted version of Zampanò's manuscript along with a series of additional footnotes and appendices.

Many structural, historical, and cultural contexts inform the narrative; however, Danielewski's attention to the specific geographies of the Navidson house, especially its links to the British colonization of Jamestown, situates his novel in close structural and thematic relation to colonial American captivity narratives. The critique that *House of Leaves* offers of captivity tropes and themes assumes that its readers possess knowledge of relevant colonial history. Danielewski may have chosen to set his story near Jamestown since the establishment of the Jamestown Settlement in the Virginia Colony in May 1607 represented a watershed in the histories of both American colonialism and Anglo-Native relations. Though the English colonists had failed several times to maintain a settlement in North America, this community signified the ongoing global dominance of British commerce as well as its inhabitants' commitment to Puritan religious separatism. The colonists' initial decision to settle on an island, isolated from not only the threat of Native American aggression but also the more fertile soil found on the mainland, and their relatively late arrival in the planting season resulted in the

deaths of ten percent of the party within the first few months alone and, during the exceptionally difficult winter of 1609–1610, the desertions of several others. In fact, more than 400 of the original 500 colonists had died by the summer of 1610. A number of factors contributed to these rocky beginnings, including the colonists' inexperience with manual labor. The nearby Algonquian chief, Powhatan, also sought an alliance with the settlers at first, but they responded with aggression, attempting to repatriate the colonists who had deserted to the Indians in the hopes of sharing their resources. These separatist gestures resulted in full-out war between the English and the Natives, a series of events featured in many later captivity narratives. Robert Hine and John Faragher have also observed that, unlike the Spanish and French colonists who sought to incorporate Natives into settlement life, the English settlers endeavored to exclude them by "pushing [them] to the periphery" of society (57). Such movements to enforce social rank only underlined the aggression that existed between the groups and reinforced the themes of antagonism and social balkanization that inform many captivity narratives.

In the end, Jamestown and other settlements helped to foster trade between England and the New World, yet the relationship between white and native inhabitants throughout the colonies often faltered in spite of the potential for sharing emerging technologies and resources. The repeated capture of whites by Natives during this period accomplished several goals: garnering bargaining-power in times of war, serving as revenge for lost allies and family members, replenishing numbers decimated by attack, and even setting an example of the advantages that existed in other cultures' standards of living. Such behavior always existed within a fraught social context, in which white settlers aggressively pursued colonialist goals with little regard for Native rights, liberty, and autonomy.

In a manner akin to several critics' conceptualizations of the captivity narrative as a constructed, collage-like, yet historically real story, Mark Danielewski frames the chronicle of the Navidson house as a chapter of American history that no single witness fully understands. Yet this account also points to the Jamestown chronicles as a key factor in establishing early America as a place of uncertainty, violence, and revelation, a complex history that represents one important dimension of Danielewski's convoluted story. *House of Leaves* consciously invokes tropes of the early American Indian captivity-narrative form through literal and metaphorical imprisonment within the titular house; characters' struggles to come to terms with a narrative whose resolution is repeatedly forestalled; their difficulties in consolidating a coherent identity; the trials inherent to encounters with a potentially hostile "other"; and an emotional catharsis that is tied to efforts to escape from captivity within the house or from its later psychological

hold. At the same time, the narrative ambiguities that define the Navidson house assemble a critique of the genre that challenges the veracity and goals of the colonialist project that underlies it. The novel's representations of the history of the Jamestown Settlement in particular, which serves as both a diegetic and a historical touchstone for captivity-narrative conventions, frame this type of human exploration as self-destructive and oblivious to the cultural worth of the unknown. Danielewski's observations about the persistence of such conventions into present-day narratives, even if fictional, suggest that such historical atrocities have not yet been adequately resolved or accommodated within the history of modern American literature.

In order to reproduce the experience of captivity within an environment that sometimes seems completely alien to colonialist landscapes, Danielewski cultivates the contradictory mixture of fascination and terror characteristic of American Indian captivity narratives in *House of Leaves*. He sustains this emotional intensity in his text through the interventions of myriad narrators and outside observers, each of whom claims a specific brand of expert knowledge while experiencing a common affect. These contributions accumulate in palimpsestic form, as a text written upon and through so many times that the original source of this sensation is impossible to discern; indeed, Danielewski implies through this cacophony of competing voices that there never has been an original. Gordon M. Sayre notes that the captivity-narrative form "has always been elastic and malleable," producing texts that are variously "revised, plagiarized, reprinted, and adapted" (17). Each facet of Danielewski's story is revealed by a different person; the novel's nested structure renders revision and adaptation key elements of its narrative style, suggesting that the most accurate account of events has already been sacrificed in favor of flexibility. He observes on the book's first page that "the house itself, like Melville's behemoth, remains resistant to summation" (3): it participates, as a self-contained entity, in the processes of history-making as much as do its narrators. These processes take place right before its inhabitants' eyes, fixing them in place as they try to understand the house and to escape from it. Like the earlier authors of captivity narratives, too, they begin to understand the difficulties inherent to such history-making when every representation of an event or person is both subjective and subject to others' rereading.

The problems begin for the Navidsons, the novel's most prominent captives, when they return from a trip out of town to find that a new door has appeared in their bedroom, opening onto a closet that did not exist before they left. When Will and his brother Tom perform a series of measurements, they find that the building's interior dimensions now exceed its exterior dimensions by 5/16th of an inch. From that point on, each time someone enters the new, alien space,

it grows larger, spinning off staircases and vast chambers and steep ramps into a labyrinth that seems to lead on forever. Travel through the labyrinth produces distant but menacing growls, as if some unseen predator is patrolling within the Navidson walls. Will and Karen come to feel as though control of their living space has been taken away from them; their physical surroundings directly generate their fear and anxiety. The house's physical properties do not conform to any known material laws, while its alien nature not only shapes the actions that Will, Karen, Tom, Will's friend Billy Reston, and a hired team of explorers take while penetrating the labyrinth but also determines the experiences of those analyzing the house through second-, third-, and fourth-hand accounts. The house's influence bleeds through multiple narrative layers, obscuring the causes of the many ill effects that later scholars of the house suffer. These symptoms of physical and mental distress—such as nausea, severe anxiety, and depression—diminish the store of knowledge and analysis that can be relied upon in their accounts, much as the emotional constraints and competing purposes behind the captivity narrative necessarily drained a certain measure of authentic meaning.

Several characters' experiences link the house to the colonial period of American history and indicate that its owners have always felt controlled by rather than in control of their home. The house's qualities, rooted in a basic ambiguity about who owns it, challenge the notion of private property that forms the basis of American capitalism, positioning it as though it still exists at a formative moment in the nation's history. The Navidsons' real estate agent claims the house was built in 1720 and has had "approximately .37 owners every year" (21); though the unfortunate Jamestown settlers' experiences contradict this date, its presence in local mythology reveals a vexing combination of permanence and transience. Since the house both precedes and exceeds the historical development of late-stage capitalism in its defiance of the concepts of origination and ownership, its presence suggests notions of belonging antithetical to accepted human commerce. Karen's experiences confirm this sense that the house exists outside the usual boundaries of space and time; a compass she purchases will not function within its walls, and, upon in-depth exploration, its labyrinth reveals only an "utter blankness found within. . . . not one object, let alone fixture or other manner of finish work has ever been discovered there" (Danielewski 119). Intensive elemental analysis suggests a far more troubling possibility: Mel O'Geery, a petrologist that Will Navidson hires to perform radiometric dating on some samples taken from the walls of the labyrinth, finds that "several of the . . . samples also appear to have ages predating the formation of the earth" (374). O'Geery's tests conclude that the materials range in age from a few thousand to 4.7 billion years; he labels

his findings only "a very nice little vein of history," in spite of the fact that some of the samples may be interstellar (378).

Though this discovery seems to confirm pre-colonial origins, the house's chronological ambiguity points to the many ways in which its very unknowability captivates its audiences—a trait that characterized white-Native relations in the settlement period. The alien nature of its material components reinforces the sense of psychological alienation that its inhabitants experience; the Native dwelling-places in which many colonial captives found themselves produced similar sentiments. Danielewski includes an abbreviated history of the Jamestown area in chapter XVIII that underlines the narrative's attention to some less successful moments in the American past, particularly in the settlers' encounters with the unknown. This history also serves as an introduction to the journal entries with which this essay begins, described as "a strange set of pages currently held at the Lacuna Rare Books Library at Horenew College in South Carolina" (410). The journal is thus revealed as a microcosm of the entire novel, itself a "strange set of pages" that leads again and again into gaps, inconsistencies, and dead ends. Though it is held in a rare-books collection, its historical worth implicitly confirmed by scholarly attention, the journal embodies nothing so much as the lacunae of meaning that its writer and subsequent readers confront.

The house's external properties only help to maintain the illusion of everyday life, just as captivity narratives focus on the parallels between life in captivity and life at home. Danielewski's narrative re-creates the jarring experience of encountering an unfamiliar, potentially hostile force by focusing on the disruptions of everyday life that such an encounter produces. A realtor with whom Karen discusses selling the Navidson house points out that "the only thing distinguished about your home's past . . . would be the colony, the Jamestown Colony" (409). Though this comment provokes no desire in Karen to perform further research, it produces a visible effect in the commentators who observe her experiences from a distance. The long s's present in the journal entries soon begin to permeate Johnny Truant's associated footnotes, for instance, suggesting that the malevolent energy embodied in the house can infect a narrative removed nearly four hundred years in time and space.

The notion of the "remove," a term that invokes both time and space, is a central convention of the American Indian captivity narrative that dates back at least to Mary Rowlandson's 1682 *True History of the Captivity and Restoration*; Rowlandson's text helped to delineate the genre through its accounts of twenty removes from colonial life into a distinctly unfamiliar wilderness that she was forced to traverse alone. So, too, Danielewski's nested narratives point the reader toward an always anticipated moment of resolution that continually recedes through

diegetic delay and deferral. The novel's structure extends its thematic focus on captivity and control, ideas that manifest in questions of communal and personal identity. Danielewski's characters repeatedly defer the possibility of establishing such identities in their ambivalence about the causes of the house's anomalies and their efforts to intervene on narrative levels chronologically or geographically removed from their own. Rather than undermining Danielewski's authorial control, these efforts eliminate the question of the author altogether, providing a neat solution to the difficulties inherent to ascertaining authorial ownership in the traditional captivity narrative. Danielewski represents authorship instead as a collective task in which anyone with access to the narrative can participate.

Both the characters' daily existence and the maintenance of the text itself are represented as vulnerable, subject to redirection without warning. The terrain of the Navidson house remains fundamentally unknowable; Danielewski presents this lack of knowledge as desirable, suggesting that captives' accounts of captors' civilizations benefit from the decision to accept the unknowable. In a discussion of early American fiction, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse argue that "the American novel . . . imagine[s] 'home' more as a crossroads and less as a beginning or endpoint in a vast network of utterly contingent connections" (681). Both *House of Leaves* and the "house of leaves" that is its subject exist at a crossroads of transient existence, floating signifiers, and palimpsestic identities. The novel's references to the structural, thematic, and rhetorical conventions of the American Indian captivity narrative can offer one way to cohere such narratively disjunctive moments of meaning by locating the substance of characters' experiences in the "removes" through which they travel. Rather than closing the circuit of meaning in his captivity narrative through a final promise of Christian redemption or providence, Danielewski places faith in the reader's ability to explore the text's potential for broader aesthetic and social resonance.

In keeping with the serial nature of the captivity narrative's removes, Danielewski represents his characters' search for personal identity at several different moments in the novel. Each of these instances manifests psychological effects unique to an individual, highlighting the persistence of captivity-based trauma beyond the period of physical imprisonment. One of the Navidson family's earliest discoveries about their house's unusual properties occurs, for example, when the children, Chad and Daisy, race into the labyrinth and vanish, their shouts echoing from what appears to be, impossibly, hundreds of feet away. When Will Navidson is finally able to retrieve them, they appear "still clutching a homemade candle, their faces lit like sprites on a winter's eve" (57). Armed for the descent into darkness with only their candles and the private game they are playing, the children remain unaware of the danger that has threatened them, yet these fa-

miliar features save them from the terror of the house that haunts their parents. Trying to make sense of events like this one, fictional parapsychologist Lucinda S. Hausmaninger describes the house as "'the omphalos of all we are'" (414): it contains all the meaning that the world can offer, a promise similar to that of many religions, yet this knowledge comes at the price of personal security. One must give oneself up to the risks of living with the unknown.

As did the authors of the early captivity narratives, who also struggled with the uncertain nature of their physical environment, the Navidsons understand themselves as both nationally located and unmoored from the state and the history that once sheltered them. Andrea Tinnemeyer points out that the three players always present in the drama of captivity—the captive, her captors, and the person or group who comes to her rescue—occupy positions that underline "the nation-building project at hand." Because the captivity narrative itself is meant to illustrate the supposedly immoral nature of the Native population and to underline the Christian values that helped to sustain the captive, it must "serve as a dynamic register for national dissonance . . . and for cautionary tales of unchecked territorial expansion and genocide" (Tinnemeyer xii-xiii). Richard Slotkin notes that the anxiety implied by this ambivalent relationship to the nation resonated for Puritans in at least three ways: in their rejection of English national identity, in their resistance to Native practices and beliefs, and in their children's creation of original American identities (98–99). Thus the captivity narrative manifests a complex set of sometimes contradictory notions about the allegiance owed to the native land. Danielewski's characters repeatedly negotiate among the terms of this dialectic in their attempts to center themselves as individuals and as a family within the hostile space of the home; while Chad and Daisy are able to navigate the labyrinth without danger because they do not comprehend its nature, their parents find themselves caught between the identities they possessed before coming to Ash Tree Lane and their sense that no representational category can correctly articulate their experiences.

Danielewski acknowledges this complex relationship to national identity in his narrative's chronology; key events often occur on national holidays, while references to national cultures and mythologies highlight the supposedly immanent nature of patriotic sentiment. Johnny Truant edits a large portion of the manuscript on July 4, a holiday that falls near his birthday (181), while the final events of the Navidsons' story take place on Halloween, and Zampanò's own edits conclude on Christmas Day (527–528). Danielewski's reference to Halloween here serves as a rather tongue-in-cheek nod to conventions of the haunted-house tale, but he incorporates many mythologies with more complex cultural significance as well. The house is situated on Ash Tree Lane, an apparent reference to the

Norse mythology of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, which is an ash tree. Numerous allusions to ash recur throughout the text, including a quote from *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* by Thomas Hariot, who worked for Sir Walter Raleigh: "Ashe, good for caske hoopes: and if neede require, plow worke, as al*ſ*o for many things els" (408). This quote appears as the epigraph to chapter XVIII, which includes the bulk of the Jamestown history and discussion in the text, suggesting that the Navidson house contains elements essential to the maintenance of the nation itself. In spite of its potentially prehistoric origins, the house's modern identity is tied to that of the colonies. Gordon Sayre has observed that "the [captivity narrative's] importance is unique to the English literature of America"; the genre is not central to the literature of any other colonial region (4). Danielewski highlights the importance of the captivity narrative within American literary traditions by linking key plot events to captivity conventions and by rendering national identity as fluid and mutable even as he offers alternate ways of imagining its epistemological functions.

As Wendy Martin has noted, "travel, whether voluntary or forced, presents a radical challenge to the notion of a fixed stable self" (viii). Danielewski's nested narrative structure incorporates several journeys in which characters either act to uncover the house's mysteries or are acted upon without their consent. Each of these incidents functions as a "remove" from the life with which characters are familiar, effectively reinscribing their identities as unknown and, as long as they are in contact with the house, unknowable. Unstable personal identity presents a steep challenge for characters and readers alike. When Will Navidson undertakes his solitary exploration of the house, after the professional explorers he hired have met a series of devastating outcomes, the text representing his journey dwindles little by little until only a few lines or words appear on each page. As he loses all sense of direction and purpose, a skewed perception reflected in the text's unconventional positioning sideways or upside-down on the page, his ability to narrate his experiences verbally also diminishes. One of his last utterances appears on three consecutive pages, underlining his need to hold onto a concrete sense of self: "'Don't be scared. Don't be. I am'" (480–482). While he is clearly trying to reassure himself in this passage, he also asserts his identity in the face of an exploration whose discoveries do not conform to any known precedents. He still possesses sufficient agency to declare himself, yet the nature of his vocal expression is constrained by the undefined forces operating around him. For the reader, the typographical sparseness of sections like this one re-creates a tangible sense of captivity that a more conventionally represented narrative cannot.

In the end, it is Will's partner, Karen Green, who conquers severe claustrophobia in order to enter the house's labyrinth and pull him to safety. Her

heroic, unselfish actions replenish the meaning drained from Navidson's sense of self by his fruitless quest to uncover the house's origins; she adds fallibility to the figure of the rescuer as well, demonstrating that every player in the captivity tale is subject to some kind of shortcoming. At the same time, she manifests physical markers that signal her participation in a narrative aware of its links to the defining literatures of early America. When she reappears outside the house, holding the recovered Navidson in her lap, Karen wears a pink ribbon in her hair (523)—a narrative device clearly meant to recall the character Faith from Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." In that story, an errant pink ribbon from Faith's cap signals to her husband that she is lost to the satanic temptations that have consumed the rest of his village; the ribbon suggests that his "Faith is gone" and no good can be reclaimed. Danielewski underlines this reference in the appendix containing letters from Pelafina Lièvre, Johnny Truant's mother, who is a permanent resident of the Three Attic Whalestoe Institute, a mental hospital: at one point, she describes herself as captivated like a "silly school girl" by her son's clever letters and, "[l]ike Hawthorne's Faith," wearing "pink ribbons in [her] hair" to demonstrate her devotion (599). If read in the context of Hawthorne's story, these ribbons communicate only the ambivalent nature of her emotions, yet, in a parallel level of the narrative, Karen fills in the gaps in Will's life that his explorations have produced. Rather than functioning as a badge of her uncertainty, her pink ribbon gestures toward the faith in individual and communal identities that has been sacrificed to curiosity about the unknown. Her grief at Will's absence and suffering in the labyrinth produces the shattered self characteristic of the captivity tale but also coheres their family's story. Danielewski represents this fragmentation in terms of the potential that the unknown possesses.

Danielewski establishes the fact that humans cannot sustain a day-to-day existence in or near the Navidson house; rather than cultivating an atmosphere of homeliness and welcome, it wears down inhabitants' fortitude by undermining the possibility of an ownership that would connect them to the broader social community. Several narrators raise the question of who in fact owns the house and, by extension, the narratives that house it. Zampanò speculates early in his discussion about "whether or not it is someone's house" since its history remains veiled: "Though if so whose? Whose was it or even whose *is* it? Thus giving voice to another suspicion: could the owner still be there?" (121). This sense of a life experienced through accident recurs throughout many early captivity narratives as well. Richard Slotkin points out that the captive, once returned to her original people, must live by lessons learned in captivity: she realizes that "life is lived on the brink of an abyss," and only continual vigilance can preserve her soul from

"the wrath of God's judgment on sinful people" (111). Danielewski's characters also struggle to forestall the threats posed by the house's unpredictable nature.

Reflecting on the Navidsons' experiences, Johnny Truant observes that the most important moments of history tend to vanish unless their lessons contribute to a shared pool of communal knowledge:

> Where is the starving time of 1610? The 1622 Powhatan Indian Insurrection which left almost 400 dead? Where are the dioramas of famine and disease? The black and broken toes? The gangrene? The night rending pain?
>
> 'Why, it's right here,' says a docent.
>
> But I can't see what she's talking about.
>
> And besides, there is no docent. (500)

His failure to locate in the present day the history that serves as the context for the house signals the precarious nature of the existence that he and the other participants in the Navidson story now share. As a central narrator of the text, he is aware of the early American history that shaped the house's bizarre evolution, yet the more unpleasant elements of that history have faded for those not directly involved, wiped clean by their willful ignorance. No person or group is willing to lay a claim to this history, so its long-term effects diminish just as the house's origins remain unclear. Truant finds himself haunted by the need to remember the lessons he has learned: "Everywhere I've gone, there've been hints of Zampanò's history, by which I mean Navidson's, without any real evidence to confirm any of it" (501). Because he has been captivated by a narrative that tells the story of multiple captivities engineered by a single, unknowable house, Truant realizes that the material effects of history persist in spite of unreliable witnesses.

Captivity narratives are also defined as much by their authors' ability—or, in some cases, unwillingness—to escape as they are by the original act of capture. Often the captive herself must initiate a successful flight, though in many cases interested friends will facilitate her efforts. Will Navidson, first alerted to his house's imminent collapse by Karen's scream, rushes into the disintegrating structure to pull his partner to safety before beginning to search for his children. Aware, perhaps, that "this is the first time the house has 'physically acted' upon inhabitants and objects" (341), he makes decisions without thinking through the consequences. Because he is too late to rescue Daisy, Tom snatches her up first and reaches Will just in time to hand his daughter to him. This moment of joyous reunion, followed immediately by absolute loss, forever reshapes the

Navidsons' relationships to one another. Tom cannot extricate himself from the house; instead, the family hears confirmation of his fate "in the shape of an awful gasp" (346). Since two family members' escape from the house required the death of a third, Will Navidson realizes that his successful escape depended upon an unsought sacrifice.

Slotkin argues that this progression of events in the early American captivity narrative, from an entry into the new environment of America to captivity by an unknown Native "other," begins "in a happy condition of innocence or complacence." This attitude is shattered by unforeseen challenges but "results in a figurative rebirth" attesting to the trials the captive has successfully endured (101). Will undergoes a self-imposed ordeal after his family escapes from the house: he returns to make a solo exploration of the labyrinth, determined to identify at last the forces that took three men's lives and drove them from their home. The letter he writes to Karen in the course of this adventure articulates his belief that the house is an instrument for conversion from worldly egotism to selflessness: "God's a house. Which is not to say that our house is God's house or even a house of God. What I mean to say is that our house is God" (390). This revelation reshapes Will's perspective on personal morality even as the letter's increasing grammatical and syntactical errors reflect a fragmenting state of mind. He concludes by mourning Delial, the dying Sudanese girl whose photograph earned him a Pulitzer, alongside his brother and his own sense of self: "i miss her i miss delial i miss the man i thought i was before i met her the man who would have saved her who would have done something who would have been tom maybe hes the one im looking for or maybe im looking for all of them" (393). The house strips away the pretenses that had concealed his true motivations; with the essential facts of his existence laid bare, he pins his hopes for escape this final time on the possibility of showing his family the humane qualities that he possesses. Yet he suffers physical disability in the course of this quest, loses his brother, and sees Karen succumb to a terminal illness after their reunion. The house denies him redemption in spite of his efforts.

In *House of Leaves*, as in other examples of the captivity form, successful escapes often incorporate strategies that captors cannot anticipate, even if these escapes also involve personal sacrifice. Janis P. Stout suggests that such planned escapes constitute "the most fully characteristic form adopted by the American imagination . . . a part of the mythology of the American experience from its origins" (31); a successful traveler or escapee is motivated by an essentially American frontier impulse to seek out the new. At the same time, some narratives of travel and captivity include a "counter move toward the East," which may be interpreted as "an ironic reversal of the original hopeful flight from Old World

decadence to the New Eden" (Stout 5)—or, as in the Navidsons' experiences, one such strategy meant to circumvent the house's hold on its inhabitants. After Karen successfully rescues Will from his failed attempt at solo exploration, she cannot explain exactly how she found him or how they were able to emerge. According to an interview that she gives afterward, she did not know where he was but simply thought about finding him until she saw him; when she wanted to get outside again, the house "just dissolved." Though the interviewer remains skeptical of this insight—"How's that possible? It's still there, isn't it?" (524–525)—the episode reveals that faith, the very property that Hawthorne's Goodman Brown lost so irrevocably, enables the family's survival in this moment. Karen may have imagined that flight from the house represented their most viable option, but, paradoxically, only her return to it can save her partner. Such flights are repeated in and echo through the novel's other narrative levels as well. Pelefina Lièvre escapes from the Whalestoe Institute for a day, for instance, claiming that "[n]ot even lightning could out light my rage" (596). Her later comments on what she gained through this brief period of freedom can be read as an analysis of the purpose and function of the captivity narrative as well: her observation that "[t]hese pages are my only flight. At least they escape" (619) signifies that the captive ultimately achieves freedom in name only, remaining subject to the constraints of the unknown and the unknowable even after returning to her home. While the primary goal of a captive may be to effect a physical escape, the rhetorical goals of the captivity narrative center on communicating such experiences to the outside world—giving them a structure but allowing their consequences to permeate beyond the limits of the page.

The themes and gestures that Danielewski borrows from the captivity narrative contribute to the substance of this house of leaves. Its revisionist and visionary form is born from an American literary tradition of emigration, conflict, conversion, and rebirth. Even as it questions the social structures that form the basis of modern American culture, it places the burden of knowledge on the reader, who must accept the unknowable, ambiguous dimensions of history and come to understand that captivity is also a self-imposed phenomenon. To escape from the confines of the enigmatic other, to assert absolute mastery over the forms of knowledge and experience that have always fascinated us, is to give up the very fact of desire itself. Rather, Danielewski argues, the captivity narrative allows us the opportunity to put ourselves in the same dangerous position as the captor in order both to acknowledge the gaps in our knowledge that can never be filled and to find representations of human experience that exist outside of us.

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Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis

"A Kitchen of Her Own": Chicana Identity Negotiations Framed Through Foodways in Carla Trujillo's *What Night Brings*

> Out of corn, water, and lime the tortillera makes the masa of her identity.
>
> – Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Tortillerismo"

Latino culture is founded upon very strict gender polarities. Any transgressions of those dichotomies (femininity connotes passivity, tenderness, gentleness, while masculinity authoritarianism, violence, egoism)[1] threatens the status quo of the society. Any woman who, through insubordinate behavior, defies the status quo is shamed, if not ostracized.[2] Thus, women who wish to disagree with Latino *machista* logic often resort to inconspicuous strategies of "civil disobedience" rather than to a blatant undermining of patriarchal authority. One of such methods is culinary negotiation with machismo culture. Thus, T. D. Rebolledo's claim that "[i]n the cooking, we see admiration, contempt, understanding, and rebellion" will resonate with my arguments about the process of identity formation in Carla Trujillo's *What Night Brings* (2003). The novel, set in California in 1967,[3] follows the struggles of Marci Cruz, an 11-year old Chicana, to contest gender constructions imposed on women such as Delia, her mother, or herself by Latino machismo and simultaneously to reconcile her queer sexual appetites. The traditionalist Latino family, which unquestioningly the Cruzes are, is more than often an unfavorable space for queer appetites. Therefore Marci prays to God to make her abusive father Eddie vanish and to turn her into a boy. Meanwhile, through the acts of

1 Alfredo Mirandé claims that "[w]hen applied to Mexicans or Latinos, 'macho' remains imbued with such negative attributes as male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse" (66).

2 Carla Trujillo remarks that "[t]he majority of Chicanas, both lesbian and heterosexual, are taught that our sexuality must conform to certain modes of behavior. Our culture voices shame upon us if we go beyond the criteria of passivity and repression, or doubts in our virtue if we refuse" ("Chicana Lesbians" 186).

3 References to the political situation in the African state of Biafra locate the plot of the narrative in 1967. For a more detailed presentation, see Ehrhardt 108.

female agency, she attempts to gain some control over the oppressive domestic space through challenging culinary practices in her family home.

Food, as cultural production, allows us to problematize questions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Thus, Julia Ehrhardt's remark that "insights from queer studies have the potential to enrich our understandings of the interrelationships among food, gender and sexuality by encouraging us to rethink and redefine our conceptions of these connections" (92) will be instrumental in my analysis of how Latino domestic space and culinary practices allow women to either reproduce or contest constructions of both gender and sexuality. Inspired by Ehrhardt's reading of *What Night Brings* as a "project of queering food studies," I propose an alternative paradigm in which a greater focus is placed on the mutual interdependence and interconnectedness between gender and sexual identities. First of all, I would like to chart Marci's challenge of a "proper" female gender identity on the broader canvas of the Chicana cultural tradition in which acceptance or rejection of the prescribed model of femininity is often presented through the heroines' attitude toward food. Various forms of gender inequality, which are advocated by patriarchal Latino families, influence the constructions of heteronormative sexuality. Hence, secondly, I will offer a reading of the correlation of gender, sexuality and foodways employed in *What Night Brings* which asks us to look more closely at the fact that, in order to understand and name her queer self, Marci first has to deal with the position of a woman in a Latino family and society at large.

As Gloria Anzaldúa points out, Chicanas have three mythical mothers: "*Guadalupe*, the virgin mother who has not abandoned [them], *La Chingada (Malinche)*, the raped woman whom [they] have abandoned, and *La Llorona*, the mother who seeks her lost children and is a combination of the other two" (52). Patriarchal ideology uses La Virgen as a desirable role model for women in juxtaposition to La Malinche and La Llorona, the usual suspects in Mexican/Chicano mythology. "These mythical Mexican mothers form a maternal trinity in the Mexican and Mexican American cultures. . . . [T]oday they are commonly figured as the sexual mother, the virgin mother, and the murderous mother" (Esquibel 23). Their symbolic iconography is ambiguous, though, and as such has been used to dominate Chicanas: "the true identity of all three has been subverted—*Guadalupe* to make us [Latina women] docile and enduring, *la Chingada* to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and *la Llorona* to make us long-suffering people. This obscuring has encouraged the *virgen/puta* dichotomy" (Anzaldúa 31).

The patriarchal *machista* logic inscribes submissiveness into women's behavior and imprisons women in the domestic space. La Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexican Indians (Rebolledo 50), is the embodiment of all desirable

traits of female character: "piety, virginity, forgiveness and submissiveness. [She is a] nurturing mother offering only supreme good. Her religiosity and unselfish motherhood make her a positive model" (Zygadło 120). Even though it is hard to live up to the ideal, the cult of *marianísmo* instills into women the role model of the passive, self-sacrificing, meek and self-abnegating Virgen de Guadalupe. In *What Night Brings*, Delia Cruz's actions promote the traditional view that women should master humility and self-abnegation. At the same time, Delia's actions reflect the patriarchal belief that "[w]omen are to be fulfilled by fulfilling the needs of men" (Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers* 117). Delia's culinary choices reveal not only her prescribed self-abnegation but also, and maybe more importantly, female subjugation internalized and reenacted by Delia herself. Through the denial of nutritious food and such delicacies as Hostess cupcakes to her daughters, Marci and Corin, Mrs. Cruz strengthens male domination which oppresses her and her daughters.[4] Culinary choices and rituals in the Cruz household reveal that Eddie's position in the family is predicated on female subjugation.

The patriarchal *machista* logic advocates weakness in women, while in reality Latino households function because of women's strength and resilience. Rejecting the prescribed female weakness, Carla Trujillo claims that "Chicanas need not be passive victims of the cultural onslaught of social control. If anything, Chicanas are usually the backbone of every familia, for it is their strength and self-sacrifice which often keeps the family going" ("Chicana Lesbians" 189). In Josefina López's play *Simply María, or the American Dream*, María is brought up to believe that she will not make it on her own. Paradoxically, it is her own mother, Carmen, who leads María to believe that "[w]omen need to get married, they are no good without men" (28). Many women do accept this belief, but not María or the speaking persona in Evangelina Vigil-Pinon's poem "Kitchen Talk." This persona reveals the suspicion of *machista* logic, which dramatically narrows down Latina women's life choices. She notices that her grandma's comment about women's inability to predict what life has in store for them is "perfectly balanced / with routine rinsing of coffee cups and spoons / [and words] que barbaridad (how absurd)" (163). The dialectic between the grandmother's verbal incredulity and her servitude as women's second nature reveals the depth of patriarchal indoctrination.

Within Mexican/Chicana culture, the man as the dominant member of society displays a strong macho attitude; his status as a breadwinner entitles him to dictatorship. Ana Castillo maintains that "the objectification of females in

4 Marci explains that cooked ham served for Eddie's lunch "cost too much for *our* lunch" (186), while such delicacies as Hostess cupcakes were reserved only for Eddie (185).

society has been the result of man's enforced economic dominance and spiritual repression of humankind" ("La Mancha" 31). In such an environment, "[w]oman is not only man's property and man, through the sanctification of the Church, her owner, but her children also belong to him and the Church" (Castillo, "La Mancha 32). Thus the mother, as a perfect housewife, submits her selfhood in the service of pleasing "her master." Submissiveness, subordination, and self-abnegation are inscribed in her identity, all of which augment the dichotomy between the dominant and the dominated gender. Cherríe Moraga, acknowledging female self-sacrifice on the altar of the men of *machista* culture, remarks that she has "never met any kind of mexicano who . . . did not subscribe to the basic belief that men are better" (93). The feeling of male superiority, granted by the Catholic Church and perpetuated by women, allows men to act upon their own wishes, instincts or desires, with no justification required (Moraga 94).

Gender relations in the Cruz family are shaped in such a way as to accommodate Eddie's hyper-masculinity. Delia is immobilized, if not metaphorically imprisoned, in her household, as Eddie "won't let her" work outside the home (3). While her major household duty is to plan "every dime [they] spend on food" (10), Delia needs Eddie to drive her to do the shopping (3). Dietary habits in the Cruz family also reflect Eddie's dominant gender position. Delia prepares the meals, but only the ones that Eddie chooses to eat. Thus, the preparation of meals in the Cruz family is a political act demarcating the vectors of power relations in the household. Demanding particular foods and complaining about their sub-standard quality is one of the many rituals of subjugation that Eddie has imposed on Delia. As a breadwinner, he demands a culinary tribute to his position in the family. Thus, any food that does not come up to his standards causes his visible displeasure. As Marci narrates it:

> I walked into the kitchen and saw Mom frying to death some pork-chops she got on sale that were cut so skinny you could practically see through them. Already, I knew my dad would use his fingers to throw the dried-up meat on his plate with the same old 'this makes me sick' look he always had when he hated my mom's cooking. (10–11)

Frustrated and angry with the father's demands for tribute and his suppression of Delia's sovereignty (Ehrhardt 97), Marci questions and then finally rejects female acquiescence, first in thoughts and then in action:

> It's just that I felt sorry for Mom because she was always trying to make Dad happy. She'd look at him like a scared pup, hoping he'd eat anyway. I hated that look. I wanted her to tell him to 'eat shit,' or 'get up and fix it yourself.'

> I practiced those words for her, but she never said them. Instead, she'd say 'What's wrong with it?' or, 'Can I fry you some eggs?' (11)

Marci feels revulsion for *frijoles guisados*, a combination of beans fried with onions, bean juice and thickened with flour (57), which happens to be Eddie's favorite dish and thus is prepared almost every day. Marci's disgust with it is correlated with her growing voice of dissent: "Mom fixes them this way because the king of the castle likes them like that. Since the king says, 'I pay the bill,' I have to eat them the way he likes them" (57). Demanding the beans *guisados* on a daily basis is clearly one of the most focal rituals of subjugation Eddie imposes on women in his family. He achieves the status of the master of his domain directly through references to the paychecks he brings home, and indirectly through Delia's forcing their daughters to honor his wishes: eating one big spoonful of *frijoles guisados* is a prerequisite for the girls leaving the table (57). Marci's disgust and frustration symbolize her disagreement with Eddie's authoritarian rule and rejection of Delia's meek acceptance of her servile, subjugated position in their family.[5]

The lives of Latina women are framed in servitude from early childhood.[6] For instance, in *The House on Mango Street*, the rolling pin Alicia has inherited from her mother symbolizes feminine subjugation—Alicia has to slave for her aging father (Cisneros 31). Alicia's making tortillas is inconsistent with her aspirations; she has to get up very early with the tortilla star—the morning star, here associated with female servility rather than with romance—in order to be able to receive a university education, a ticket to freedom from the servitude symbolized by making tortillas.[7] Similarly, Soveida in Denise Chávez's

5 Ehrhardt succinctly captures the symbolism of Marci's culinary rebellion: "[b]y rejecting this particular dish [*frijoles guisados*], Marci symbolically refuses to ingest the subservient culinary role her culture expects her to embody" (98).

6 Interestingly, there are women who accept the ethics of servitude and adopt it to their own needs. For instance, Cherri Moraga presents servitude as female power over men: "[t]he men watched the women-my aunts and mother moving with the grace and speed of girls who were cooking before they could barely see over the top of the stove. Elvira, my mother, knew she was being watched by the men and loved it. Her slim hips moved patiently beneath the apron" (91).

7 In Josefina López's play *Simply María, Or the American Dream* the opinions of María's father reveal the internal conflict between female aspirations to individual fulfillment, which Ricardo denigrates, and feminine servitude and self-sacrifice in the name of patriarchy, which he praises,: "Don't tell me about modern women. What kind of wife would that woman make if she's so busy with her career and can't tend to her house, children, and her husband?" (28).

Face of an Angel exemplifies a greater tendency in Latino culture: "As a child, I was imbued with the idea that the purpose of life was service. Service to God. Country. Men. Not necessarily in that order, but lumped together like that. . . . In our family, men usually came first" (171). In the La Virgen fashion, good women are supposed to passively accept their fate, to embrace dutiful service to men. Likewise, female servitude has been inscribed in Delia's married life since its beginning. Delia confesses to her daughter: "Your daddy was damn cute I practically knocked your grandma over running up to give him his beer. . . . And in two weeks I became Mrs. Eddie Cruz" (2). In a wedded state, Delia continues to embrace the virtue of service; she always waits for Eddie with suppers. Delia's anger with Eddie when he comes late for evening meals (35, 175) exposes the general fact that a Latina woman's "sense of identity is tied to that of a man, she is dependent on this relationship for her own self-worth" (Trujillo, "Chicana Lesbians" 188). Thus, Delia's anger is directed not so much at Eddie for his being late (she can easily heat the dinner), but at the fact that Eddie's tardiness or absence exposes her dependence on a man to the point of defying her self-worth. Without his appreciation of a well-cooked meal, Delia has to face the inconvenient truth that her services are taken for granted.

During Eddie's unexpected, albeit temporary, absence (he moves in with his girlfriend), the culinary repertoire in the Cruz household changes diametrically. The leftovers Delia brings from work at Woolworths coupled with the food that the guests bring make the girls "happy because [they] didn't have to eat beans so much anymore" (100). The lunch counter leftovers do not coincidentally create associations between cultural signifies of food and mainstream culture. So far gender negotiations normally have not been within the purview of the younger generation in the Cruz family home. However, the newly-gained access to mainstream American food—hot-dogs, macaroni and cheese, fried chicken, fish sticks and meatloaf, "grilled-cheese sandwiches, spaghetti, cold cereal, or weenies wrapped in bacon" (100)—mirrors Marci's nascent self-conception which challenges her gender identity predestined by Latino culture. Furthermore, the girls receive guests who often bring "little presents, like a dozen fresh tortillas, avocados from their trees, or eggs from someone's backyard" (101). The gifts of food, as a binding familiar and communal force, make Marci and Corin part of a supportive network of relatives and friends. Sharing food is a means by which the girls establish physical and psychological oneness with their relatives. Gone is the situation of hopeless isolation and vulnerability to the outbreaks of Eddie's gratuitous violence.

Marci finally finds freedom to act when Eddie is absent. Delia's decision to get a job precipitates Marci's "tak[ing] control of the kitchen on her own

initiative and teach[ing] herself to cook meatloaf, hamburgers, and spaghetti" (Ehrhardt 102). Through her culinary preferences, Marci questions the denial of many Latina women of their "own individuality for the benefit of [their] family and community," at the same time transforming cooking from "an obligatory performance . . . [into] an occasion to celebrate her affectionate nature with her culinary creative expression" (Abarca, *Voices in the Kitchen* 24). The space of the kitchen, apart from being a locus of stifling social entrapment in the domestic environment, whose "walls limit her social, economic, and personal mobility, which derives from conceptualizing *place* as a fixed, unchanging, and nostalgic location" (Abarca, *Voices in the Kitchen* 20), can also become a site of creativity, female authority and agency. Many Chicanas share Meredith Abarca's perception of women's cooking "not [only as] an obligatory performance but rather a celebration of . . . [their] own affectionate and creative expression" ("Los Chilaquiles" 127). For instance, Viramontes in her essay "*Nopalitos*: The Making of Fiction" comments on women's ability to claim subjectivity through cultural politics of food in the oppressive environment. Benay Blend perceptively observes that "[g]ender definitions most likely placed her mother in the kitchen, but she converted what might have been a demand into a desire, a responsibility into a delight, a chore into a talent. For Viramontes, food making is valuable because it revalorizes women's work as a more creative form of labor within the home" (156).[8]

With the awareness that her mother always takes Eddie back, Marci is not particularly surprised when their five-month culinary domestic bliss ends with his grand comeback.[9] Eddie immediately attempts to restore the domestic status quo. His authoritarianism and chauvinism is yet again coached in culinary terms: "Where the hell is your goddamn mother and why isn't there any food on the table?" (107). However, with the prospect that she can be "finally happy" at home (107), Marci no longer wants to accept passively her role within the domestic

8 The kitchen may also afford comfort and pleasure, as in Pat Mora's "Layers of Pleasure," where she claims that she managed to create "a kitchen of her own." Blend observes that "[f]or Mora, food work became communal, creative, and comforting; 'the kitchen became Pat's place, the special room in which I succeeded in bringing myself and others pleasure'" (154).

9 At this point it is not amiss to mention that romantic heterosexual love is not shown in a very positive light in the novel. The comments about Delia's love for Eddie evoke entrapment, retardation, and passivity. For instance, Tia Leti claims that Delia "can't even think straight when it comes to that man" (10). With disarming honesty, Marcy admits that "when it's about my dad, she's practically retarded" (10). Grandma Flor sums up her daughter's fatal infatuation with Eddie: "She don't hear shit, she don't see shit, and she don't do shit" (10).

space. Meredith Abarca's claim that "[c]ooking is a language of self-representation" ("Los Chilaquiles" 120) reverberates in Marci's decision to stage her domestic rebellion through foodways. One night Eddie comes back home from work to see spaghetti for dinner. Marci's replacement of Eddie's favorite *frijoles guisados* with the dish whose ethnic connotations have been neutralized into the mainstream American culinary repertoire may suggest that Marci has broken out of the spell of the cultural authority that comes with Eddie's machismo. Rebolledo's suggestion that through devaluing of "traditional foods" a woman can articulate a denial of cultural authority (134) seems to define Marci's choice. Beans *guisados* are semiotically deployed in the narrative as a way of coding female oppression. Thus, the unruly daughter's decision to replace the dish with food that is coded as a part of mainstream American culinary culture clearly fits into the discourse of resistance. Marci's breach of the Cruz family culinary rituals shows that, to use Abarca's words, "affirmation of her right to creative expression [through food] becomes an affirmations of her agency" ("Los Chilaquiles" 129). Marci rejects the traditionalist idea that in the kitchen Latina women lose their agency; it is exactly the opposite in her case. Hence, spaghetti becomes a sign of Eddie's challenged, if not diminished, authority in the Cruz household.

Eddie's aggressive reaction to spaghetti, masking his incredulity, echoes his status of an underdog in American society who has to take it out on his women at home to boost his violated macho self-image: "Chinga, chinga, chinga, I put up with este pinche mierda all goddamn day, then I got to come home to this kind of crap. I hate this shit! Every time you mom has to work I gotta eat dog shit for supper. . . . Why do you cook this crap, huh?" (124). Eddie supports his ego through aggression and expects the female to passively accept it, which alludes to the mythical La Chingada. According to Octavio Paz, gender relations between Mexicans are predestined because of Hernán Cortés's sexualized conquest of la Malinche, thus these relations will always vacillate between two poles: *chingón* and *chingada*. One of the primary meanings of the colloquial expression *chingar* is to do harm or to fail. The verb *chingar* always denotes violence, aggression, and cruelty. Due to its historical context, the verb is invested with notions of sexuality, alluding to rape and sexual conquest. The word empowers the male through references to female passively and involuntarily suffering male aggression, sexual conquest and/or cruelty. All those lexical and historical insinuations resonate in Eddie's expression, making his interactions with women in his family highly gendered.[10]

10 I would like to thank professor Constante González Groba for guiding me through the lexical and historical meanders of the word *chingar*.

Yet, Marci shows self-control and does not want to relinquish the new role in her family home which she has experienced as rewarding. Maintaining her composure, the rebellious heroine explains: "Mom told me to make spaghetti … and you don't have to eat it" (124). Eddie correctly recognizes his daughter's culinary disobedience as an act of female agency and authority, which comes from "gaining knowledge of food and its preparation" (Ballard 178).[11] Female agency comes with a price, though. The unruly daughter has to deal with Eddie's physical retribution as his verbal aggression is always just a prelude to physical violence against his daughters. After knocking Marci down, he kicks her hard, with his work boots on, repeatedly all over her body: "From now on, if you don't learn some respect for your father, I'll just have to knock the shit out of you until you do" (125). Then Eddie takes the tool of culinary disobedience—the pot of hot spaghetti sauce—and starts to tip it over Marci's head saying: "This is what I think of the fucking mierda you cooked" (125). Finally he pours the sauce across the kitchen floor, scalding her arms and legs. Psychological trauma and physical injuries are the price Marci has to pay for the deliberate breach of the prescribed female servility and submissiveness.

Despite Delia's attempts to pass the ethics of service and servility to Marci, the unruly daughter refuses to serve Eddie. Once Marci appropriates the kitchen as her space, she decides to deal with her father's machismo on her own terms. She celebrates her cultural resistance by purposefully spoiling the food she has to prepare for Eddie (Ehrhardt 102); Marci frankly admits: "'Course I cooked bad on purpose. … I did it because I hated cooking for him. Just because I had to cook didn't mean it had to taste good" (123–124). The more she objects to servitude and subjugation, the greater is her ability to understand the implications of gender dichotomies in a Latino family. Through Soveida's words, Denise Chávez captures what Marci and so many Latinas have experienced: "Life was, and is, service, no matter what our station in it. Some wrestle more with service than others. It is those to whom more is given from whom more service is demanded" (172).

11 In her article "The Keys to the Kitchen: Cooking and Latina Power in Latin(o) American Children's Stories," Genny Ballard sees "the acquisition of knowledge regarding food and cooking as a right of passage for young women" (167). Ballard's observation that "being able to cook and acquire food for the family represents the acquisition of power for female characters" (167) made about three texts: *Las Hermanas*, *Too Many Tamales*, and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* is also illustrative of Marci's culinary choices. Despite the fact that Marci does not have a special bond with her mother based on culinary mentorship as is the case in the texts Ballard chose for the analysis, Marci becomes empowered and stages her rebellion through food selection and preparation. Much like for characters analyzed by Ballard, cooking becomes for Marci "a marker for maturity" (Ballard 174).

However, once Delia steps out of her prescribed silent, submissive role and stands up against Eddie's abuse of paternal power, she and the girls are quickly reminded of their inferior status in the family. On Easter, the daughters share eggs in the morning: Marci eats whites and Corin yolk. Eddie perceives "their own system of egg consumption—each eats only the parts she wants" (Ehrhardt 99) as a challenge to his authority in the family: he is the one to decide who eats what and how. He slams the girls with a belt on their faces for disobedience and shouts: "I'll teach both of you to tell me what to do. Don't forget *I'm* the one in charge" (85–86). Ehrhardt pertinently observes that "in Eddie's eyes they are guilty of assuming the power that rightfully belongs to him as the person with the 'huevos' (balls) in the family. . . . Eddie's words imply that because he is a man with the parts to prove it his daughters will never succeed in defying his rules" (99).

As opposed to most Chicana writers who use traditional Mexicano/Chicano/Indian foods to symbolize their ethnic identity (Rebolledo 133),[12] Carla Trujillo uses Marci's food preferences to reinforce her gender and sexuality. Marci disgust with Eddie's favorite *frijoles guisados* is counterbalanced with her taste for Delia's "thick and puffy" tortillas (46), a culinary choice reinforcing Marci's identification with generations of women. In Mexican cultural heritage, tortilla-making is a time- and energy-consuming activity which underscores a woman's position as an object of male desire,[13] and as such it stands in as a signifier of gender subjugation. After confrontation with Eddie over her culinary choices, Marci seems to force herself to accept patriarchal rhetoric which indoctrinates women into believing that their destiny is to slave away in the kitchen, preferably making tortillas. With the instinctive knowledge that women "became inextricably connected with the

12 In *Latino Food Culture*, Zilkia Janer discusses the foundation of Mexican American cuisine: "[t]raditional Latin American diets used to give central stage to maize, beans, rice, and fresh fruits and vegetables, reserving the richer meat-based dishes for occasional consumption" (141). Janer goes on to explain that "The Latino food pyramid uses foods like maize, tortillas, potatoes, plantains, avocados, and papayas to illustrate how to compose a balanced Latino meal" (143).

13 Pilcher refers to anthropological research which suggests that "a woman cooking for a large family typically spent the entire morning, five or six hours, making tortillas" (101). Making tortillas required a lot of energy, finesse and skill from a woman. On the other hand, a decent, marriageable woman would not allow herself to fail at tortilla-making: "[b]ecause tortilla making demanded so much time and effort—as much as a third of a woman's waking life—the activity acquired a corresponding significance in her personal and family identity. . . . Tortilla making was so essential to domestic life that no woman in the [studied] village became eligible for marriage until she had demonstrated this skill" (Pilcher 106).

food they [have] cooked" (Pilcher 107), Marci attempts to recreate her mother's position in the kitchen as a "dutiful Chicana cook" (Ehrhardt 103). Interestingly enough, Delia, for whom tortilla making becomes her second nature, never assists Marci in her endeavors to find her place in the matrilineal heritage. If "[t]he Kitchen as a woman's *space* . . . can represent a site of multiple changing levels and degrees of freedom, self-awareness, subjectivity, and agency" (Abarca, *Voices in the Kitchen* 19), then Delia's absence in the kitchen when Marci attempts to define who she wants to be through foodways signifies the mother's inability to encourage her daughter to contest gender relations in Latina families. On the other hand, Delia's lack of tutelage or even assistance in Marci's tortilla making, or any culinary activities for that matter, could be understood as her indirect way of discouraging Marci from adopting a servile and submissive gender role, if it were not for the fact that for many years Delia was a passive witness to her husband's brutal abuse of their daughters.[14]

The neutral term *tortillera*, meaning a tortilla maker, has also sexual connotations. The reference to slapping—the sound of tortilla making—is used to evoke

14 The lyrical speaker of Odilia Mendez's "Mother" receives much more obvious encouragement from her mother. The daughter appreciates and cherishes her mother's self-sacrifice and maternal love which make it possible for her to define her selfhood and not simply repeat her mother's fate:

> Mother, I see you make tortillas
> and tamales and caldo especially for me.
> I see you beaten in spirit by my father
> You lay there quiet as plates fly through
> the air as he releases his oppressions on you. . . .
> You don't expect me to make tortillas
> but to think about who first made tortillas
> and what the future holds for the tortilla
> And my relatives laugh at you for not preparing me to be a good wife. . . .
> Your daughter will never see the abuse
> that you experienced out of necessity. (*Compañeras* 166–167)

The daughter can refashion her sense of self through the reverse reference to her mother's embrace of *marianismo*—"a woman's spiritual and moral superiority through absolute submission of her will and invisibility of her self" (Abarca, "Los Chilaquiles" 140). The educational value of mother's *marianismo* cannot be denied, as "[w]itnessing . . . mothers' endurance of husbands' physical abuse, alcoholism and extramarital affairs, *sometimes* serves some women . . . as an example of what *not* to tolerate in their lives" (Castillo, "La Mancha 35). In Mendez's poem the mother engages in the culinary discourse of resistance (not forcing her daughter to make tortillas), however, at the same time, she encourages her daughter to remember her matrilineal heritage.

associations with the sexual act. Thus, as Alicia Gaspar de Alba shows in her poem "Making Tortillas," *tortillera* is a colloquial, derogative term describing queer Chicanas (Ehrhardt 94). Marci is not an experienced or conscious *tortillera*—in both meanings of the term. Thus, her failed attempts to make tortillas, which resemble "a map of California" (143), reveal not only her inability to internalize prescribed femininity,[15] but also her lack of readiness to name her queer appetite. Indoctrinated by the educational system and the media, Marci internalizes the paradigmatic heteronormative relations; she narrates: "I have to change into a boy. . . . It's because I like girls. . . . Maybe I was born this way, but the second I saw chiches, I wanted them. . . . Now, *I* know you can't be with a girl if you *are* a girl" (9).[16] However, the references to foodways she makes subconsciously equate her sexual desire with that of her father. The invocation of food in the descriptions of Eddie's desire for a woman with "big chiches, [who then] smiles and looks at her like he's about to eat pudding" (1) and simultaneously referring to food to express her own sexual attraction to Raquel, "I felt all melty and good when I looked at her, like I'd just eaten two packs of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups" (26) subverts the belief in Latino culture that "love and desire are constituted in relation to heterosexuality" (Esquibel, qtd. in Ehrhardt 100).

Since his grand comeback, Eddie keeps making allusions to the social constraints of Marci's prescribed gender role and sexuality. Yet, emboldened by her newly-found female agency, Marci does not ignore Eddie's chauvinist taunts. Holding a knife in her hand, she talks back: "If you want food, why don't you ask that girlfriend of yours to come over and cook it?" (107). His position of domination in the household is threatened by her cheekiness and self-confidence expressed by both a physical gesture of waving a knife and a verbal confrontation. Therefore, Eddie retorts: "'Hijo, Marci, what a big little man you are now. . . . Que homre! I didn't know I had me un hombrecito. Here I was thinking you was my little girl. . . . ' I slapped his finger away. 'Oh, and a macho, tambien'" (108). Through the use of the word *hombrecito*, which in a colloquial register means lesbian or

15 Ehrhardt rightly observes that "[w]hile Eddie concedes that her [Marci's] mistakes 'taste pretty good' (143), he ultimately regards her culinary shortcomings as indicative of her failure as a female" (103–104).

16 Avotacja's testimonio reveals that lesbianism was treated within Latino community as a dangerous aberration which could be treated in a mental institution. She also refers to "the common knowledge" of the 1950s about the dangers of being lesbian: "I *knew* that if I ever kissed a woman, my voice would drop three octaves, my hips would disappear and my hair would fall off into a quo vadis" (*Compañeras* 66).

effeminate gay,[17] Eddie makes a veiled reference to Marci's sexual orientation. The contempt for queers Eddie earlier conveyed in an epithet "jotito" (75) reverberates in the name he calls Marci now. The word *hombrecito* conveys the threat to Latino patriarchy on two counts: gender and sexuality. The reference to gender—as a diminutive of *hombre*, a small man—positions Marci as the one who might compete with Eddie for domination in the Cruz household. This understanding of the word is reinforced through Eddie's evocation of a macho in the next sentence. However, the queer connotation of the word *hombrecito* defines Marci as a bad woman whose negative sexuality positions her beyond the control of patriarchy (the object of her sexual desire falls outside the heteronormative matrix).[18] Instead of seeing Marci as a failed *tortillera* (Ehrhardt 104), I am inclined to see her as a girl who tries to regain her lost female agency through "negative" sexuality. Her improper desires and potentially threatening behavior signify her unwillingness to embody the La Virgen ideal of a self-sacrificing mother and wife.

In patriarchal ideology, the malicious Malinche is responsible for the destruction of her own people by selling-out to the Spanish (Rebolledo 125; Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers* 139). However, a feminist reinterpretation of the myth of La Malinche makes room for an alternative reading. The challenge of the notions of (im)proper womanhood sanctioned by patriarchy reveals the other side of the coin: "The stigma of *malinchísmo/vendidísmo* has been repeatedly used to keep Chicanas 'in their place'" (Esquibel 24). Moraga goes even further and appropriates the myth within lesbian studies:

> The woman who defies her role as subservient to her husband, father, brother or son by taking control of her own sexual destiny is purported to be a 'traitor to her race' by contribution to the 'genocide' of her people—whether or not she has children. In short, even if the defiant woman is *not* a lesbian, she is purported to be one; for like the lesbian in the Chicano/a imagination, she is una *Malinchista*. Like the Malinche of Mexican history, she is corrupted by foreign influences which threaten to destroy her people. (113)

17 In a poem "Intentarás Imponerme" Lidia Tirado White provides readers with a list of terms used to describe queer Chicanas: "Cachapera, Manflora, Jota, Rara, Maricona, Anormal, Tortillera, Lesbiana, Marimacha, Androgina, Hombrecito, Muchachito" (22).

18 Ehrhardt mentions another situation when Eddie calls Marci *hombrecito*: "[t]hough Eddie acknowledges Marci's queerness … by suggesting that she is at once a boy with a 'bizcocho,' he stops short of calling her a 'tortillera' because the possibility that his daughter really is queer is too frightening for him to imagine" (Ehrhardt 104). My analysis of this scene departs from Ehrhardt's line of argumentation, in which she claims that "[b]y referring to her as a boy, as opposed to a lesbian, Eddie implies that Marci is not only a failed tortillera literally, but queerly as well" (104).

Marci's negotiations of sexual orientation are framed by references to La Malinche, the evil female betrayer. The perception of Marci's budding lesbianism as a form of "cultural betrayal" of her own ethnic group—her inability and/or potential unwillingness to reproduce Latino heteronormative patriarchy—can thus transform her into a modern avatar of La Malinche. Marci translates prescribed passivity into culinary dissent and the desire for a foreigner into queer desire. With men removed from the picture, Marci's empowerment locates her beyond the control of patriarchy.

Marci's sexual orientation, which challenges the domination of and dependence on men, is illustrative of the fact that "Chicana lesbians are perceived as a greater threat to the Chicano community because their existence disrupts the established order of male dominance, and raises the consciousness of many Chicana women regarding their own independence and control" (Trujillo, "Chicana Lesbians" 186). Marci manages to challenge Eddie's male dominance by making spaghetti for dinner, as mentioned before. Spaghetti does not seem to be a coincidental choice. It is during the spaghetti feed that Uncle Tommy and Father Chacon together cook spaghetti to raise money for the starving refugees in Biafra. The symbolism of this social event for Marci's recognition of her own homosexual desires (her very first suspicion of the relationship between these men) is undeniable.[19] Thus, spaghetti provides the locus of Marci's nascent self-conception and queer sexual identity. With this particular dish, the unruly daughter sets up an important relationship between food, gender/sexuality and resistance. Eddie rightly sees her culinary transgression of domestic subservience as an affront to his machismo:

> I don't ever want to eat this spaghetti crap again. You hear me?! If you have to cook, you'd better cook me some goddamn beans and chile. And learn to make tortillas, too. I ain't eating none of this shit you cook anymore. It's about time

19 On her further quest to define her sexuality, Marci will try to find some answers during the Thanksgiving dinner organized at Uncle Tommy's. Eddie's refusal to go to the house which has "a bunch of queers in it" (164), is an additional incentive for Marci to attend the festive dinner. She watches uncle Tommy and Father Chacon prepare dinner—a task which is traditionally codified across various cultures as feminine (Goody 193). Moreover, the sexual tension Marci senses in the kitchen gives Marci hope that she also may be able to resist the dominant heteronormativity. However, "when she attempts to come out to the couple by alluding to their queer behavior in the kitchen—'You don't usually see men cooking' (167)—the men ignore her innuendo" (Ehrhardt 105). Uncle Tommy's response "No, you don't.... And for sure, not in our family" (167) attempts to sever the relationship between food, gender/sexuality and resistance.

> you started learning things that's gonna do you some good, and that's learning how to cook food a man will eat. I wouldn't give this shit to a fucking dog. Don't fix this crap again, Marci. You hear me? (126)

The attack on Marci's culinary abilities conforms to a formulaic pattern of reprimands for Latina women's lack of housewifery skills. The rebuke that López's María receives from her father: "[n]o Mexican man is going to marry a woman who can't cook" (*Simply María* 25), in Marci's case turns into the "the unspoken demand that she [Marci] assume a heterosexual female identity" through cooking proper food a man would eat (Ehrhardt 103).

In *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza says that "Mexicans don't like their women strong" (10). Eddie Cruz is no exception. When Delia finally stands up against Eddie and confronts him about his sexual indiscretions, authoritarian behavior, and abuse of the girls, her strong convictions (coupled with photographic evidence of his extramarital affair) infuriate him so much that he lashes out at his wife for the first time ever (226–227). In order to prevent her mother's serious bodily harm, Corin shoots Eddie with his own gun. After the incident, the girls find permanent shelter with their maternal grandmother in New Mexico. In a safe environment, away from Eddie's brutality and Delia's ultimate indifference, Marci comes out of the closet and shares the first kiss with Robbie, her neighbor who becomes her "blood sister."

Food as semiotic praxis can reveal aspects of identity negotiations. Marci Cruz does not want to accept passively the rules of the social milieu. Through her culinary transgressions, she becomes an active agent of her life as she speaks out against the imposed silence, submissiveness, self-sacrifice, and servility. Marci successfully attempts to free herself from the debilitating concepts of traditional Chicana womanhood and heteronormativity.

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Mirosław Aleksander Miernik

The Evolution of Emo and Its Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this article is to analyze how emo, a youth subculture, evolved in the United States during a period of approximately twenty five years, since the mid-1980s, particularly focusing on how it changed in regard to the zeitgeist of the time period, as well as how it appropriated various elements of past subcultures into itself in order to create its own subcultural identity. Special attention will be paid to the third incarnation, which emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century and proved to be the most widespread variation of the subculture. It is also interesting how this incarnation was affected by historical events such as the Columbine High School Massacre and 9/11.

The theoretical implications of emo are the second issue that this article attempts to tackle. In particular, when viewed from the perspective of post-subculture studies, it allows one to revisit certain theories of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (CCCS), which pioneered subculture studies in the 1960s and 70s. The relationship between post-subculture studies and the CCCS's approach has always been very complex. Even though many representatives of post-subculture studies criticized the CCCS for various shortcomings, most significantly for an *a priori* approach that ignores empirical evidence and limits the concept of authenticity within subcultures (Muggleton 19–30). At the same time, the work of the CCCS has been always treated with respect and considered a milestone. However, one of the issues that post-subculture researchers believed to be irrelevant was class background, to the point that sometimes subcultures were considered ultimately classless (Thornton 55–56, Muggleton 161–162, 165–166). Yet the example of emo shows that class can nonetheless be an element that plays a role within subculture.

Emo's roots lie in the early 1980s hardcore scene after it moved to the American East Coast from the West Coast, where it originally appeared. Three major stages of the subculture's development can be distinguished. The first incarnation was characterized by a break with the general hardcore scene and a development of a separate identity. The second incarnation was a logical continuation of and an elaboration on the movement's previous variant. The third incarnation is of

particular interest because not only did it redefine the movement substantially, but also finally allowed it to be fully acknowledged as a youth subculture.

Although most publications claim that punk was originally a British subculture, it is generally acknowledged that it was influenced by the American music scene, particularly such groups as The Stooges, The Ramones, The MC5, and such places as CBGB, a New York club that became dominated by bands playing in a similar fashion. After punk broke out in the UK in the second half of the 1970s, it gained popularity in the US, and, as an immediate result, both the supply of and demand for punk bands increased. A new variant, native to the US, was thus born: hardcore.

Hardcore, or hardcore punk, was faster, heavier and more aggressive than earlier punk music. As with punk, the hardcore scene was often politically charged. It was particularly very vocal against the Reagan administration, which was the target of raw and explicit criticism. Ronald Reagan was often credited, albeit somewhat mockingly, as the "godfather" of the American hardcore and punk scene. The author of Ronald Reagan's obituary in *Ear Candy* magazine recalls:

> Once in concert, the vocalist for D.O.A. asked the audience,
> 'who was the person who did more for punk rock in the '80s than anyone? And I ain't talking about Jello Biafra or John Lydon.'
> There was a pregnant pause and then he finally answered,
> '... it was Ronald Reagan! Everyone got into punk bands because of him.' (Giving the Punk/Hardcore Rockers of the '80s a Reason?) ("Ronald Reagan")

The same author explains:

> This pretty much hits the nail on the head. Punk feeds on anger and aggression. Look at the English punks of the '70s—they had the massive unemployment of the U.K., sparking the Sex Pistols to utter the immortal 'no future.' But what did the American punks of the '80s have to complain about or protest? I tell you what ... Ronald Reagan. By sheer force of personality, Reagan gave the punks of the '80s something to sing about. Can you imagine what they would have sung about had Carter been re-elected in 1980 or Mondale in 1984? That is some pretty lame material. ("Ronald Reagan")

As Kelefa Sanneh writes, Reagan permeated the scene in many ways. Even though some attempted to forego direct references to him in their music in order to render their message more universal, his image, often altered, was present on CD covers, flyers and posters, promoting bands and concerts etc. (Sanneh). Some

bands, such as Reagan Youth, even named themselves after the American president. Nevertheless, Sanneh argues, hardcore cannot be called protest music as it never gained a following significant enough to become a voice of the generation. Lyrically it focused on the hardcore scene itself, alienating people from outside of this community. Hardcore also encountered another problem: as a result of the aggressive style of music, events and concerts frequently ended in brawls and attracted white-power skinheads (*American Hardcore*; Blush, 33–35, 39).

The result was a highly politicized, hyper-masculine subculture, which, in turn, alienated both certain artists as well as groups of hardcore punks. During the mid-1980s this was perceived as a significant problem to such an extent that certain hardcore bands from the Washington D.C. area decided to make their sound more melodic and remove heavy political content from their lyrics. A new term was used to describe this movement: emotional hardcore, or, for the sake of brevity, emocore. Even though the press employed it, the label was rejected by many bands, such as Embrace and Rites of Spring, both which were headed by Ian MacKaye, who is considered a figurehead of emocore ("Ian MacKaye—1986—Emocore Is Stupid").

Alienated from the community it used to be a part of, emocore started to emphasize values often neglected within the hardcore scene. It should be stressed, however, that neither was hardcore devoid of any themes of emotion, nor was emocore devoid of any political content. The major difference was in how these issues were articulated. Hardcore was full of anger directed at political structures and expressed an anti-establishment stance, whereas emocore focused on matters closely related to alienation, particularly social alienation, teenage angst, as well as themes of male/female romantic relationships. Like hardcore, emocore was also associated with liberal and left-wing politics. It embraced the straight edge ideology, which advocated abstinence from alcohol, drugs, promiscuous sex and sometimes caffeine (Greenwald 10). It is noteworthy that this ideology developed from a song by the band Minor Threat, which was also headed by Ian MacKaye.

The movement remained without a mass following until the beginning of the 1990s, when it started attracting more attention. This was a sign of the times: many new musical styles that were thought to lack mainstream potential became popular to the extent of occupying the top places on the Billboard charts. It was not uncommon for albums recorded by alternative rock bands to attain platinum and even multi-platinum status (the examples of Nirvana, The Smashing Pumpkins, Pearl Jam, Nine Inch Nails or Ministry can be given). This was followed by a growing amount of media coverage, which stimulated a greater interest in the alternative rock scene (Greenwald 18–20).

A characteristic element of early-90s alternative rock music is the focus on themes of dejection as well as teenage angst. Such album and single titles as *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, *The Downward Spiral* or *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* illustrate this tendency sufficiently. Although alternative rock often was different musically from emocore, both shared certain lyrical qualities, which helped the latter reach a broader audience. Furthermore, the popularity of grunge, represented by such bands as Nirvana and Soundgarden, aroused the interest in other, less popular bands on the same record label, Sub Pop. One of these bands was Sunny Day Real Estate, an emo group which quickly gained popularity in the US and brought this genre of music to a wider audience, essentially merging certain elements of it with the mainstream (Greenwald 18–28). Ian MacKaye's new band, Fugazi also deserves to be mentioned. Although it differed from his previous bands that had been labeled emocore, its fans soon became interested in MacKaye's previous career and sought out his earlier work. In late 1997 Deep Elm Records launched a series of compilations called *The Emo Diaries*, and thus emo, as a musical style, was recognized as a distinct element of the indie rock scene.

Yet it was not until the first years of the twenty-first century that emo gained a large following and a concrete subcultural consciousness. This third incarnation greatly differs from the previous ones, which never happened on a big scale, and therefore were rarely distinguished as subcultures; they were rather considered an offshoot or niche within other movements. Contrary to those past variants, modern emo not only developed an identity as such, but it also became so significant in size and popularity that it could have even been called a "mainstream subculture" in the first several years of the 2000s. There were many reasons for this beside its popularity, especially the movement's approach to consumerism, which may be considered unique within the field of subcultural studies.

In the classical theory of youth subcultures, such movements are formed by adolescents searching for their own identity and a sense of community, this search being an expression of certain "deviant norms" which become engaged in negotiations with hegemonic culture. According to the original CCCS view, the working-class parent culture was a result of a negotiation with the dominant culture, which placed a number of constraints on the entire social class. Nonetheless, young people still experienced conflicts between the parent culture and the mediating institutions of the dominant culture, such as schools, social workers or the police. It was believed that youth subcultures are the result of mixing certain elements from the parent culture with a new kind of generational and group consciousness, which was subversive not only in relation to the dominant culture, but also in relation to the parent culture from which some elements

were borrowed, the whole process signifying a negotiation between young people (in the CCCS paradigm these were mostly males, for which the center was criticized) and the dominant part of society. The CCCS saw adolescents from the working class as being in a more complex situation than their parents because of susceptibility to unemployment on the one hand, and social mobility on the other (Hall et al. 48–53).

Another element that the CCCS recognized was that young people had more money at their disposal. This affluence, along with the factors described above, led the early theorists of subculture to the conclusion that the main line of resistance was their style, the meaning of which was not determined by the producer, but solely by the young consumers (Hall et al. 53–56). The rituals of resistance were closely tied to leisure, the sphere wherein members of subcultures could live out the subversive values of the movement.

This approach has been criticized for several shortcomings and for its general view of youth subcultures as ideologically-driven, idealistic and even heroic (Muggleton and Weinzierl 6–13). It also downplayed such issues as geographical specificity, placing too much emphasis on the issue of deviation from mainstream social values, focusing on teenagers with a working-class background or ignoring such elements as the mixture of various, seemingly incompatible styles, which are developed by producers as well as consumers (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 6–13; Gottdiener 979–1001). These issues are of crucial importance for emo, which stressed its middle-class roots, distanced itself from overtly deviant or subversive norms, especially in relation to the authorities of the "dominant" culture, most noticeably after 1999. Since the stylistic aspect is so fundamental for emo in the twenty-first century, I shall discuss it first.

The modern-day emo movement differs greatly from the previous incarnations known from the hardcore scene. Although there are certain stylistic elements common both to modern emo music and post-hardcore music, as exemplified by such bands as Bad Religion or Pennywise, the subculture is often disconnected from its past variants. Many factors contributed to this: first of all, the movement was never recognized as a full-fledged subculture, nor was "emotional hardcore" considered an independent music genre. Thus, emo chose to draw upon many different subcultures from the past. Stylistically, it employs certain elements of the dress styles of indie-rock fans of the late 1990s, e.g. vintage track jackets, t-shirts, black-rimmed glasses, sneakers or training shoes, mid-length hair. These were combined with elements characteristic of goth and punk subcultures, with their strong preference for black or neon bright colors (particularly pink), hand warmers, slim-fit trousers (often in plaid, characteristic of punk), as well as specific clothing adornments (skulls and crossbones, black and white or black and

red stripes). With respect to appearance, one should also mention the tendency to dye hair (black or neon hues, or a combination of both). They often sported an androgynous look; for example, men sometimes used makeup, particularly eyeliner (Simon 42–59; "Emo Scene Fashion").

Similarly, the kind of music that modern-day members of this subculture listen to is eclectic, not necessarily reminiscent of the music they originally appreciated. Among the many genres enjoyed by this movement one may find post-hardcore, British punk, post-punk (Joy Division enjoyed a great surge of popularity), and new wave. Psychobilly elements are also present. Though most of the musical groups that have been described as emo or screamo still shun these labels, there are some that accept them—My Chemical Romance or Good Charlotte—which has to do with a band's identification with the movement. However, there are many subcultures that consist of fans of a great diversity of musical styles; one can think of metalheads, who may enjoy anything from melodic glam metal up to grindcore, or goths, who may choose from a spectrum that includes acoustic-guitar-based neofolk, guitar-laden gothic rock, all the way to futurepop, which at times is difficult to distinguish from trance music. The fact is that music is not as central to emo and other contemporary subcultures as it had been previously. Style and fashion have replaced it. In addition, subculture movements are no longer seen as age-based, and many members of different subcultures identify with them as adults, though emo retains its preference for people in their adolescent years, most likely because of their expressed values.

In the twenty-first century, emo is one of those subcultures that create eclectic styles by combining seemingly incompatible elements. Classical subcultural theory would try to identify some homologous values expressing deviant norms. Yet, within emo this element does not exist in the same way it did in the subcultures analyzed by this theory. Like its previous iterations, the subculture mostly attracted people of a middle-class background, but it abandoned other elements found in those earlier variants, particularly their very strong anti-consumerist stance. Members of the later iteration of the movement did show a certain ambivalence about their own social position and the expectations placed upon them, yet they did not denounce consumer culture. Clothes were bought in shops that belonged to large chains, though certain retailers, such as Hot Topic, a NASDAQ company, were preferred. Garments were often adorned by pictures of pop-cultural icons, superheroes, protagonists and motifs from cult movies, such as *Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas* or *Star Wars*, as well as with such characters as Hello Kitty or Emily the Strange, along with many other trademarks licensed from their respective owners. This supports Sarah Thornton's point that becoming recognized by certain businesses and media can actually increase a movement's

authenticity (9) rather than denote a subculture's end by depriving it of its deviant values and rendering it inauthentic, as the CCCS's subcultural theory claimed.

Other popular artifacts of mass culture were also present in the emo canon of style. The subculture displayed an affinity for certain electronic devices and gadgets, very often of specific brands, such as Apple products that included computers and iPods, hand-held game consoles and computer games. These were the tokens of their ambivalence about their own social position: on the one hand, they rejected certain notions of conformity, but on the other, they often chose products that were specifically targeted at the middle class as a consumer group. Whereas this was often a question of convenience or personal preference, there were situations in which certain artifacts, such as Apple computers, were seen as "less mainstream." In fact, Apple's "Get a Mac" advertising campaign projected the image of Mac personal computers as a youthful, independent and attractive alternative to traditional PCs, associated with middle-age and the corporate world (Nudd). However, the issue of price, which had an undeniable impact on their small popularity, was ignored (according to StatCounter Global Stats, the median percentage of computers running MacOS, the operating system run by most Apple computers, was 13.61% of all computers connecting to the Internet between July 2008 and November 2012. The peak percentage was 15.58 in April 2012).

Earlier theories concerning subcultures held that certain deviant norms lose their relevance when artifacts specific for such a movement are appropriated by the mainstream. Later theories contested this view, claiming that such norms immediately enter into negotiation with the hegemony, of which emo is a case. This can be seen on the example of the characteristic way in which members of the subculture adapted mainstream elements by translating them into its own aesthetics: fashionable hairstyles were appropriated through the addition of a black dye, skinny-fit trousers, which returned into vogue, were adorned with band logos or bought at specific retail outlets, etc. Although a number of these artifacts were often connected with older subcultures, such as punk or metal, characterized by a significantly higher amount of deviant norms, one notices that the deviant element has long been absent from these artifacts, and they themselves have entered into the mainstream. It may seem that such references to past movements imply the same nonconformist values that these objects used to symbolize, though I argue that the members of the subculture know well that the deviant meaning of such elements as black clothing is long gone. It is a stylistically motivated consumer choice rather than a stance against society at large.

Although emo does not possess the deviant norms once associated with subcultures, some tools developed by the CCCS may nonetheless be of use in the analysis of the movement. One may see emo's stylistic choices in terms of what

Dick Hebdige, drawing on Clause Levi-Strauss, has called bricolage, in which a new meaning is imposed on the artifacts of a given subculture (102–106). However, emo does not excavate the deviant norms from the past, but rather emphasizes a certain "collective individuality" of choice (in line with Muggleton's observation that subcultures are "internally homogenous" (42), but also that one's perceived individuality is the cornerstone of subcultural authenticity (77)), at the same time acknowledging the mainstream as a set of cultural artifacts. However, this individuality is virtual: the movement mistakes the inner collective uniformity for individuality, as it differs from the hegemonic uniformity of white, middle-class Anglo-Saxon society. This is homologous with many elements discussed earlier in this article, such as clothing and apparel with images of pop-culture icons, or the popularity of such objects as iPods, which were just as popular in mainstream culture. Emo contests neither popular culture nor Anglo-Saxon middle-class society, but it articulates different values within them. To illustrate this with an example: the bands found on an emo teenager's iPod will differ from those on that of a person of the same age with decidedly mainstream tastes, but chances are that all the bands will be on the same major record labels, such as Warner, Universal or Sony.

The only element of emo that, for a short period of time, the media claimed to be deviant was self-mutilation. The tabloid press attempted to use this to create a folk devil out of the subculture, yet it ultimately failed. According to Andy R. Brown, the movement, through its presence in various niche media and online media, developed a voice of its own and managed to contest the sensationalized news stories about it. Brown looks at the example of Great Britain (19–37), but the situation was similar in the US, though on a smaller scale. When the movement was criticized for encouraging self-harm, for instance by the American conservative blogger Michelle Malkin, both members of the movement and many people outside it started to point out that self-mutilation was not confined to the subculture or inherent to it and that it had various causes. Such discussions were made possible by the movement's access to the media outlets that catered to the subculture and were prepared to act in its defense. Furthermore, the role of the Internet as a means of communication and of establishing a subcultural community through such pages as MySpace and VampireFreaks was also a significant factor here, as it enabled a better coordination of responses to accusations.

One of the unique aspects of emo was its reaction to two significant historical events: the Columbine High School Massacre of 1999 and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001. After the Columbine High School Massacre, certain subcultural movements, mostly goths, received an increasing amount of bad press (Griffiths 406–409, Williams 4–5), which resulted in

a backlash against them from the authorities, which undertook certain preventive actions, such as reinstating dress codes or issuing warnings to parents. In addition, families that used to accept the fact that their children were members of the subculture were becoming less tolerant (Goldmen 1999). Therefore the newly emerging variation of emo incorporated some elements of popular culture into its style to establish an identity different from, but not opposed to, mainstream culture. The values thus articulated were similar to those of the goth subculture, but expressed in a much more acceptable way.

It should be kept in mind that such a change of an artifact's signification does not only come from the subculture itself. In his article "Hegemony and Mass Culture: A Semiotic Approach" Mark Gottdiener points to the role that producers play in the negotiation of the meaning of such items. He recognizes three stages of semiosis: (1) the producer attempts to influence the object's sign value, for instance by advertising, (2) the users transfunctionalize the object and imbue it with a secondary meaning, and (3) finally, the producers recognize this meaning and supply objects that are characterized by a "symbolically leveled," i.e. negotiated version, often deprived of the most subversive and/or deviant elements (991–999). Normally, subscribing to such a negotiated image was often seen as a sign of selling out or being inauthentic. However, as a result of the events of 1999 and 2001, such a change was actually welcome by emo. In consequence, members of other subcultures, from which emo borrowed certain stylistic elements, began to view it as a substandard imitation. This was particularly visible on the Internet where many images deriding the movement were circulated, such as a picture of an emo youth in the back seat of a car with the caption "Mom's minivan. Less conformist than the bus" or announcements of "National Emo Kid Beatdown Day."

Emo stirred up various animosities. Male emos were perceived as effeminate, though this was only a stylistic element. As Andy Greenwald notices, the subculture was male-centric to some extent: there were rather few women in emo bands, and song lyrics were often about men who had been wronged by women. Nonetheless, Greenwald claims that the expression of emotions in such songs is universal to both sexes, whatever a song's subject might be (133–139). The emo movement was considered "nerdy," which brings up the classic binary opposition of "jocks" and "geeks. As a result, they often were victims of bullying (Brown 30–32).

9/11 crucially influenced the final shape of this incarnation of emo. A patriotic spirit pervaded the nation. According to a Gallup poll, George W. Bush's popularity rose from 51% a week before the attack to 90% immediately after it. Anti-establishment and non-cofnormist stance that characterized different

subcultures (punk, hardcore, indie, hip-hop, etc.) immediately became suspect. Even among adolescents the allure of such movements dropped greatly.

The influence of 9/11 was fully recognized in 2003, when Greenwald made his claim that the rise of emo's popularity was a result of media interest in the subculture after the attacks as something that "would heal us through fashion" (69). However, I believe this to be an overstatement. The media obviously were still interested in the aftermath of the attacks, and this persisted throughout the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent war. The topic that was to be "the next big thing" in the media was broader and more universal than a subculture: the celebrity craze (or, more precisely, its scale) that focused on such personas as Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears. The influence of the attack on emo was different: it facilitated the appropriation of conformist elements into an ostensibly nonconformist subculture.

Towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the amount of people interested in emo fell significantly. This is visible in the infrastructure that they used for internet-based communication: Myspace now is a waning band-focused website dedicated to promoting music; VampireFreaks does not mention emo in its history; Hot Topic has concentrated more on elements of popular culture and less on catering for specific subcultures, a development connected with the fact that sartorial references to pop-culture (particularly vintage pop-culture) became popular among young people toward the end of the first decade of the new century. Various other mainstream fashion outlets that once offered clothing or accessories associated with emo, such as H&M, introduced a new assortment that had a more general appeal. As most subcultures before it, emo survived this drop in popularity, and the aesthetics of the movement are still visible. The most popular bands representing this subculture enjoy a massive following, as reflected on social networking sites like Facebook (in December 2012, Good Charlotte had almost 3 million subscribers, My Chemical Romance had almost 10 million), and even a short browse of such web pages as VampireFreaks quickly shows that there are many American teenagers who identify with the movement. In addition, many elements that the subculture popularized have also been appropriated by other subcultures, such as hipsters, who share certain ideas and stylistic elements with emo: skinny-fit jeans and horn-rimmed glasses, some types of piercing, as well as a consumer-based elitism.

As stated above, the evolution of emo carries interesting theoretical implications. Classic subcultural theory is no longer sufficient to describe and understand the movement. Its rigid focus on selected aspects and British society, its tendency to explain youth subcultures through their relation to social class, may lead the researcher to ignore significant issues involved in subcultural formation

and identification. The most obvious topics would be its relationship with the media, capitalist production and social change. Even though some of these issues have been already discussed, they merit further elaboration.

The CCCS saw only working-class youth culture as capable of actively contesting dominant culture through the subversive elements and values they subscribed to, while middle-class youth culture was interpreted as passive (Hall et al. 96). This is a major drawback of the theory developed by this school, which not only overestimated the subversive potential of working-class subcultures, but also underestimated the possibilities of those rooted in a middle-class background. Such shortcomings have to do with the specificity of the time when the CCCS theory emerged. For example, the claims that the middle class produces countercultures rather than subcultures (Hall et al. 57–71) were linked to the countercultural movements and organizations of the 1960s. Since then, this approach to middle-class youth culture has been abandoned, and many subcultures, such as goths and twenty-first-century hipsters, are rather closely associated with this social background. Hardcore punk, too, drew its audience mostly from the middle classes, though not exclusively. For example, the New York City hardcore scene attracted many people who had working-class origins, which gave them a pretext to aggressively challenge the authenticity of other members of the movement (*American Hardcore*).

There are post-subculture theorists who see class as increasingly irrelevant in subculture. However, I believe that emo offers evidence that the opposite is the case. Yet, this does not signify a return to the extreme class determinism that the CCCS was criticized for. This situation rather shows that subcultures may have preferences with respect to class. Even if the problem of class is ostensibly neglected or shunned, there are invariably certain class issues at stake. The most obvious of these is money: since many people identifying with emo are teenagers, they need money to purchase the items that constitute their style. This is quite unlike some subcultures of the 1990s, which were strongly anti-consumerist. Post-subculture studies were still at a formative stage at that time, and this partly explains why the paradigm then in process neglected class. Now it is quite evident that class-based studies are an important possibility in the post-subculture paradigm.

Emo is ambivalent about consumerism; its members pay less attention to the authenticity of clothing (though this does not extend to electronic equipment) than previous subcultures: they are more concerned with the look than the brand, which has to do with the ways emo expresses the turmoil of adolescence and teenage angst. This does not mean that earlier subcultures were not recognized as valid consumer groups. There were many businesses that saw subcultures as

potential targets and some media corporations explored niche markets, including subcultures. Nonetheless, unlike emo, earlier subcultures often rejected certain popular brands as inauthentic.

The very existence of products for specific subcultures, rather than a general consumer population, proves the economic potential of such groups. Companies may offer goods that do not necessarily target a group, but expresses values and ideas that certain movements would subscribe to, although the economic aim is to create a general demand (as mentioned above, this can be seen in the case of emo on the example of social networks and electronic entertainment). It is worth remembering about the corporate sponsorship of subculture-related events and venues; in fact, companies seldom cut themselves off from subcultures that are typically associated with their products (the great significance of Doc Martens boots and Levi's 501 for skinheads would be a case in point). There have been commercial attempts to exploit the popularity of some subcultures, a tendency believed to mark an end of the true value of a subculture, although it can lead to a "revival" of a given movement.

As Gabriele Klein points out, youth cultures often practice mimesis as a way of establishing their own identity. This should not be seen as an imitation, but as a reinterpretation that yields a new variant of a given subculture, which may become a negotiation of a set of values in a new historical situation (45–48). Such a process was visible in the third generation of emo, which incorporated many "vintage" stylistic elements from the 1980s and early 90s (legwarmers, leggings, albeit in subculturally-correct black or neon colors) or logos of older rock and punk rock bands, e.g. Motörhead and The Ramones. These stylistic choices were not faux-attempts at becoming punks or rockers; they articulated an interest in particular kinds of music that had once been popular, as opposed to the music that was popular then. Between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, music charts were dominated by hip-hop artists, while such types of music as industrial rock were controversial because of the then-recent Columbine massacre.

The engagement of subcultures in consumer (or even consumerist) activities is not a new thing. In the late 1970s Dick Hebdige wrote that "a subculture is concerned first and foremost with consumption" (94–95). However, contrary to what Hebdige and other CCCS theorists have assumed, it seems that consumer goods are not redefined to fit a semiotic system that has been generated by a given subculture. There are processes of appropriation and negotiation (as described by Gottdiener), but the products, when purchased, already fit the subculture's values and styles. The items that emos bought did not need to be transfunctionalized, a sign of consumer consciousness among the members of a subcultural movement.

They may criticize the notions of mainstream culture, but the criticism is voiced from within the market.

However, some products dedicated to the subcultural consumer may be seen as deviant or dangerously non-conformist. In other words, the market not only accepts subcultures and post-subcultural movements, but it is willing to satisfy the demands of this niche. The negotiation of values does not deprive such movements of all its anti-mainstream features. All in all, society has become more tolerant toward (post-)subcultures, which are not seen as a threat, unless some kind of moral panic arises, and even subcultural movements have access to the media. Subcultures primarily express individual tastes, values and styles.

In the light of the CCCS paradigm, such negotiated subcultures may be considered as inauthentic. Yet, I would argue that this is not the case. The development of emo over time serves as an illustration. Despite the continuing presence of hardcore elements, it would be a mistake to label the third generation of emo a revival of American hardcore punks. In a post-subcultural fashion, certain elements were retained, and others transfunctionalized, recontextualized, or abandoned because of their irrelevance in a new social, economic and political situation. This is true of a number of subcultures that have been present for decades, such as punk, metalheads, goths, or emo, all of which have had many incarnations. This further undermines the CCCS linear model (Muggleton and Weinzierl 6) and proves that new incarnations of previous movements should be analyzed as legitimate subcultures in their own right rather than as inauthentic reiterations, deprived of the original subversive value.

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REVIEW ESSAY

Kacper Bartczak

Poetry and Epistemology

Jacek Gutorow, *Luminous Traversing: Wallace Stevens and the American Sublime*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. 202 pages.

Wallace Stevens, an efficient insurance businessman with a rich range of secret cravings for sophisticated pleasures of both body and mind, a provincial American who deliberately maintained his provinciality in the form of a dull burgher inhabiting the unattractive state of Connecticut in order to spin a lifelong effort at a poetry which, although said to be of earth, often radiates with extraterrestrial beauty, never ceases to fascinate and bewilder critics. While other modernists become the monuments of their own literary professionalism, Stevens's amateurish clinging on to poetry as the sole redeeming, if secret, light of a harshly excised personal life, continues to grow in significance and evocative power in our endless discussions on the intricate, impalpable, ephemeral uses of poetry.

It is fascinating to review the hall of master critics coming to Stevens oeuvre in order to profess and confess their own key formula, their own paramount investment in the art of reading poetry. For the earlier J. Hillis Miller, Stevens's heroic oscillation between "imagination" and "reality" achieves a balance in the poet's late "poetry of being." Miller was, however, to realize later, under the influence of Derrida, that the Heideggerian grounds are no grounds at all, but abysses whose glimpse we get through and in the endlessly mercurial figural play. For Hellen Vendler, Stevens's stylistic shifts are undulations of tone and mood, the poet looking for states of internal balances, and achieving them fully at least once, in the splendid "harmonies" of the famed *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*. Finally, Harold Bloom wants to see in Stevens's art another

instance of the poetic as a vehicle and realization of the basic imaginative power with which the human transcends itself and morphs away from the human as defined before.

In these various readings we observe a revolving kaleidoscope of approaches to the undefined lure of poetry. Does poetry come close to what really is and, as a more ephemeral, more enticing sister of philosophy and religion, bestow epistemological and spiritual truths on us? And if it does, if the most lasting and poignant poems give us the truth, is this the truth discovered, one that was waiting for poetry as a representational tool? If so, what then happens to poetry itself?

Jacek Gutorow's careful and balanced study of Stevens's entire creative career is a tribute to the richness of such a discussion and the Stevensian critical lore. It impresses and rewards the reader with beautifully organized and meticulous discussions, in which the author manages to summarize elegantly and tactfully the existing critical mappings, in order to extend them or in fact reformulate and move beyond them.

Gutorow's focal point and perspective with which Stevens's artistic ambitions are held together and presented to form a fluid developmental narrative is the aesthetic category of the sublime. In the opening chapters, the author presents us with a concise but effective review of the lineage of the term, from Hobbes, Burke, and Kant, to the Romantics, with Longinus later to be joined to this group. The task of the discussion is to remind the reader that the concept of the sublime aesthetic experience will inescapably be connected with another concept which brings together the classical theory, the Romantics, and Stevens—the imagination. If the problematic of the sublime touches on the liminal powers of representation, it leads us to imagination, as a tool, or faculty, responsible for the work of representing, picturing, or actually producing that which we think we represent. But the essential link that Gutorow traces and exposes between the sublime and the imagination is the motif of limit, of the transgressive moment in which the imagination will renounce itself, indeed get dispersed, in its sublime surrender to what it discovers to precede it: the bare rock of that which merely is. The question then will remain, will Stevens, as both man and poet, withstand the burden of this discovery, the awful finding made by his poetic "capable imagination," will he be faithful to its own discipline, even as it jeopardizes the very imaginative capability?

Gutorow's is an academic analysis beneath which there resounds a long and loving attachment to a great poet. And even though Gutorow's approach is not biographical, being immersed in philosophy and literary theory, the critic's theoretical apparatus gives us also a man in the poet. The author sees a man in the artist who sometimes gives in and bends under the grandeur of his aesthetic findings. Stevens will often balk at and flinch away from the sublimities produced by his verse. Or at least, such are the conclusions frequently reached in the book. For in this respect,

the Polish scholar does not differ from his renowned American predecessors: he also comes to Stevens to reverently pronounce his key formula. And in this case the formula is: dissolution and dispersal. Gutorow's sublime in Stevens is the sublime of "deconstructive vibrancy," a cognitive and imaginative coming apart of language, faculties of mind and expression, at the threshold moment of approaching the bare inhuman ground of reality as it is, beyond the human.

Now, the fascination of this reviewer is in finding out that this reading will make the author want to catapult his subject, a poet, beyond even the scope of poetry. Poetry may in fact constitute an obstacle on the way to the deconstructive sublime, as it stubbornly refuses to yield its illusions in the face of the pressures exerted by the dispersing powers.

Gutorow's Stevens oscillates between not so much imagination and reality, as it is the case in the Miller of *The Poets of Reality,* as between the urges of making and unmaking. The oscillation is found in the poet early on, and Gutorow shows how *Harmonium,* Stevens's uncannily late and powerful debut, is not only a book of imagination, a standard critical label, but a book of fancy, too. Fancy, however, is here thought to be a force and faculty whose vector is opposite to the compositional powers of imagination. Thus the author proceeds with a discussion in which he reworks the standard Coleridgean terms. As a reversal of the synthetically compositional forces of imagination, fancy "seems to subvert the very coherency of the mind" (37) whose operations may have been imaginatively integrated. Gutorow reaches for those poems in *Harmonium* in which Stevens plays with the excess or lack of meaning, fortuity of sound structure, the bizarria of imagery. These poems, an abundant group in *Harmonium,* are presented as cubistic exercises in which the intention is to bring about the "swooning of perceptive faculties" (41). Here, we have to do with the sublimity of disjunction. A poet of imagination, Stevens appears as a poet of the opposite thrust too, for whom fancy "was about disintegration and dispersal" (39).

The stylistic dispersions exercised in *Harmonium* change into repressions of the poetic self in Stevens's next volume, *Ideas of Order*. We enter the region of the Freudian sublime, the sublime connected with the processes of repression and willful renewal of the self, its ability to depart toward new shapes. These clearly Bloomian agendas, however, are quickly moderated by Gutorow. Against the theorist of the anxiety of influence, the critic points to those moments of the volume in which the interest and value is in the instances of stalling and hesitation. Stevens had a long period of creative silence after the publication of *Harmonium,* and Gutorow senses the new collection as full of abiding pauses, hesitations, and uncertainties. Indeed, the volume witnesses poetry attaining points of "complete paralysis" (64). To be sure, it is a stalling that the critic sees the poet to be intentionally investigating. Stevens is said to be interested in: "uncertainty, silence . . . terror" (65). In these post-*Harmonium*

pieces, the point is not violently "capable imagination"—Bloom's usual bounty—but images which "fade away rather than flood consciousness" (65). It is also here that, according to Gutorow, Stevens's former interest in stylistic dispersal of fancy matures into a serious, metaphysical interest in violent disorder. The critic reads the wildly aphoristic "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" and concentrates on the speaker's finding "the eccentric to be the base of design" (qtd. in Gutorow 66). Such offhand perceptions, seemingly marginal, grow to be the gates through which the poet plays with the forces of chaos, death, and destruction. Whenever the poems in the volume observe the construction of order, as it is the case in the famous "Idea of Order at Key West," Gutorow shows them to incur the costs of heavy repressions, repressions of disorder, of that which, as the feminine in Nietzsche, stands for the ephemeral, indeterminate, ever distanced and spectral. That is, all construction of order trails behind it the fear of its attendant repressed other.

The full discussion of the tropes of centrifugal imperceptibility enters the picture when Gutorow discusses the volumes of the forties, with a particular emphasis on Stevens's preoccupation with the figure of the "hero" or the "central man." The genealogy of the central man is Emersonian, with the debt to the Longinian connection between genius, divinity and transgression, making Emerson an inheritor and continuator of the motif of the sublime. Gutorow's reading of Emerson, just as his earlier rereading of Coleridge's fancy, is as focused as it is peculiar. Emerson may have been a preacher of the powers of the self, but his treatises are shown to veer toward explorations of the abyssal, dispersive, and chaotic. Emersonian texts, rather than integrative of the powers of the spirit, are shown as suffused with "basic deconstructive vibrancy" (80). True, Emerson speaks of departures toward ever greater "circles" of being, but these departures are to be seen as transgressive bursts and openings toward energies which never take definitive shapes. So while Stevens may play at the theme of centrality when offering his figures of the major man, Gutorow is careful to redefine this centrality away from fixedness and toward the ephemeral. This centrality is more like an ability to "perceive and record scenes of [its own] absence" (81).

This reading will separate Gutorow from J. Hillis Miller and Andrzej Ziarek in the way all three of them read Heideggerian motifs in *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*. For the two latter critics, Stevens attains a kind of sublimity of the "here," the visible merging with the invisible, which leads Ziarek to talk about how Stevens makes his hero a true inhabitant of Being, the rift between Being and thought bridged by the power of the poetic language. Such story is too smooth for Gutorow, who, although he agrees that Stevens's "first idea" might fruitfully be read in the context of Heidegger's philosophy of Being, sees Being as a term signifying radical dispersals of meaning, "eluding any essence and fixed character" (102). In other words, Gutorow's "Being" is a sphere of transgressive dissemination; and so will be his approach to Stevens's

"major man." This creature is an angel of the indeterminate, mutable, and fluid, who is defined by "the abyss of negations" (102), the only element by the help of which we might get glimpses of this post-human figure.

The negative sublime in Stevens, according to Gutorow's scheme, reaches its culmination in "The Auroras of Autumn," or, more precisely, in the first several cantos of this long poem. This phase of Stevens's development presents his coping with the realization that the figures achieved in *The Notes,* which for such critics as Vendler are Stevens's strongest balances and harmonies, are not to be maintained. The ongoing poetic and psychic mutabilities, the poet's own imperative of "it must change," demand a venture beyond even the most supreme rhetorical domes, and a confrontation with the truly inhuman essence of the real, the real that repels and defeats any rhetorical and poetic supreme fiction. That Stevens attempts this confrontation in the first seven cantos speaks for his poetic honesty and power; that he is able to bring the poet in him to renounce rhetoric in the face of the violently inhuman destructiveness revealed in the aurora borealis spectacle is one of his biggest triumphs, one, however, which, as Gutorow is forced to note in the light of Stevens's struggle against the lights, the poet is simply unable to maintain for long. In this discussion, "The Auroras" fail, as the remaining cantos attempt to divert away from the overpowering but still point of the sheer chaos reigning beyond the life of rhetoric, an attempt that Gutorow sees as forced and unconvincing. Stevens, in this retreat, is unfaithful to his own experiment in "decreation," an ethico-aesthetic strategy that the poet glimpsed in the writings of Simone Weil, saw at work in modernist painting, and tried to employ himself.

This pattern, the rhythm of the poetic language coming in touch with something beyond it, almost yielding, in its total dissolution, to the reigning, primordial, definitive IT of it—the base of the real that lasts impervious to the actions of language and imagination—which is then followed by an awkward, if not totally embarrassing, regrouping of rhetorical forces, is also found to be the glory and failure of "The Rock." In the first sections of it, Gutorow praises the hierophantic approach to the theme of the "rock," which here becomes a new, allegedly ultimate name for Stevens's life-long concern with the base of the real. The treatment of the "rock" is a chance to finally rest the useless rhetorico-poetic march and come into a sublime touch with an entity that will repel any attempt to intellectualize it, to enmesh it in relations and thus subordinate it to the transforming powers of poetry. Instead, it is the rock, like the auroras before it, that arrests the flow of language and stands apart and supreme as, in Gutorow's phrase, "the blank wall of reality" (165). But, again, the poet flinches. Instead of withstanding the brunt of the first two thirds of his own poem, he squanders this rare opportunity and strays into the "'idle talk' of the third section . . . in which the rock becomes one more supreme fiction" (165).

On this reading, Stevens is more successful in his previous long attempt at the sublime, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." Here, through an intense and focused meditation, he is able to enter the Heideggerian mode of dwelling as thinking the place of dwelling, which is also a mode of a sublime merging with the thingly character of reality, and, by extension, of the poem itself. For the critic, however, this kind of "the existing human being's ecstatic entry into the unconcealment of Being"—as Heidegger puts it in "The Origin of the Work of Art" (192)—opens us on the sublime indefiniteness of the threshold non-place of Being. In evocations of Heideggerian clearings, which Gutorow traces in "An Ordinary Evening" and in the masterly late lyrics, such as "The Plain Sense of Things," "for Stevens, The House of Being starts at the threshold, in a kind of non-place . . . devoid of essence but essential" (151).

Now, how should we welcome these findings of the search for the negative sublime, with their attendant search for "deconstructive vibrancies." The critic's impulse to follow his key formula—the order-defiant chaotic dissolution in the destructive element of the negative sublime—is very strong in this reading, and it tends to put pressure on some allegedly established theoretical schemes. Gutorow's is a courageous project, one of going back to a series of received traditions and injecting a rereading energy into them. Some of these attempts are promising; others demand a greater discussion, which, if conducted at greater detail, could be of great interest. Let us do justice to some of these critical anticipations.

Is fancy a deconstructive force that Gutorow sees in it? In the classical eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, and in Coleridge, our primary source here, fancy is merely a faculty of the mind arranging materials that have already entered the mind through the sensual apparatus. Coleridge's point, however, was not that fancy should work against order, coherence, or meaning. On the contrary, fancy, in Coleridge, belongs among the forces of composing wholes. It does so, however, on a level that is beneath the capacity of the imagination. It belongs among the mechanical compositional forces, as an inheritance bequeathed to the Romantics by the eighteenth-century mechanistic and atomistic aesthetic theory. Fancy is "mechanical" and "passive" (Coleridge's vocabulary). Tied to what M. H. Abrams, commenting on the "psychological atomism" of the empirical tradition, calls "atoms of the minds" (160), it deals with "fixities and definites" (Coleridge), and "must receive its materials ready made from the law of association" (Coleridge). As such, Coleridge makes fancy inferior to some truer compositional forces, those of imagination, which, being more holistic, organic, and synthetic in their work, are free of the temporal, spatial, but also logical bounds of the existing material elements provided by the merely sensual instruments. In fact, contrary to Gutorow's discussion, it is the faculty of "secondary imagination," not fancy, that does the work of "dissolution, diffusion, and dissipation," which operations are performed for the sake of new compositions and organic

integrations. In other words, Gutorow's reading is a complete reversal of Coleridgean terminology. To read fancy as a force that counterpoints the synthetic compositional actions of imagination, to read this faculty as the actual dissolving drive, might in fact be a revealing act of reinterpreting an area of the aesthetic tradition. Such departure, however, should give us pause and be accompanied by a fuller discussion.

An even more fascinating inquiry should result in a closer examination of the relations between Heidegger's jargon—the monumental apparatus that includes the thought of the "Being of beings"—and the earlier, much more established concept of the sublime. Gutorow links the two notions very naturally and reads the connection into Stevens. And so, Stevens's enigmatic "First Idea" easily becomes a synonym of the thought of Being. In the next step, this equalization is naturally brought to the experience of the sublime, specifically Gutorow's sublime of the endlessly fast and elusive work of negation, doubt, and hesitation. Are we really justified, however, in making this easy leap from Being to the sublime? Our first intuition here should be contrary: after all, Being is a term created for the purpose of leading philosophy beyond the scope of the idea of "representation," and the very provenience of the concept of the sublime grounds it in such philosophy. Its genealogy binds it strongly to some essential metaphysical distinctions, such as the one between the sensible and the super-sensible.

This is not to say that Gutorow's inclinations are erroneous. Not at all. This is just to say that Gutorow's deconstructive impetus rolls over a tad too quickly over large and difficult areas. What is so natural for the Polish critic is found to be a surprise, if not a scandal by, say, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe who, in a text called "Sublime Truth," claims that Heidegger's discussion of the event of "truth" in the work of art is nothing but a return of this anti-representationalist philosopher to the very essence of the concept of the sublime: "What this text ["The Origin of the Work of Art"] describes, in its own way and at a depth doubtless unknown before it, is the experience of the sublime itself" (Lacoue-Labarthe 95). Should we arrive at this point, we might also press further, into the very heart of the problem, the negativity that Gutorow finds in the moment of the "unconcealment" of Being. By concentrating on the notion of Being, Gutorow wants to stress the trembling and disruptive "inessentiality" of this term, its ever operative disseminating activity, the activity of that which prepares space for particular beings to appear, itself remaining hidden and dissolving. Lacoue-Labarthe, meanwhile, concentrates on the defamiliarizing uncanniness of the event of the work of art itself, which allows us to glimpse the Heideggerian "void" founding beings. Does the defamiliarizing experience of the uncanniness of the ordinary push us inevitably into the abysses described by Gutorow, or does it allow us to re-enter the ordinary in a new mode?

Beyond these adjustments, some of the author's theoretical treatments demand not so much a discussion as a full scale debate. If the event of the work of art speaks

of the rending forces of negativity, the Emersonian tradition, which is decidedly Stevens's tradition, treats this recognition as the enabling event of potentiality. That is why, when Gutorow reads "deconstructive vibrancy" in Emerson, when he concentrates on this thinker's disruptive moment—the constant falling over, away and beyond any established order—or when he reminds us of Emerson's recognition of endless uncertainty inscribed in our condition, he also remains blind, with a blindness necessary to his entire argument, to the Emersonian moment proper. This moment is the moment of Power, which in Emerson means the stubborn, integrative clinging onto the act of purposive departure from one system of meanings—one constellation of tropes, one "circle"—to another. The element of uncertainty and of incoherent and inchoate dispersal of forces is there for sure; but this is merely "nature" as the initial mechanical jolt ushering in the integrative work of subjective forces which are pushed on toward new shapes. So the "eccentricity" that Gutorow finds in Stevens's aphoristic propositions of "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" is not a spillage toward disorder. It is the very Emersonian power-hungry thrust away from that which has already been established, the literal "it" of the existing system of tropes. Further, this "power" hunger should not be thought of as an imperialistic and teleologically naïve belief in any finality of orders, but as a desire for poetry—the imaginative power to depart toward new formulations. The falling away is not *into* dispersal, but *toward*—it is a key word in Stevens—the next "circle". Emerson's wonder is not at dispersal and chaos—these are always found abundantly at hand. His wonder is at the poetic capacity of spanning the voids of nature, the capacity of re-forging the inchoate into a shape. "Eccentricity" is the ability to leave the existing "circle." The ability itself does not partake of dispersal. "Dispersal," that of nature, is the environment in which poetry can happen. When it happens, it does smack of dissolution; but it is only the first step in a continuous evolution of the trope. The action of departure itself is predominantly integrative. That is why when Emerson speaks against "consistency" in "Self-Reliance" it is against the "foolish consistency . . . the hobgoblin of little minds," the minds fully enclosed in the literalness of the now. To renounce this form of "consistency" is not to favor disorder; it is to use "disorder," by getting better of it, and make room for a greater coherence of a future "character," invisible to those around the agent. This "character" emerges as "*one* tendency": "all the sallies of his will are *rounded* in by the law of his being . . . the inequalities of Andes . . . are insignificant in the *curve of the sphere*" (265, emphasis mine). The moment of departure from the given, the "eccentric" moment, is in fact fully integrative: "It is the . . . power of divine moments that they *abolish our contradictions*" ("Circles" 411, emphasis mine).

If "power" and "character" are the names of this integrative game, it is not "teleology." There is no "telos" here in the sense of a point of arrival. The future shapes,

the specific contents of the successive circles, are unpredictable (and unimportant). If "power" is the name of the Emersonian game, then it is the power of departure. Departure from the literal is also the real topic of Bloom's theory, which is no theory at all, but an apology for the rhetorical capacity and activity of the poetic. When Gutorow finds the contradiction between the rhetorical—the unpredictable, the reformulative, the figuratively incalculable—and the allegedly "teleological" in Bloom, he is, I guess, unwilling to thematize the coalescing power of the poetically rhetorical, because his entire argument goes against this power. To thematize it would mean to admit that any cubistic dismantling of architecture, such as the one Gutorow finds in the cubistic poems of *Harmonium,* is itself a feat of the imaginative, integrative action, an imaginative achievement of the poem itself. In other words, the dismantling itself is a rhetorical device, a ploy, a strategy. And all such strategies are necessarily rhetorical: they are a stage in the endless evolution of tropes. This evolution is Bloom's only theme and no teleology is incurred since no final shapes of the evolution can be predicted.

By extension, the critic is also unwilling to find Stevens a poet of desire, more basically than the poet of epistemology. Gutorow takes Stevens's ever new formulas in the "imagination" vs. "reality" dialectic to be exercises of epistemological nature. In this way he seems to be able to dismiss the Bloomian story of the coherent growth of the poet's self, the story which requires a coalescence of rhetoric and will. By foregrounding the epistemological element, Gutorow brings rhetoric and epistemology together and cleanses both of desire and will. This move is one of the most problematic strategies presented in his study. First, regardless of the various dissatisfactions we might have with Bloom (e.g. Bloom's persistent patterning of the rhetorical development of the poet, the persistence that might be mistaken for a form of teleology), to divorce rhetoric from the work of the will is to go against a powerful theoretical grain and coalition, consisting of the Emersonanism not only of Nietzsche, but also of William James, a figure who should not be ignored in Stevens scholarship, not even to mention the further continuation of Nietzsche, found in Foucault's major dismissal of the divisions between knowing, willing, wielding power. While Gutorow is careful—and correct—to distinguish between Nietzsche's fantasy of the *übermensch* and Stevens's "major man," he never mentions James or Foucault in their insistence on the inseparability of will and knowledge.

More importantly, however, the insistence on an epistemological cleansing of Stevens's rhetorical mastery forces the critic to limit his readings to investigating the unstable career of the moves at "representing" reality in Stevens. This limitation means an almost sublime inability to accept a huge other area of the poet: the area in which he delights in his own powers of diverting from any shape or content of "knowledge" his own poems may have brought him. This area is not something

separate from the work of aligning "reality" and "imagination"; rather, in this poetry, the very attempt at such aligning is a result of a will and a desire for the real, a desire which makes epistemology a tool and a vehicle rather than an objective in itself.

Stevens is a poet of desire in its versatile forms: the aesthetic, the erotic, the epistemological. Most crucially, however, he is the poet of the desire and will—a very narcissistic will—not to "know" but to keep knowing afresh. The changeability, the mutability of orders, grounds and cognitive systems that Stevens insists on—these are just so many exercises sustaining not the fantasy of the self as a coherent fixity, but the power of the self to renew itself. In the "It Must Change" section of *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction,* musing on the need of transformation, Stevens finds it the essential ingredient of the health of the self, not its coming apart: "It is our own, / It is ourselves, the freshness of ourselves" (344). He never resigns this ambition, not even in his very late poetry, allegedly the poetry of "being" and dissipation of the subject.

This is why Gutorow must avoid those passages in Stevens in which the poet makes an effort to fight his own "epistemological" findings. The primary examples here are the remaining three cantos of "The Auroras of Autumn," the cantos that continue past the catastrophic recognition of the unmaking powers of the auroras, and the parts of "The Rock" in which the "rock" is, again, tirelessly, caught in a network of tropes so that its finality can again be seen as an illusion, the illusion that death makes any statement at all.

The supreme rule of the "auroras" in their destructive majesty which repels all human rhetoricity becomes a source of fear for the "scholar of one candle" not because he senses an inability to divert from them, but because, in order to divert from them, he must assume their powers and thus leave, again, the former version of his self (the balanced self of *Notes*). But the joining is adversarial: it aims at erasing the "name" of the auroras, at annulling their terrifying "thisness." The unmaking begins already in Canto VII, with the "eccentricity"—the poetic, rhetorical falling off from the literal. What "unmakes" the auroras is very little, a drop of poetry—"our flippant communication under the moon" (360).

Gutorow's Stevens is a poet whose sublimity consists in his renunciation of desire for the sake of knowledge: the knowledge that the poetic clashes and crushes against a specifically understood finality. It may be the finality of chaos invading all linguistic formulation, the chaos that makes Gutorow wonder at the sublime indeterminacy of the word "like" in "it was like a new knowledge of reality," one of Stevens's farewell statements. In this reading Gutorow goes beyond Vendler, Bloom, and even Miller, both early and late. His reading is focused, devoted, and very strong, despite its author's forays against the concept of a "strong" reading. It is one to be treasured for these very reasons.

In it, paradoxical as it may sound, the critic's veneration for the poet sees the poet as failing more often than not. Gutorow's Stevens fails in "Auroras," because they move "flippantly" away from the finality of the lights; he fails in "The Rock," which veers into "idle talk." The magnificent *Notes* are only a transient success, their supreme fiction not lasting beyond the trial of their own demand of mutability. Finally, Stevens seems to fail even in his much acclaimed final lyrics, whose balanced styles are here taken to be suggestive of "inertia" (168) more than the Heideggerian "nothingness."

So in this reading Gutorow may be coming close to another Heideggerian critic, Simon Critchley, who finds Stevens to be a poet gradually curing himself of the need for poetry, as he forsakes the poetic in order to merge with the life of things. Critchley is right when he claims that the final arrival at the life of things would mean the end of the poetic. This is because "the life of things" is an ephemeral remnant of epistemology which always aimed at the end of itself, the end of the rhetorical procession of all inquiry, the end that would be the result of achieving the final epistemological success. "The life of things" would be something that is independent of inquiry, human language, imagination. But this is precisely what would have happened in Stevens had he stayed mute at the "blank wall of reality," the bland fact of "the rock," the point at which Gutorow would most gladly see him stay. The paradox is that, although such point might be a highest form of sublimity, it would also be the end of poetry. Poetry, however, was about the only kind of lasting "health" that the poet knew (all his bodily pleasures, obsessions, and cares being a prop in his internal poetic theater). Thus, what for Gutorow is a sublime moment of poetry arriving at self-erasure may well be what Stevens devoted a life-time in poetry to get himself free of: the idea that one might finally get to know something final and stop writing poetry. Stevens knew that this kind of finality, this asceticism that lies at the heart of all epistemology, needed "itself to be imagined." Such ascetic finality is a rhetorical stance itself, and the value of his art lies in its overall sense that epistemology is second to poetry.

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REVIEWS

Bożenna Chylińska. *The Gospel of Work and Wealth in the Puritan Ethic: From John Calvin to Benjamin Franklin*. Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2012. 336 pages.

Although it has been a fact in human life since time out of mind, work became a subject of detailed and specialized studies only in the past two centuries. In her book Bożenna Chylińska applies a large variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories and conceptualizations of work to the lives and careers of English and especially American Puritans. The opening Chapter I traces the evolution from ancient times to the present, from theology to ethics, from the focus on work to the focus on workers, and from the concept of work as degradation to the concept of work as ennoblement. The awareness of the fact that the word "work" has its origin in the Greek word for sorrow (*ponos*) and the feeling that labor amounts to servility and freedom from it is synonymous with nobility, have colored attitude to work for centuries. Although it seems that Chylińska's book poses questions which are important to students of American literature and culture, it addresses in fact major philosophical dilemmas which are significant to a much larger audience. Self-reflexive (after all academic activity also qualifies as work), the book invites the reader to progress intellectually through several centuries (and two centuries in greater detail) of work motivated by religious dogmatism. What is particularly valuable in this account is the perspective of Catholic Chritianity which is a point of reference throughout this study of Puritanism.

Chapter II focuses on the European origins of the Puritan mind and spirit. It outlines the history of various attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church before and after Martin Luther. Although Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* has been recognized as a landmark, it was "not a revolutionary document" (59). However, the debate that flared up in response to it attracted public attention and had wide-ranging social and political consequences. Luther himself opposed the Peasants' Revolt, which shows that his major concern was theological, and not political (62). Since "his theology did not constitute the only facet of the Reformation" (64), Chylińska discusses also the contribution of such reformers as

Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, the latter in particular. Calvinism, which had a lot in common with Lutheranism (68) is discussed in greater detail as "the greatest religious force in the development of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and, ultimately, in North America," the one that "gave rise to the Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist denominations" (71). Chylińska notes the moral discipline and the strict hierarchical church structure devised by Calvin, who also considered the way church and state should relate. She devotes much attention to the situation in England, which differed considerably from the developments in Germany and Switzerland. She argues that the English Reformation may in fact have been rooted in the Lollards movement, rather than in the doctrines of Luther (72). Anti-clerical sentiments were in addition "radicalized by the Humanistic movement" (74). However, even though the Act of Supremacy officially put an end to Catholicism in England "in no sense could the 'new' religion be called 'reformed'" (77), at least during Henry VIII's reign. Motivated by political rather than theological considerations, the Reformation in England resulted in (rather than being a consequence of) the expansion of Protestantism. In the sixteenth century, Calvinism was promoted by a group of radical theologians who were later labeled as Puritans, a word which came into usage c. 1564 (81). Bożenna Chylińska discusses the activities of several Puritan theologians affiliated with Cambridge University, stressing in particular the contribution of William Perkins, a prolific writer whose fame reached far beyond England and shaped Puritan thinking in America, and exerted an impact on seventeenth-century literature and visual art. His notion that religious devotion was linked to economic prosperity attracted the rising English middle class in that it justified their entrepreneurial approach (85–87). The story of opposition to the Puritans, their persecution and exile first to the Netherlands and then to the New World is narrated in detail and with recourse to historic documents on the remaining pages of Chapter II (91–101). The narrative culminates in the symbolic act of obliterating local names and filling America with new meanings (97).

Chapter III explores the concept of "Calling" in American Puritanism. It opens with an attempt at a definition of Puritanism, which proves to be a major challenge. Chylińska considers a variety of definitions formulated recently and in the past, in prose and in verse, by proponents and opponents. What emerges out of such juxtapositions is a multifaceted definition, which is then in addition illustrated by vignettes of several prominent American Puritans. The discussion of "Calling" is indebted to Max Weber's concepts of protestant ethic and capitalism, and results in an illuminating comparative analysis of Calvinism and Catholic Christianity. "Calvinism" argues Chylińska, "extended and spiritualized work and wealth, and

turned them into the virtual sacraments" (117). American Puritans constructed a social hierarchy based on the individual relation to work and the degree of social usefulness (119–120). The role of the state (acting through civil magistrates) was also precisely defined by American Puritans, who went to great lengths to regulate in particular church government (128). Work amounted to serving God and disciplining oneself at the same time. It meant "relief from forbidden passions and excessive energies, which were denied outlet and expression elsewhere by the Puritan moral code" (148). The concept of "Calling was extended by the Puritans to cover all honest human activities and some productive occupations" (149). The lives, careers, and Calvinist lessons of the Mather dynasty (carefully studied on pages 135–151), illustrate these principles. Their published works, also a form of "Calling", served to promote Puritan ideology. A richly nuanced comparison of Puritan and Catholic conception of work and wealth (151–155) encourages the reader to ponder the role of Puritanism in the dismantling of medieval ideas and in forcing Catholic Christianity to redefine its stance on work in later centuries.

The phrase "from … to …" in the subtitles to Chapters II, III, and IV signals the intention of tracing the (r)evolutionary change that Calvinism underwent once it crossed the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the development of Puritan thought in the New World. Chapter IV offers a fascinating study of "Puritan wives" from Lady Margaret Hoby in Yorkshire to Mistress Anne Bradstreet in New England. Biblical proverbs set the standards for all Puritan women, though class and religious status accounted for fine distinctions within female community (162–163). Chylińska studies them in detail, exploring as an example the daily account of Lady Margaret Hoby, "virtually the first English woman-diarist" (164). Repetitive in its account of practical and devotional occupations, the diary speaks volumes about the life of a Puritan woman of high social status. Numerous quotation illustrate Chylińska's thesis about the meaning of work in a Puritan woman's life (164–176). Even though the community of American Puritans was strictly patriarchal, women were present and notable in their settlements from the very beginning. In this respect the Puritan colony was unlike non-Puritan ones, which consisted almost exclusively of men. The Bible and its reflection in countless conduct books and sermons both set the standards for gender relations and offered their justification (176–183). Each aspect of a woman's life was considered and regulated. Chylińska discusses such crucial matters as a woman's marital status (184–195) and appearance (196–202). Hannah Moody, Dorothy Dudley, and Anne Bradstreet come alive in this careful study as various types and generations of Puritan wives. Bradstreet's poetry serves as a point of reference in an exploration of various aspects of a woman's life. Although living half a century apart and on

two opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Bradstreet conceptualized her daily toil very much like Lady Margaret Hoby.

The mind of Benjamin Franklin is the final destination of the intellectual pilgrimage to the Puritan past. In Chapter V Bożenna Chylińska juxtaposes his life and works with those of Cotton Mather. Both were polymaths, but whereas Mather lamented the decline of Puritan faith, stressed the need for "doing good", and looked back, Franklin insisted on the "well-being" aspect of economic rather than spiritual salvation, and looked ahead to the times which he expected to be different. Chylińska underlines, however, the similarities between the two Puritan thinkers. Franklin not only met Mather, who was his senior by nearly forty years, but he also acknowledged the influence of Mather on his own life and writing. He stayed in contact with Mather's son and nephew (235–236). In her in-depth study of *Autobiography* and *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Chylińska explores the deist and pragmatist (*avant la lettre*) side of Franklin. As in previous chapters, she looks at Franklin's secularized Puritan ethics through the lens of Max Weber's thoughts on the rise of capitalism, the relation between time and money, and the economic morality and salvation. Taking up a motif present in the previous chapter, Chylińska brings to the limelight the marginalized figures of women in Franklin's life, especially his wife Deborah, who found a way of handling her "deputy husband" (280–298). Franklin has often been compared with Jonathan Edwards, and this is the way the chapter is concluded. However, as it was in the case of Cotton Mather, Chylińska stresses similarities rather than differences, which means that her aim is to reclaim Franklin as a Puritan thinker, albeit with a deist twist.

The study ends with a conclusion which sums up the project, but also—because of the global and universal significance of the problem—provokes new questions, for example, the one concerning Puritan heritage in American multiculturalism. The book is superbly documented: it contains an extensive bibliography and an index of names, as well as numerous and relevant quotations from original historic sources and an abundance of reprographic materials which allow the reader almost to touch history. Readers of this book will never again take work for granted, be it their own work or that of others.

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Paweł Jędrzejko, Milton M. Reigelman, and Zuzanna Szatanik, eds., *Hearts of Darkness: Melville, Conrad and Narratives of Oppression*. Zabrze: MStudio, 2010. 262 pages.

Paweł Jędrzejko, Milton M. Reigelman, and Zuzanna Szatanik, eds., *Secret Sharers: Melville, Conrad and Narratives of the Real*. Zabrze: MStudio, 2011. 395 pages.

The two reviewed volumes are collections of essays on Melville and Conrad; about half of them are comparative studies, whereas the other half are mostly, and significantly, about Melville. The intention of the editors and compilers was to provide a comparative study of Melville and Conrad in two ways: in terms of "Western existentialist thought" and of post-colonial criticism. The essays were presented by distinguished scholars from many countries during the 6th International Melville Society Conference in Szczecin in August 2007. Effectively, both books are proceedings that try to be monographs. Like most of such books, the two volumes lack a clear framework; chapters, which are loosely related essays, are arranged according to vague thematic affinities. As such, the volumes provide neither a full survey of Melville's or Conrad's work, nor a comprehensive range of comparative topics. The editors, following the generally accepted procedure, resolved to rather daunting philosophical themes, such as the "existential philosophy of participation" or the "multifaceted relations" of the self to the world. Such sweeping generalizations, for all their brilliance and philosophical informedness, leave the unprepared reader with a rather poor idea of what the books are about.

The two volumes have recently been reviewed by Elle Stedall in *The Conradian*; the rather skeptical review points to the fact that most essays are about *Moby Dick* and *Heart of Darkness*—one is bound, apparently, to find affinities between such outstanding and generally admired works of literature. This, however, does not suffice as a reason for approaching them comparatively. "[C]an the universal squeeze of the hand," asks Stedall, "which, incidentally, is conceptualised in a chapter which one can hardly imagine Conrad calling beautiful—incorporate the hand in which Melville's masterwork lay open and unappreciated. And should that matter? Does comparativism have to be companionable; should we look for friends in the authors we admire; must their work make the world less hostile?" (Review). Stedall's question is about the purpose of comparative criticism, whether it should create thematic constellations of admired authors, simply because they are admired simultaneously by one critic. A contrastive approach, defining Melville's and Conrad's cultures by mutual negation, might be as interesting, but is never undertaken in the two reviewed volumes. Another comparative angle, the study of contexts and traditions, is not corroborated by historical evidence, as the editors

and some essay authors remark, referring to Conrad's famous and derogatory remarks about Melville in a letter to Humphrey Milford. Yet another approach, based on Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, would link Melville and Conrad as representatives of a historical tendency in development of world literature, but again, no essay in the collection attempts to do it. Generally, both volumes are not based on any theory of comparative literature; they do not explain why Melville and Conrad should be compared at all, other than because of the "essential liquidity of the existential condition" which "necessitates a 'universal squeeze of the hand'" (*Secred Sharers* 22).

There are, however, several very good essays in both collections, such as Arthur Redding survey of American reception of *Moby Dick* in the 1950s or the series of essays on mirrors in the 2011 collection. It is perhaps significant that so many essays, including the most interesting ones, forego the comparative perspective altogether, and are about Melville. Redding focuses (*Hearts of Darkness* 167–182) on C. L. R. James's *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville* (1953), a political interpretation written from a Trotskyist point of view, but the essay presents James's book in comparison with the contemporary representatives and predecessors of the myth-and-symbol school of American literary criticism, such as F. O. Matthiessen, Richard Chase, or Leo Marx. These prevalent readings of the 1950s are compared with James's Trotskyist (anti-totalitarian) stance, and with the political discourse of American foreign policy in the twenty-first century. The essays on narcissism and mirror reflection, mostly related to Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and *The Mirror of the Sea,* are grouped in two sections of *Secret Sharers:* "Ungraspable Phantoms. *Vanitas*-Text-Reality" and "*Mise-en-Abyme*. Reality as Mirror." The first group consists of Dennis Berthold's essay on the Narcissus myth in Melville and Conrad (*Secret Sharers* 175–184) and Joanna Mstowska's "The Idea of *Vanitas* in *The Mirror of the Sea*" (*Secret Sharers* 185–205). Berthold contrasts the use (and prevalence) of visual imagery in Conrad's and Melville's fiction, pointing to the scenes of mirror reversal and self-reflection, and arguing that Narcissism in Melville is individual, and in Conrad, communal, as in a crew and ship saving itself by "enlightened self-love" (181). Mstowska's essay is exclusively about Conrad and contemplation of human nature through allegorical objects (*Vanitas*), such as ships, mirrors, and sea. In the other group, Sarah Thwaites compares the nineteenth-century debate on photography as the magic mirror (pace Trachtenberg) with Melville's use of conflicting perspectives, both on the plane of ideology in *Moby Dick*, and on the plane of visual descriptions. The other essay on mirror and *mise en abyme*, by Marek Paryż, compares *Moby Dick* with Sam Peckinpah's Western movie *Major Dundee* (1965), treating Melville's novel as an allegory of the American frontier.

Another outstanding essay was provided by John Bryant (*Secret Sharers* 31–48); while comparing *Moby Dick* and *Typee* with *Lord Jim*, it also describes the fluid text of *Typee*. Bryant has written a theoretical book called *The Fluid Text* (2002), a terms that refers to texts with many variants, and created an interactive variorum edition of *Typee*. Stephen Andrews (*Secret Sharers* 93–125) offers an interesting reading of "Benito Cereno," comparing Melville's imagery to today's notions of piracy, property, right, law, and innocence. Andrews explores, through quotations from 19th-century background texts on confidence and trust, the ambivalent attitude of Captain Delano's attitude towards the *San Dominick*: is Delano an innocent observer or a pirate? How can law and order legitimize themselves? Fiona Tomkinson, Scott Norsworthy, Aubery McPhail, and Stanford E. Marovitz describe intertexts and sources for both authors. Tomkinson (*Secret Sharers* 49–60) refers to the possible influence, on Conrad, of colonial imagery in *Wędrowiec* (The Wanderer), a popular nineteenth-century Polish magazine. The theme of wandering in Conrad is, in turn, compared with images from *Moby Dick*. Scott Norsworthy, in the same manner, provides a detailed catalogue of near-quotations used by Melville's and Conrad's various works. Aubrey McPhail (*Secret Sharers* 351–370), in a more general discussion, presents the various philosophical sources referred to in *Moby Dick*, and Stanfor E. Marovitz (*Hearts of Darkness* 203–214) presents biographical sources and influences that shaped Melville's and Conrad's heroines. Some essays projects established readings of one author onto the other, perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate the similar impacts across literary cultures. This approach is exemplified by John D. Schwetman's study of *Billy Budd* and "*The Secret Sharer*," and by Wyn Kelley, who relates several novels and stories by Melville to a short story by Conrad. Another group of authors, such as Sostene Massimo Zangari (exotic imagery), Wendy Stallard Flory (psychological imagery), and Yukiko Oshima (Eastern religions), read Melville and Conrad in a parallel manner, discussing imagery related to one subject of choice.

The two volumes are expertly and flawlessly edited, and are fine specimens of sumptuous bookmaking. They are also a testimony to an important conference that provided an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas and for a further consolidation of a strong intellectual milieu (that is, critics of Melville's and Conrad's fiction). The variety of themes and the differences in the quality of research make both *Hearts of Darkness* and *Secret Sharers* very interesting, but uneven books. The efforts of the editors, who tried to create a framework for a coherent comparative study, were only partially successful. One of the reasons was the very difficulty in comparing Melville and Conrad, but the two books have the intrinsic qualities of all collections derived from

large conferences: a wide range or themes and approaches, lack of historical or interpretative continuity, and incomplete selection of texts by the author(s) under discussion.

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Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis, *Aristocratic Ethos in Ellen Glasgow's and Walker Percy's Fiction*. Lublin: KUL Publishers, 2011. 334 pages.

Aristocratic Ethos in Ellen Glasgow's and Walker Percy's Fiction reads as an ambitious reeducation project. While some scholars in Southern studies have attempted to re-examine the endurance of some of the South's treasured icons, thus providing innovative re-readings of the lady or the belle figures that have "been fetishized, fixated on and marketed for so long" (McPherson 152), Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis seems to be siding with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in acknowledging that women's history in the plantation South "cannot be written without attention to women's relations with men in general and with 'their' men in particular, nor without attention to other women" (Fox-Genovese 42).

From the opening pages, Niewiadomska-Flis's objective is indeed clear: by focusing on "the changing aristocratic South from the 1850s to the late twentieth Century" (12), she aims to offer significant insights into "the changes, along with their agents, in the image of the lady and the gentleman which run parallel to the shifting patterns of social structure in the aristocratic South, such as marriage, friendship and sexual unions" (21). Her work will also make for another lack in Southern literary studies, since she hopes that, in "comparing the fictional worlds

created by Glasgow and Percy" (12), this "arrangement offers insight into the complementary constructions of gender and transformations of the myth of the South from the Old to the New to the "American South," otherwise called "the late South" (12).

The book is developed accordingly, with a first chapter entitled "Southern Gentlemen: Evolution from Noble Origins to a Contemporary Rhinestone?" The second chapter, entitled "Southern White Womanhood: The Evolution From White-Gloved Ladies to Rebel Queens" complements the first chapter's development of the myth of the Southern Gentleman, by focusing, this time, on the evolution of the image of the Southern lady since the times of the Old South. The changing concepts of gender guide the discussion in the third chapter, entitled "Love, Sex, Marriage, and Homosocial Friendship from the Old to the American South" (22). Niewiadomska-Flis's analysis uses the critical lens of irony as a recurrent element of discursive strategy for both Glasgow and Percy. Indeed, both authors, as she notes, share the same desire to "undermine [the workings of the myth of the South]" and both equally resort to "ironic discourse in their fiction to reveal hypocrisy, evasive idealism, and double standards, enforced gender differences, the nondescript New South, the dubious Old South heritage, and moral estrangement" (17).

Though focused on Glasgow's and Percy's work, Niewiadomska-Flis's study successfully sets each writer in his or her (literary and historical) context. The book is thus organized as a contextualized case study since the close readings of Glasgow's and Percy's texts are integrated into larger discussions of identity-shattering periods in Southern history: the slaveholding South, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement and even more challenging to Southerners, women emancipation in the 1960s that marked perhaps a more profound break with the past than the Civil Rights movement had been (125). Drawing on Glasgow's male cast—from Gabriel Pendleton or Olivier Treadwell of *Virginia*, Judhe Honeywell of *The Romantic Comedians*, Virginius Littlepage of *They Stooped to Folly*, Tucker Corbin of *The Deliverance*, to General Archbald or George Birdsong of *The Sheltered Life* (and many others)—in addition to a vast array of male characters taken from Percy's novels, among whom John Bickerson Bolling of *The Moviegoer*, Williston Bibb Barrett of *The Last Gentleman* and Lancelot Andrews Lamar of *Lancelot*, Niewiadomska-Flis offers a complex and richly nuanced portrait of Southern white men in the changing South. The Civil War that was to fundamentally metamorphose the traditional values of the Old South and the accompanying mythologization of the Southern gentleman . . . in the New South" (50) forced Southern scions to reevaluate their place and role in Southern society. With a challenged hierarchy, with men now finding themselves "less sure of what [was]

right and honorable" (50), and with old principles now turned into "antiquated notions" (54), the South had to (re)invent new foundations for self-edification and self-worth.

In placing Southern men at the center of the academic debate, Niewiadomska-Flis moves away from the unproblematized images of Southern manhood as the paradigm of honor, community and chivalry, but also from the unproblematized reduction of masculinity to patriarchy. In the rich and varied corpus of literary texts under consideration, Niewiadomska-Flis indeed explores Southern manhood in its plurality—a judge, an aging patriarch General, an inadequate Southern man who lacks character (45), a Southern male of plain origins in Glasgow's *The Miller of Old Church* (49), as well as John Bickerson (also named Jack or Brinx) who suffers from what Niewiadomska-Flis defines as the traditional hereditary disease of the Southern male in Percy's *The Movie Goer*: self-dislocation and self-deception (61). As such, she underlines the necessity of talking about male fictions (and representations) in the plural and to explore (and rethink) masculinity in its plurality as well as incredible complexity.

Besides focusing on the fragmented (male) subject of Southern fiction, Niewiadomska-Flis makes sure to revisit and discuss one of the most influential stereotype in the plantation South: the "mythical image of [the] Southern lady as an innocent and inferior creature" (159). Tracing the evolution of the Southern lady along with the development of the South, Niewiadomska-Flis reconstructs the changing sense of self that Southern ladies experienced as they transitioned from "an old ideal to a very "real" human being" in the New South (178). Both Glasgow and Percy, as Niewiadomska-Flis demonstrates, pulled away "the fabric of illusion" by satirizing the old style of womanhood—the fossilized ladies—as evasive, parasitic and lethargic" (Jones 260). Representative of the shrewdness of Niewiadomska-Flis's portrait of Southern womanhood is the spectrum of her analysis: a clear-eyed portrait of Southern womanhood, Niewiadomska-Flis suggests, must reclaim the voices of these women we do not always listen to—the mothers, daughters, "she-man" (156), the ethereal lady who has become the "master of pretenses and deception" in Glasgow's novels (140), the disgraced Southern Belle, the lady/whore in Percy's *The Last Gentleman* (155), but also the "doubles", i.e. these women who manage to turn men back on the right path of life and their opposites, the "false doubles" (167).

Even if both authors, as Niewiadomska-Flis explains, do prove different in their treatment of emotional attachment (love, sexuality, true companionship), the reconceptualization and demythologizing of gender meanings is becoming increasingly clear throughout as this common thread runs through most of their novels and with it, traditional Southern images, places and paradigms are being

challenged. By making the issues of the relations between Southern men and women, of sexuality, love, marriage, the home, morality, "beautiful behavior" (233), friendship or courtship, topics of literary and cultural investigation, Niewiadomska-Flis's analysis reaps a number of rewards. First, instead of pitting Southern men and women against "social changes in the twilight of Victorian times and then in the New South" (257), Niewiadomska-Flis chooses to place them as fully participating *in* (rather than simply reacting *against*) struggles over identity definition. Such is the necessary condition, Robinson asserts, if one wishes to renegotiate and shift gender meanings. Men (and women), she claims, must indeed be set within a field of struggle over cultural authority ad priority, rather than outside these struggles (4). Second, it shows that what is referred to as the "normative" should be, and indeed was, tested and revised in response to changing times. Third, by focusing on Percy's work, Niewiadomska-Flis's analysis also reveals the ways in which his texts continue along a trajectory of earlier Southern fiction and the ways in which "Percy's fiction further develops Glasgow's vision of the aristocratic ethos" (258). Last but not least, the ironical stance deployed by both Glasgow and Percy not only allows to test and to rebel against "stifling Southern myths" (257), but also allows to revisit Southern heritage. Young Southerners, as Niewiadomska-Flis remarks, could "only make limited use of the previous generation's experience" (259). As such, the book calls for an interrogation of inheritance as it affects both the lives of both male and women characters in Southern American literature and those of women and men writers alike, wrestling with imposed patters of inheritance or claiming the right and feasibility to reinvent inherited traditions, if not to dispense with them altogether.

Niewiadomska-Flis's book is an important addition to the exploration of gender issues in Southern literature. It problematizes essentialist visions of Southern gender as "universal, eternal, and immutable" emphasizing instead to what extent the performances of gender were "historically constructed, context specific and culture bound" (Armengol 1). Both authors, in effect, have not only revised traditional patriarchal concepts of gender but have also proposed new alternative forms of being (and living as) a gentleman or a Southern belle in the devastated post-Civil War South.

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Alexander Leicht, *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics: Robert Rauschenberg, Walker Evans, William Carlos Williams*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 264 pages.

Alexander Leicht gets it exactly right when he argues that links between art and democracy are too often acknowledged only offhandedly—for instance, in the various discussions of Walt Whitman's large-souled aesthetics—and are rarely studied with any seriousness. As a result, he writes, we know little of the exact nature of those links and rely only on vague intuitions. With his inconspicuously titled book *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics*, Leicht hopes to fill this very gap. Ultimately, the book offers three interpretations of a lifetime's work by Robert Rauschenberg, Walker Evans, and William Carlos Williams to argue that their formal strategies are metaphors for some of the crucial aspects of "liberal-egalitarian" democracy. For this purpose, Leicht first immerses himself in all the major contemporary theorizations of democracy by such philosophers as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Robert Dahl, Will Kymlicka, Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam, and isolates the most important features of a democratic imagination manifesting itself in the arts. To give a few examples, Leicht first identifies the notion of radically non-hierarchical organization of the state in Robert Dahl's idea of the equal moral worth of every individual and the principle that every person is recognized as the best judge of his or her good. The author moves from that to observe that this sentiment manifests itself in the various formal features of Walker Evans's photographs; Evans's portraits in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), for instance, are highly respectful of his sitters' autonomy. The independence and worth of all individuals is visualized in various forms of assemblage and collage: Evans's pictures of junkyards and discards, for instance, express such "non-hierarchical" imagination. Or take the idea—always verging on

contradiction and so carefully worded by Kymlicka or Dahl—that the coherence of an ideally democratic society can only be maintained most tenuously, never at the expense of individuals' autonomy. An analogous sentiment, Leicht argues, can be sensed in the tentative compositional schemes of Robert Rauschenberg, only sublty guided by the principles of symmetry or sequence; Leicht also promises to find the same in lightly signalled structuring devices in the books and portfolios of Walker Evans. Lastly, the author repeats after Michael Walzer and Jurgen Habermas that democracy, if it is worthy of its name, is less a social condition than a never-ending process of public debate. That, too, has its aesthetic analogies.

While the subsequent chapters devoted to individual artists, though very solid, do not surprise us that much with their approach, the most engaging is probably the concluding part of Chapter I, that is, the section entitled "Democratic Theory and the Aesthetic Imagination" (56–71), which goes far justifying the whole project. By relying on the interesting formulations by Martha Nussbaum, Noel Carroll, Elaine Scarry, and Winfried Fluck, Leicht suggests that art can offer a significant, even necessary "input into moral [philosophical] deliberation." Aesthetic contemplation of beauty, symmetry, balance, etc.—whether in a narrative, a poem, a photograph or in a canvas--encourages us to intuit our reasoning beyond the fixed categories of professional moral philosophy. One is also impressed by the conceptual part devoted to the notion of metaphor as most effectively describing and negotiating the interface between the realm of the aesthetics and that of political ideas. This section very persuasively sets up the subject and wins over the skeptical. One can only find some flaw with his readings of contemporary philosophers of democracy, readings that seem a bit too extensive and ultimately excessive. You begin to wonder if these ventures into political philosophy were really worth all this effort given that they somehow disappoint by producing conclusions one easily anticipated from start. As a result the text in the first chapter becomes unnecessarily jumpy, moving back and forth between two disparate fields.

The chapters that follow discusses one artist at a time, each working in a different medium. In Chapter II, Leicht shows that "almost all of" Robert Rauschenberg seeks to recognize the individuality of all objects and that his work shows aesthetic pluralism and an open-ended processual structure. The book offers chronologically arranged "close readings" of selected works by Rauschenberg starting from sample works of his *Scatole Personali* series (1952) to the various elements of his magnum opus, *The Quarter Mile or 2 Furlong Piece* of the 1990s and 2000s. Echoing Arthur Danto's notion of "the transfiguration of the commonplace" which Danto finds mostly in Warhol, Leicht defends Rauschenberg against the accusations that the artist, using paint as he is, is no less elitist than

Abstract Expressionists. Leicht also claims that Rauschenberg has little to do with the kind of self-consciousness and philosophizing that often accompanies the various gestures to elevate ordinary objects to the status of art like that by Marcel Duchamp or Warhol. If theirs were frequently "mental acts" posing philosophical questions on the nature of art or on commodification, his work is more of a "sensual experience." Much of the chapter is well and clearly argued, even when the reader hesitates to be entirely persuaded—say by the somewhat fancy idea that Rauschenberg's silkscreens and painted-over photographs restore the original existence of subjects by underlining the superficiality of the images as merely images.

No less interesting is Leicht's detailed review of Walker Evans's oeuvre for similar formal structures embodying the main aspects of a democratic society. For instance, having carefully set up the terms for the discussions of "respect" in portrait photography, Leicht discusses Evans's "respectful portraiture." The author also links it to a similar non-hierarchical "frontality" in the photographer's images of inanimate objects, something that makes manifest those objects's specificity and individualized nature. In the next step, *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics* asserts the most tentative and most dynamically maintained coherence in Evans's work by tracing integrative structures in larger units such Evans's collections (*American Photographs* [1938]) or exhitibions. Finally, Leicht finds temporal openness in Evans's series.

The last chapter discusses the same formal parameters of democracy not in visual works of art but in poetry. William Carlos Williams, however, was an easy choice, it seems, and a certain monotony and predictability set in, perhaps unavoidable in a book in which thoroughness and order are priorities. Much of the commentary on Williams is also slightly derivative; the author himself admits that as he started researching for this part of the book he found himself relying on earlier findings by J. Hillis Miller, Henry Sayre and Marjorie Perloff. True, this chapter, too, is quite informative. Here we find extensive treatment of Williams's respectful portraiture, his line breaks and enjambments, the triadic stanzas from the the Asphodel period and the collage-like structures of *Patterson*. But there is no denying that the book's conceptual structure begins to exhaust itself. It seems that venturing, with the same interpretive apparatus, into the other artforms like jazz or dance—something which is encouraged by Leicht in the conclusions—would be quite redundant.

Altogether, however, the book deserves praise. Leicht takes up a topic that at first seems self-evident and relatively easy to pursue. However, he then makes the best of it, carefully laying out the terms of the discussion, rarely neglecting to anticipate the reader's skepticisms and often surprising one by showing complex-

ities in ideas that have long since been taken for granted. He also makes highly persuasive comparisons by bringing in the well-known works of other artists such as Andy Warhol, Richard Avedon or Gary Winogrand. In short, though somewhat unoriginal in its impulse, ultimately *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics* makes a really useful reading, making you more confident of ideas that you had not even known you understood quite poorly.

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Ewa Łuczak, ed., *Toni Morrison*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2013. 183 pages.

Reminiscing about her childhood in a recent interview given to the French press, Toni Morrison mentions that the multiethnic mining community of Lorain, Ohio, in which she grew up, included a large Polish population. While not of the utmost importance, this biographical detail strikes one as somewhat ironic in the light of the fact that Morrison—who is not only a critically acclaimed author, but also a best-selling one—has received comparatively little attention in Poland. This situation is rightly deemed regrettable by Ewa Łuczak in her introduction to *Toni Morrison*, a collection of critical essays published in the series *Mistrzowie literatury amerykańskiej*. The brainchild of the Section of American Literature at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, the series in question is meant as Poland's answer to Anglo-American companions to major writers. As its title suggests, the recently published volume, succeeding a previous one on Don DeLillo, is devoted to the work of the leading Afro-American author and Nobel Prize winner.

Edited by Ewa Łuczak, who is also the author of two of the volume's nine essays, the monograph includes analyses of Morrison's *œuvre* by several other Polish scholars of American literature: Patrycja Antoszek, Grażyna M. T. Branny, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, Marek Paryż, Anna Pochmara, Anna Warso and Justyna Włodarczyk. With the exception of the volume's closing essay, which deals with Morrison's socio-cultural and literary criticism, each of the texts focuses on one work by the author of *Beloved*. While each of the essays makes interesting, worthwhile and truly pleasurable reading when examined separately, together they make up a comprehensive study, which successfully delineates Morrison's literary achievement in the realm of both fiction and nonfiction. As such, it constitutes a major step towards remedying the oversight on the part of Polish readers to

which Morrison's prose has fallen victim. The fact that, like other monographs in the series, *Toni Morrison* is a Polish-language publication makes it accessible to a non-English-speaking Polish readership. More importantly, however, the authors of this highly readable collection of essays strike a balance between *par excellence* academic content, in-depth readings of literature and form which is at once sophisticated and reader-friendly, backing it all with thorough scholarship.

The volume contains analyses of six out of the ten novels Morrison has produced so far. *The Bluest Eye* is discussed by Justyna Włodarczyk, whose sensitive reading of Morrison's debut novel centers on such important aspects of her prose as family breakup, violence and the inextricable link between American popular culture, itself allied with capitalism, and racism. In keeping with the essay's title, Włodarczyk reflects on Morrison's attempt to let the marginalized speak, on the poetics of trauma and the traumatic effect of racism on the Afro-American community, as well as on the role of literature and literacy in counteracting it. In her interesting essay, Patrycja Antoszek explores *Sula*, focusing on the motifs of transgression and subversiveness central to Morrison's second novel. Taking as a point of departure the turbulent sixties and seventies in America, Ewa Łuczak examines *Song of Salomon*, published in 1977, in terms of its treatment of the past, memory and nostalgia as well as their role in shaping identity. Łuczak convincingly shows how Morrison's novel inscribes itself into Afro-American culture and history, at the same time questioning certain radical Afro-American ideologies based on violence and idealization of the past. Another truly interesting and accomplished essay deals with *Beloved*, arguably Morrison's best-known work. The essay's author, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, identifies trauma, memory, itself inextricably linked with the body, and amnesia—on both the individual and the historical levels—as crucial to Morrison's Pulitzer-winning historical novel. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska sees *Beloved* as a combination of literary genres and conventions, and shows how the Afro-American writer subverts the conventions of the classic historical novel and exploits the Gothic tradition.

Far from being confined to the novels Morrison published in the first two decades of her literary career, the volume also covers those dating from the nineties and noughties. In her ambitious essay, Grażyna M. T. Branny undertakes a comparative study of Morrison's *Paradise* and William Faulkner's *Light in August*. The focus is, again, on the notion of memory, collective memory to be precise. Perceiving several novels by Morrison as Faulknerian, Branny looks at how the Afro-American writer "rewrites" (117; trans. A. P.) the author of *The Sound and the Fury*. The interesting conclusion of Branny's intricate analysis is that, *vis-à-vis* Faulkner's novel, *Paradise* is a "photographic reversal of the positive and the negative" (132; trans. A. P.), and as such it shows how racial stereotypes upheld

by whites are regrettably adopted and internalized by Afro-Americans. Importantly, Branny's reading of Morrison's and Faulkner's novels is two-way, each work elucidating the other. The last novel to be discussed in the volume is *A Mercy*. In his highly perceptive, erudite and yet lucid reading of this 2008 work, Marek Paryż demonstrates how Morrison uses her story, set in the late seventeenth century, to explode the founding myths of America, in particular that of freedom. Identifying individualization and symbolism as the key strategies employed by the writer to achieve her aim, Paryż examines Morrison's reversal of biblical symbolism in the novel as well as her revision of the myth of the American Adam. Moreover, Paryż also ponders the role of geography in *A Mercy*, arriving at interesting and convincing conclusions.

In addition to the novels, *Toni Morrison* also discusses the Afro-American writer's only short story "Recitatif," to which two essays—one by Anna Pochmara and the other by Anna Warso—are devoted. While the decision to include two essays revolving around the same, relatively short literary text in one volume may come as somewhat surprising, Pochmara's and Warso's essays dispel any potential doubts. Firstly, it goes without saying that polyphony and pluralism are as welcome in literary criticism and scholarship as they are in social and political life. Secondly, as Pochmara points out, "Recitatif," oft-anthologized and frequently discussed in American literature classes, is rarely subjected to critical analyses. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the striking complexity and sophistication of "Recitatif," a true literary *tour de force*, as well as the multiple critical and readerly perspectives it offers more than justify the above-mentioned editorial decision. The two essays overlap, but also complement each other. In a gripping essay, Pochmara delves into the mystery at the heart of Morrison's short story, which focuses on the relationship between two women – one white and one Afro-American – but refuses to unequivocally state which is which. Observing what she aptly calls "the merry-go-round of racial identity" (54; translation mine), Pochmara carries out a detective-like investigation, which draws on an analysis of racial, political, social and cultural codes as well as historical circumstances. In a similar vein, Warso pertinently notes that "while we are reading 'Recitatif,' 'Recitatif' is reading us" (71; trans. A. P.) and analyzes the way Morrison's text drags the readers into a tricky and complicated interactive game, obliging them to look for meanings and realize the often frightening power of racial, cultural and gender clichés. The last essay in *Toni Morrison* beautifully completes the volume, devoted largely to Morrison's fiction, by concentrating on her critical writings and showing—interestingly—that the image of Morrison the critic does not necessarily coincide with that of Morrison the novelist. In her examination of Morrison's responses to two *causes célèbres* of the nineties, namely the Clarence

Thomas affair and the O. J. Simpson murder trial, Łuczak points out that Morrison's stances, especially on gender issues, are sometimes controversial and that the writer distances herself from mainstream (white) feminism, but also anticipates an ethnicity-minded modern version of it. Łuczak's essay also discusses Morrison's "ambitious proposal to reread the history of American literature" in the light of "the Africanist persona" and "the Afro-American discourse" (174; trans. A. P.), and her critical attempts to define both Afro-American literature and Afro-American identity.

Conscious as they are of the didactic dimension of their monograph, by no means do the authors of *Toni Morrison* restrict themselves to a school-like reading of the literary texts they discuss. Instead, they offer a broader critical perspective, consistently underlain with references to literary and cultural theory, which makes the volume a valuable tool for Polish students and scholars of American literature alike. Their analyses also boast a solid factual background, relying heavily on Afro-American history, culture, myths and beliefs. Antoszek reads Morrison's *Sula* in the light of Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject. Pochmara filters "Recitatif" through the critical race theory, social constructionism and the perspective of whiteness studies. The archetype of the trickster is applied to Morrison's prose by Warso and Branny alike. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska delves into generic subtleties in her study of Morrison's use of literary genres and conventions in *Beloved*. Both Łuczak's analysis of *Song of Salomon* and Paryż's reading of *A Mercy* explore Morrison's revision of the founding myths of America. Additionally, Branny also refers to Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of *signifiant* and *signifié*, and to Jacques Lacan's semiotic theory, while Paryż supports his theses with, on the one hand, Crèvecœur's writings and, on the other, references to such exponents of the French Theory as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. Importantly, the authors of *Toni Morrison* draw on up-to-date bibliographical resources.

Despite being the fruit of collective effort, the volume is strikingly cohesive and consistent. The individualities of the contributors and the fact that each of them focuses mostly on a single literary work do not prevent their essays from overlapping and revealing certain parallels. The same motif is often discussed in more than one essay, and the critical strategies adopted, the observations made and the conclusions drawn are frequently convergent. As a result, the picture of Morrison given by the monograph is coherent, though in no way oversimplified or over-generalized. While revolving around the notions of race and gender immanent in Morrison's *œuvre*, the essays emphasize the ambiguities inherent in her prose, her avoidance of clear-cut dichotomies and simplifications, and of a—fortuitously named—black-and-white world. The author of *Beloved* emerges as a writer who shuns the unequivocal and the obvious in favor of fluidity, multiplicity and in-

stability. Moreover, she emerges as an author whose approach to both form and content is dialogic, which, as Łuczak notes in the volume's closing essay, is also, in Morrison's eyes, the approach generally distinguishing Afro-American literature from mainstream—that is, white—American literature.

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Anne Mihan, *Undoing Difference? Race and Gender in Selected Works by Toni Morrison and Jeanette Winterson*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 393 pages.

In *Undoing Difference? Race and Gender in Selected Works by Toni Morrison and Jeanette Winterson,* Anne Mihan sets side by side authors living and writing in two different countries and focusing their literary works through different lenses, those of race and gender, respectively. In this, Mihan's enterprise is unique: no other volume has been devoted to a comparative analysis of these two female authors read together. The author validates such a choice of writers by noticing and then analyzing a common strategy used by both Morrison and Winterson, that is their experiments in employing narrators and protagonists whose race or gender remain ambiguous. Mihan's main critical goal is to examine the writers' reasons for using such textual strategies and to establish whether their "play" with gender and racial ambiguity possibly constitute a plea for eliminating "these categories because they rely on essentialist notions of purity and exclusivity" (19).

While a book analyzing Morrison and Winterson together is long overdue; indeed, the two authors' experiments with narrators withholding information about race or gender can be legitimately viewed as parallel, and Mihan's argument is presented in a carefully crafted manner, it is the very question posed by the author in the title of this book—and then repeated in the introduction and in the conclusion—which seems somewhat forced. True, both authors through their narrative strategies reveal how crucial race and gender are for readers as categories of classification and how the refusal to provide such information denaturalizes these concepts and forces the readers to acknowledge the ideological grounding of their response. However, the connection between Morrison's and Winterson's strategies of narration and their potential plea for "undoing difference" is somewhat dubious. After all, the erasure of race and gender as employed by the two writers is not a strategy implying the lack of significance of these categories in the contemporary world but, on the contrary, their omnipresence. Mihan does

answer the question posed in the title with a resounding no, but the fact that the answer can be predicted from the very beginning makes her argument less powerful or at least somewhat less exciting to follow.

Mihan begins with a summary of the most popular theoretical lenses for discussing race and gender. These include, not surprisingly bearing in mind the title of the book, the work of Judith Butler, mostly grounded in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, but also Sally Haslanger, Joshua Glasgow, Judith Lorber and Henry Louis Gates Jr. In other words, Mihan aptly summarizes recent theories of social constructivism. The author then devotes a significant amount of space (almost one hundred pages) to an analysis of the two authors' public statements and essayistic writing related to the themes of race and gender. These include interviews, newspaper columns and essays. The author's interest in these non-fictional texts stems from her belief—and is an attempts to prove it—that both Morrison's and Winterson's fiction is part of larger political projects. Admittedly, Mihan's familiarity with the authors' public utterances and semi-public statements is impressive and allows the author to show the evolution of particularly Morrison's public persona and political ideas. While the presence of the analysis of these non-fictional texts certainly adds to the already imposing scope of this book, it is haunted by a certain problematic assumption, that is that there exists—or could exist—an easy transposition of the author's public political statements/beliefs and the "political message" of their fiction. True, Mihan never openly states that the books of fiction can be read purely as an illustration of the authors' politics but she does not problematize this possibility either. Mihan writes "With their literary texts, in ways that are at times clearer and more radical than their theoretical statements, they [Morrison and Winterson] have also begun to re-define these concepts [race and gender]" (25). All in all, while this section is interesting and informative in itself, it could maybe benefit from a greater critical suspiciousness or "critical skepticism" in accepting the authors' own explications of their fiction.

Mihan begins the second part of her book with the chapter "Challenging the Matrix of Racial Difference: Toni Morrison's Short Story 'Recitatif'" with an analysis of the only short story ever published by Morrison and it is this reading which best illustrates the doubts I harbor about the efficacy of Mihan's method. Mihan claims that most critics who have looked at this story tend to "focus on racial difference and the racial identities of the protagonists" (120). Mihan further argues that because information about the racial status of the two protagonists has been withheld, readers know only that Twyla and Roberta are of different races, "it seems hardly surprising that the question of who is black and who white has received so much attention by critics as well as readers" (122). While it most

certainly is true that Morrison purposely frustrates readers' expectations in this short story, one would be hard pressed to find a critic who actually attempts to label the protagonists as representatives of a specific race; that is to find a critic whose analysis concludes with a triumphant declaration of who in this story is really black. Rather, most critics—including those quoted by Mihan—recognize that the exercise Morrison sets up should lead readers to understanding how this seemingly innocent desire to assign racial identities to Twyla and Roberta is not so innocent after all, but reveals their implication and complicity in the broader framework of American racialism.

Meanwhile, Mihan sums up the critical debate about the short story with a series of rhetorical questions, mirroring the one posed in the title of the book, which can be read as opening up the possibility that critical responses to the story have been insufficient in doing justice to its complexity, mostly because by focusing on the construction of race in the story – and in particular, on Morrison's use of class signifiers as racial signifiers—they "hold us imprisoned in the vicious circle of perpetual construction and reconstruction of race" (124). Mihan asks, "Is it altogether feasible that despite her intention to deconstruct this category the author could be satisfied with her readers' re-constructing racial difference, with their racializing of the protagonists of her short story whose racial identities she has deliberately and efficiently left ambiguous?" (124). The question above seems to be an ill-formed one in more than one way. Neither readers nor critics of the short story are expected to complete their interpretive process by reconstructing racial difference, that is, by assigning racial labels. On the contrary, they are expected to become much more conscious—and by extension also more cautious—of how they use race as a system of classification; to understand why they experience the pressing desire to assign racial classification and the ideological technologies governing its operations. The critical position of the author of the article criticized by Mihan as being caught up in the "vicious" circle of assigning race, Elizabeth Abel's "Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation" (1993), is in fact an illustration of precisely the effect I have been describing. Abel's initial conviction (recounted "with considerable embarrassment") about the racial identity of Twyla (that she is white), which opens the essay, is contrasted with the opposite conviction of her colleague. Both of these convictions are, however, presented in the past tense and the essay itself is a reflection of Abel's coming to understand how her own conviction was based on a certain unconscious fantasy of black womanhood: "Twyla's sense of social and physical inadequacy … signaled Twyla's whiteness to me by articulating a white woman's fantasy (my own) about black woman's potency" (Abel 474).

Mihan proceeds to present her own interpretation of "Recitatif," which does not focus on racial difference as the primary theme of the story, but which analyzes how the two protagonists' relationship develops and continues in spite of racial difference. In her reading of the theme of the charwoman Maggie, the author perceptively notices that the protagonists' discussion of Maggie's racial identity masks "the more relevant question of why they wanted to hurt the old woman" (151) in the same way that the treatment of race in the US masks other more relevant questions. While this is a valuable analysis, what mars its insightfulness is Mihan's positioning it as standing in direct opposition to other critical voices, while in fact it is based upon them and does not contradict them. I have used Mihan's treatment of "Recitatif" as representative of the problems with Mihan's analytical tone and strategy. Notwithstanding its problems, the book does constitute a significant contribution to the study of Toni Morrison's and Jeanette Winterson's writings and to the growing body of scholarship which takes on the themes of the inseparability of the themes of race and gender.

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Karsten Fitz, ed., *Visual Representations of Native Americans: Transnational Contexts and Perspectives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 302 pages.

As has been observed by numerous critics and scholars (among them Robert Berkhofer, Ward Churchill, and Shari M. Huhndorf to name just a few), the image of the Indian captivated European imagination from the moment the first accounts of the New World crossed the Atlantic. These first accounts quickly produced myriad images, fantasies, and stereotypes which bear little or no resemblance to actual Natives and which Robert Berkhofer, in his seminal *The White Man's Indian*, calls the "white man's invention" (3). Karsten Fitz's interdisciplinary collection focuses on the transatlantic adventures of the white man's Indian, namely the circulation of Indian images in different cultural contexts and its ideological functions. Aware that the term "transnational" "still lacks a precise definition" (2), Fitz, following

the insights of Günter Lenz in "SYMPOSIUM: Redefinitions of Citizenship and Revisions of Cosmopolitanism – Transnational Perspectives," declares that the goal of the "transnational" agenda is to question and decenter the U.S. perspective, thus offering views and insights from the outside, and, furthermore, to shift the focus away from the nation-state emphasis, which in turn puts great premium on intracultural and multicultural interaction in the globalized world (4). With the scope of the analysis thus defined, the editor of the collection points out that a transnational perspective is rarely considered in American Studies in the context of Native American topics and hence, the volume may offer interesting and original comments and observations. It is worth mentioning is that Fitz is well aware that the collected essays, with their emphasis on how images of Indians are produced, consumed and distributed to serve different ideological agendas, should not be considered part of Native American Studies.

The essays are a truly eclectic collection, covering the time-frame from the early colonial era to the twenty-first century and including such diverse topics as literary works, visual art, and photography as well as museum studies. The variety of topics under discussion, the multiplicity of methodological approaches and the contributors' diverse cultural backgrounds reveal the project's interdisciplinary and transnational character and its emphasis on case studies rather than theoretical context. While the volume is not divided into sections based on thematic focus or methodology, a careful reader will notice that the essays can in fact be arranged into different groups. Apart from applying a thematic criterion (film, literature, photography, museum studies, etc.), it is clear that the texts offer two radically different treatments of Native American representation. The first group of essays fulfills the promise delivered in the introduction: they do not look at actual Natives, but rather at how their distorted images are decontextualized to serve different cultural and political purposes. The second group, interestingly, assumes the position of the observed Natives and examines strategies aimed at challenging the objectifying consumption of Native cultures.

Among the essays in the first group is Maike Christadler's "Indigenous Skins: Indian Costumes at the Court of Württemberg. Christadler analyzes how Theodore De Bry's collection, published in 1590 and 1631 in fourteen volumes, and including a 1599 plate featuring a procession organized by the Duke of Württemberg on the occasion of a political meeting in Stuttgart, is invested with the European political and economic agenda in the New World. Christadler's captivating reading of the plate and its political implications draws attention to a plethora of phenomena: the shocking exposure of naked bodies meant to represent Indians, casting Indian characters in the roles of fools and the context of the carnival and finally, the unintentional but resultant gender transgression.

As Christadler concludes, the Duke's participation in the procession in the role of (female) America allowed him to communicate a number of imperialistically motivated massages: "For Friedrich of Württemberg the embodiment of America is an occasion to usurp symbolically the mythical riches. and territory of a vast continent, and thus perform a role much beyond his real political and social significance and weight" (24). The theme of gender transgression is also in focus of Christopher J. Pastore, who examines a unique representation of America as male by Orazio Farinati. Drawing comparisons with typical early visual representations of the New World, Pastore reveals contradictory messages written into the image such as fear of cannibalism on the one hand and a keen interest in the newly discovered land on the other, and suggests a motif of possible kinship between Venetians and Native Americans. Robert Lee's essays, taking a temporal leap into the nineteenth century, explores how Karl Bodmer's *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (a painting created between 1832 and 1834 when Bodmer stayed in the U.S.) was consistently treated as a historical document rather than an artist's fantasy of the American wilderness. As Lee aptly demonstrates, any attempts at redefining Bodmer's *oeuvre* as heavily inspired by European Romanticism fell short of success, thus proving the need for the perpetuation of the fantasy and in fact revealing more about the ideological agendas of Bodmer's scholars than his works themselves.

Similarly motivated readings which trace the ways Indian representations are used in literary texts are provided by Dirk Uffelman's analysis of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Sachem* (1883) and Michael Perník's study of illustrations accompanying Czech translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Uffelman offers a brilliant close reading of Sienkiewicz's novella to reveal how in fact the text is a reaction to and a criticism of Prussian attempts to colonize Poland. Even more surprisingly perhaps, considering the historical context of Poland's partition and the way the novella addresses the military conquest of Native Americans, Uffelman concludes that Sienkiewicz, "tend[ing] towards a culturally modifying strategy of concealment" (272), in fact offers a critique of Russian politics towards Poland and plays on the colonizers' (Prussian as well as Russian) fear of revenge (i.e., Polish revolt). Perník's essay discusses illustrations included in Czech translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Beginning with the first illustrated translations of Cooper's novel in 1878 and 1879, Perník traces the changes in the aesthetics and ideological content of the illustrations chosen for subsequent editions, namely "a gradual emancipation from the originally hegemonic influence of German culture by means of American literature and transnational modernism" (80). Apart from demonstrating how the choice of artists to illustrate *The Last of Mohicans* expresses Czech people's

growing self-confidence, the author also draws attention to how Czech artists adopted and then rewrote the German model of representing Indians.

Several essays in the collection focus on the transnational circulation of Native images between Germany and the U.S. Karl Markus Kreis focuses on the period before WWI and examines the production of Indian postcards and their "afterlife" when they were sent from North America to German-speaking addressees and inevitably contributed to the creation of stereotypical images of Indians. Dana Weber goes to the very source of German fantasies about Indians, namely Karl May's novels and their later staged performances. Weber engages Homi Bhabha's attention to functions of stereotypes to escape easy generalizations and links the construction of clichéd images with the historical development of media technologies and live performances. Alexandra Ganser draws attention to the less-studied Indian portraits produced by Winold Reiss after his immigration to the U.S. As Ganser meticulously explains, Reiss's presentation of the Blackfeet of Montana, commissioned by the Glacier National Park, reveals internal tensions and ambiguities originating in the artist's split allegiances as a newly-arrived immigrant required to embrace the mainstream ideology of the necessity of Indian conquest and an individual truly interested in Blackfeet culture, fighting an urge to identify with the oppressed indigenous subjects. Finally, an essay by Frank Usbeck traces the use of Indian imagery in military discourse during WWII. Although Germany did not share a collective history of interactions with Natives, Usbeck found that the Indian warrior image often dominated military reports.

The essays devoted to representations of Native Americans in film focus on projects not necessarily associated with mainstream Hollywood cinema, namely Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) and Terrence Malick's more recent *The New World* (2005). Miriam Strube turns her critical attention to both films in order to present them as examples of revisionist cinema which, informed by postmodern questioning of master narratives and historiographic methodologies, "interrogates representations of heroism and violence, history and myth, masculinity and minorities" (198). The analyses of the films allow Strube to draw an analogy between the transnational agenda in American Studies, which decenters the nation, and revisionist cinema, which, with a similar gesture, decenters the white male hero. Heike Bungert, on the other hand, focusing again on *The New World*, examines reactions to the film posted by international viewers on websites such as the Internet Movie Database to trace a transnational dialogue.

The remaining essays differ significantly in the way they approach representations of indigenous people. Rather than documenting different forms of cultural and ideological appropriations, these essays "return the gaze" and explain the rea-

sons why the representations violate norms of cultural sensitivity. The first essay written from the Native perspective is provided by Gerald Vizenor, whose critical examination of stereotypical images will be well-known to readers acquainted with Native American literature and culture. Here, Vizenor examines and interprets the functions of Edward Curtis's manipulations of his photographs and enumerates Native strategies of resistance against being immortalized in Curtis's artificial poses. Providing a productive dialogue with Vizenor's analysis, Rebecca Peabody's essay describes a symposium at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, entitled *Documents of an Encounter: Edward Curtis and the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations*. The event featured a screening of a restored film by Curtis, *In the Land of the Head Hunters,* as well as a Salmon Dance performed by Kwakwaka'wakw traditionalists. Apart from demonstrating how the film and the dance communicate on a cultural and ideological level, Peabody also draws attention to establishing connections between creative performances and lived experience, which would sensitize audiences to actual problems and dilemmas of contemporary indigenous communities. The theme of the indigenous body as an object of performance or exhibition is tackled in a revealing essay by Miriam Jordan and Jason Haladyn. Relying on Bourdie's work, Jordan and Haladyn demonstrate how European museums, in a gesture revealing the prevailing imperialist ideologies, perpetuate the colonial fantasy of the primitive Indian and subscribe to the rhetoric of saving Indian cultures for the Indian's "own good" (179). The critique of traditional museological practices is followed by an intriguing discussion of the work of Native artists such as Erica Lord, Jimmie Durham and Kent Monkman, who consciously challenge these practices and offer counter-methods of inhabiting museum space without objectification of Native cultures. Finally, the essay by Jane Sinclair is impressive in its originality as the author examines the phenomenon of Indian gaming, Indian casinos and the processes through which the casino space is transformed into a site for displaying Indian art. The author discusses the impact of gaming on Indian communities, the rise of tourism and the resultant cultural and ecological consequences, and, more importantly, how gaming, its advantages and problems, are featured in Indian art.

All in all, *Visual Representations of Native Americans* offers interesting insights into the politics of representing Native Americans. The variety of examples and theoretical approaches and neatly delineated historical contexts result in an interdisciplinary volume that expresses both the richness and complexity of the topics. Moreover, an emphasis on particular case studies rather than theoretical frameworks caters to readers acquainted with the dilemmas inherent in the adaptation of Native American representation as well as those who are just beginning their transnational adventures.

WORK CITED

Robert F. Berkhofer. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.

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Christina Judith Hein, *Whiteness, the Gaze, and Transdifference in Contemporary Native American Fiction*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 381 pages.

Christina Judith Hein's volume, somewhat overwhelming in scope and heavily footnoted, focuses on answering the question of how whiteness is represented, critically examined, and effectively challenged in contemporary Native American literature. At the outset, Hein declares her intention to move away from over-researched themes such as mixed-blood identity, reservation life and its ensuing problems, and instead concentrate on issues revolving around the performative construction of whiteness and indigeneity. Informed by and in dialogue with Whiteness Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Gender Studies, the book insists that interactions (often involving the act of looking and being looked at) between individuals of different races and genders may in fact produce situations in which the Other assumes the position of the subject rather than that of an object, forever occupying an allotted and inevitably lower place in the power structure. To illustrate this point, Hein draws attention to Native texts in which Native characters inevitably interact with white characters and as a result, whiteness is approached, observed and in turn scrutinized as the Other. These texts offer multiple, so far unexplored, perspectives on what whiteness is, how it is created, and more importantly, how it is destabilized as a normative, non-marked category.

Hein examines the literary output of four Native writers representing diverse approaches to identity politics and deploying various artistic methods and styles: Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1998), Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* (1991), Craig Womack's *Drowning in Fire* (2001), and finally Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996). In her meticulously presented analyses, Hein offers brilliant, insightful and original observations about the four texts. Her readings are informed by a thorough understanding of the intersectional character of whiteness (and indigeneity). Each chapter, devoted to a different text, methodically examines white and Native characters, their identity politics and interactions among them, and

exposes various understandings of what whiteness is and how it can be used (politically, culturally, or for personal purposes). A great strength of Hein's analysis (which may also be considered a weakness) is the simultaneous engagement of different theoretical positions, which expose the complexity of the discussed themes. Whiteness as it emerges from Hein's analysis, filtered by an indigenous perspective, never provides univocal conclusions.

Hein's book is characterized by a coherent and well-developed structure whose first part provides a theoretical framework which then applied in the chapters offering analyses of literary texts. The theoretical introduction begins with a brief history of Whiteness Studies and the enumeration of some of its main areas of interest such as intersections of whiteness and capitalism, class, race, privilege and the concept of whiteness as invisible, taken for granted, and racially unmarked. While the very idea of destabilizing whiteness is clearly seen by the author as productive and well-established in Whiteness Studies, it is the project of displacing whiteness, or, othering it, particularly from the Native American perspective that is at the core of Hein's analysis. As Hein asserts, "the present superiority of whiteness in a multitude of spheres may be disrupted by stressing the factual racialness of whiteness as lived identity" (48), a feat that may be achieved through the existence of an *indigenous gaze* that is trained in detecting and deconstructing mechanisms governing the construction of whiteness as an unmarked category. Since the processes of displacing whiteness in Native American fiction frequently rely on an exchange of looks, Hein incorporates into her theoretical framework Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological approach to interpreting interpersonal encounters between individuals, as proposed in *Being and Nothingness* (1992). For Sartre, such encounters, in which an individual is confronted with the Other and forced to negotiate his/her position in the world, are necessary for the constitution of social subjects (57–56). Finally, to account for situations in which "the clear demarcations of difference are transcended" (61), Hein introduces the concept of transdifference (as defined by Helmbrecht Breining and Klaus Lösch), which facilitates the understanding of fluid and instable identities, composed of plural affiliations, conflicting loyalties and opposing values.

Having presented her complex and extensive theoretical framework, Hein proceeds to analyzing the selected literary works. In Louise Erdrich's well-known novel *Tracks* whiteness is analyzed with special emphasis on the female characters Anishinabee Fleur and mixed-blood Pauline as best exemplifying the text's critical approaches to whiteness. According to Hein, Fleur, because of her interactions with the white world and her resulting fluency in its rules, deciphers and challenges the codes governing the construction of whiteness, and in this particular case, white masculinity. Since she understands its logic and operations, the objectifying

white gaze that is directed at her is in fact neutralized and turned against her white male perpetrators. Pauline, on the other hand, with her obsessive rejection of her Indian origins, not only appropriates whiteness as a chosen identity but also redefines it for her own purposes. Occupying the position of a keen observer who remains unobserved due to her physical unattractiveness, Pauline first collects data about whiteness to remodel it to her own liking. Hein offers a brilliant reading of how Pauline refashions whiteness through a reconceptualization of the figure of Jesus Christ, inextricably bound to whiteness in the context of the novel. Not only does she identify with the Savior, with his bodily and spiritual suffering, but she also transforms him into a weak and fragile creature who desperately needs her protection. Thus Pauline erases her race, cultural background and to some extent even her gender to successfully integrate herself into a confined but white community of the convent.

Heirs of Columbus by Gerald Vizenor, discussed in the next chapter, approaches whiteness as "suffused with practices of the visual that may be challenged, countered, and frustrated by alternative regimes" (352). These alternative regimes emphasize the aural as a more productive medium of expression, one that successfully resists the objectifying operations of the gaze. In *Heirs*, the characters identified as Native choose the radio over the television as the medium which allows them to escape misrepresentation via exposure to the objectifying gaze. Moreover, echoing Vizenor's claim refuting the discourse of victimization in representing Natives (*Fugitive Poses*), the indigenous characters, rather than assuming stereotypical roles written for them by the white culture, participate in the exchange of words (not gazes), and "remain agentive and act" (120). Knowing Vizenor's propensity for poststructuralism and tricksterism, whiteness in *Heirs* emerges as confusing, elusive, fluid and negotiable. As Hein points out, the narrator is rather "reluctant to name characters as white" (135). In the text, whiteness is conveyed by referring to specific cultural and political affiliations, and the use of violence rather than physical characteristics. Moreover, by rewriting the figure of Christopher Columbus as part-Mayan and playfully deconstructing the opposition of the Old and New Worlds, Vizenor decenters whiteness and pushes it to the margins of the native characters' activities.

In Craig Womack's *Drowning in Fire*, whiteness is associated with the white Baptist church and established as an oppressive discourse delineating the borders of what constitutes the (racial and sexual) norm. In analyzing white-Native interactions, Hein identifies different strategies employed by Native characters such as Lucy and Josh to distance and destabilize whiteness as an oppressive category that instills self-hatred and internalized racism. Interestingly, these strategies, to be effective, must be derived from Creek cosmology and often, Creek language. The

emphasis on Creek tradition and history is in fact crucial in the novel, although not necessarily in the sense of its being a counter-force to whiteness. As the novel features gay Native characters and their struggle for acceptance in first the white and then the indigenous communities, Womack's agenda in *Drowning in Fire* is to first, offer a Creek understanding of queerness (not destabilizing the *status quo* as it is used in Queer Studies but actually, according to Creek cosmology, upholding it) and, more importantly, to represent queerness as inherently Creek and hence indispensable in Creek communities. Such a positioning of whiteness and Creekness, as Hein rightly points out, results in a paradigm in which the two emerge as "less negotiable and largely mutually exclusive" (357).

The final chapter is devoted to an even more extreme paradigm for interpreting interactions between whiteness and indigeneity offered by Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*. As in the case of the previous analyses, Hein examines the interactions between white and Native characters; however, she now pays special attention to two central characters: John Smith, a Native man who, as an infant, was adopted by a white middle-class family, and the titular Indian Killer, who is never identified in the text as Native or white and yet is assumed to be non-white by the mainstream, a killer who selects his victims from among the affluent white males of Seattle. In Alexie's novel, whiteness signifies privilege which is violently defended by white male and occasionally female characters. Native characters such as Marie Polatkin, however, do not remain passive and instead devise their own strategies of subverting whiteness, challenging its power and even, considering the Seattle Native homeless, creating alternative communities which cancel out the superiority of whiteness. The most extreme and violent instance of challenging whiteness is provided in the figure of Indian Killer, who, as Hein observes, is a very attentive observer of white masculinity, and turns white males into objects of an interested and violent gaze (335). What Indian Killer communicates about white middle-class males is that while they may be portrayed as perpetrators of violence and benefactors of privilege, on a corporeal level, they are as vulnerable as everyone else (338).

While Hein's detailed analyses contribute significantly to the body of criticism on now canonical Native writers (Erdrich, Vizenor, Alexie) and offer an interesting reading of emerging ones (Womack), the book's major shortcoming involves the theoretical approach. As Hein announces in the introduction, her goal is to discuss the chosen texts from an indigenous perspective (15), thus emphasizing Native methodologies of reading Native American literature (as proposed in *Native American Literary Nationalism* by Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver and Craig Womack). Therefore, the choice of Sartre's work as a theoretical framework poses numerous questions. As productive as Sartre's theory is for many literary texts,

the fact that it disregards racial, class or gender differences between individuals exchanging the gaze, undermines its utility in the Native American context. While Hein acknowledges this shortcoming of Sartre's model and proposes expansion, its application nevertheless remains problematic. Moreover, also in the introduction, Hein claims that "Evaluations suggested by indigenous perspectives, not canonized French theories, are meant to have the last word here" (17), but again, it seems that the large body of criticism produced by Native critics and intellectuals is pushed to the background or thoroughly ignored. One of the most telling examples can be found in the section discussing the history of Whiteness Studies: while Hein rightly observes that the first contributions to the field date back in time to as early as W. E. Du Bois's T*he Souls of Black Folks* (1903), she seems to forget about Native intellectuals from the early 20th century, such as Charles Alexander Eastman or John Joseph Mathews, whose texts may as well count as valuable comments on what constitutes whiteness. Nonetheless, Hein's volume does impress with the scope of the analysis and its thoroughness. *Whiteness, the Gaze, and Transdifference in Contemporary Native American Fiction* is an inspiring addition to the criticism of Native American literature.

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Ewa Alicja Antoszek, *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. 248 pages.

The title of Ewa Antoszek's study, *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings*, makes it clear that the author's major interest lies in literary representations of Chicana identity formation, especially its enactment in space, or—to be more specific—in various spaces. Antoszek offers in her book a detailed analysis of three literary texts by contemporary Chicana authors: two novels—*Face of an Angel* by Denise Chávez and *Caramelo* by Sandra Cisneros, and one autobiography—*Two Badges* by Mona Ruiz. This analysis is preceded by the examination of recent theoretical formulations concerning identity and spatiality, which are the two theoretical axes around which Antoszek's discussions of literary texts revolve.

In Chapter One, titled "An Overview of Chicana History and Literature," Antoszek presents crucial facts in the history of the Chicano/a community that account for the Chicano/a presence in the contemporary US. As the author claims, such a historical overview is indispensable to understanding Chi-

cano/a literature, its trends and transformations. Antoszek proves her point by enriching the presentation of historical facts with references to literary texts that attempted to record and make sense of a particular historical moment. The second part of the chapter is a more literary-oriented analysis of the trends generated by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The fight of Mexican Americans for equal rights resulted in their more visible presence on the American cultural scene, as their literary and artistic productions were frequently deployed for political aims. Antoszek focuses specifically on the emerging voices of Chicana women, who in the decades following the Civil Rights Movement attempted to express their multiple marginalizations: as women, as Chicanas, some additionally as lesbians. Antoszek ends the chapter with a presentation of four trends characteristic of Chicana literature at the end of the twentieth century, namely the proliferation of personal essays, a pronounced interest in exploring male-female relationships, an overt treatment of sexuality and a fascination with borders and border-crossings.

Chapter Two, "Chicana Identity and Identity Formation: Evolution of the Concepts," serves as an elaboration on the notion of identity as understood and employed in the analyses of literary texts in the second part of the book. Antoszek discusses significant reformulations of the concept of identity that took place in the final decades of the twentieth century within the so-called post-prefixed theories. To be more specific, postmodernism and post-structuralism led to the dismantling of identity as something stable and fixed, while postcolonialism enabled the analysis of identity in terms of the center-periphery methodology. Antoszek devotes a significant part of Chapter Two to discussing theories of identity developed by Chicanos/as themselves, including Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *la mestiza*, Norma Alarcón's focus on the fragmentary character of identity, Chela Sandoval's concept of oppositional or differential consciousness, Emma Pérez's notion of diasporic subjectivity and Cherríe Moraga's "theory in the flesh." Antoszek then proceeds to address the criticism leveled at these theories from within the Chicano/a community itself. The chapter ends with a discussion of the most recent contributions to the understanding of identity within Chicano/a context, namely Moya's postpositivist realist theory of identity, Pérez-Torres's new readings of *mestizaje*, Priewe's concept of transculturation and, finally, the emergence of multiracial feminism as an outgrowth of US Third World Feminism.

In Chapter Three, titled "On the Transformations of Spatial Paradigms," Antoszek addresses the so-called spatial turn in the humanities towards the end of the twentieth century, whereby scholars questioned the temporal model of literary and cultural analysis and argued for the inclusion into the model of spatial parameters. Antoszek pays special attention here to Edward Soja's book *Thirdspace: Journeys*

to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places, in which Soja attempts to develop a theory of urban space geared to the American continent on the basis of European thought, namely that of Foucault, Baudrillard, Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. The chapter also takes note of several postcolonial thinkers who—though not exclusively working on space—contributed to the changed understanding of the spatial concepts such as center, periphery or margin. What is of particular importance to Antoszek's argument is the interconnectedness of space and identity. The author shows that the production of space and the production of identities are parallel processes. She also argues in that for the Chicano/a community space has always been an important category for their self-definition.

The second part of Antoszek's book, comprising chapters four to six, is devoted to the discussion of the spatial dimension of identity formation processes as depicted in three contemporary Chicana literary texts. In Chapter Four Antoszek focuses on Denise Chávez's novel *Face of an Angel*, whose main character—Soveida Dosmantes—undergoes a process of identity formation that is intricately connected with her de- and re-construction of certain spaces: that of the patriarchal ancestral home, that of the oppressive Catholic church and that of the female body. Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo*, discussed in Chapter Five, in turn focuses on what Antoszek calls nomadic identity, that is identity constructed on the literal and metaphorical road, through travels both in space and time. The novel's protagonist, Celaya Reyes, constructs her *mestiza* identity while traveling back and forth between Chicago and Mexico City, as well as while listening to her paternal grandmother's stories. Chapter Six constitutes an analysis of Mona Ruiz's autobiography *Two Badges*, which is, in a nutshell, an account of the transformation of Ruiz from a Chicano/a gang member to a police officer. In her discussion of the book Antoszek employs the concept of the intrinsic dichotomy of public and private spaces. However, the author expands the meaning of the private by including the whole barrio within it, whereas the public space signifies the world outside the barrio. Analyzing Ruiz's autobiography, Antoszek shows how the protagonist negotiates between public and private spaces, eventually proving them to be overlapping categories, whose boundaries are by no means definite or final.

Antoszek's book deserves praise for its clear style, structural cohesion and thorough documentation, the works cited section filling over a dozen pages. Even though the author discusses in detail only three literary texts, she attempts to contextualize her research by showing certain trajectories of development of Chicano/a literature and community in general. What one may object to, however, is a certain imbalance between the amount of attention devoted to the discussion of literary texts themselves and to the evolution of theoretical concepts of identity

and spatiality, the latter—together with an overview of Chicano/a history—taking up half of the book. It seems that a meticulous account of all the various shifts and turns within the discourses on identity and space—albeit undoubtedly showing the author's familiarity with these theories—could have been condensed, which would in turn enable the author to discuss the literary representations of the processes she is interested in in a bigger number of sources. Despite this shortcoming, it needs to be emphasized that Antoszek's study is a compelling read, which is likely to interest all those working within the fields of ethnic literature, identity and spatiality studies. Such a contribution into Chicano/a studies is especially welcome from a Polish scholar, as so far there have only been a handful of texts written by Poles on Chicano/a community and literature.

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Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger, eds., *Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 216 pages.

Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives is a collection of twelve essays, most of which are revised papers presented at the 2009 annual meeting of the Bavarian American Academy. As the second part of the title emphasizes, the book is a publication committed to the presentation of European views on America as well as American views on Europe, and despite the difficulty that such a commitment creates for every editor, Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger deserve the highest praise for the editorial work they put in the project. Grouping the essays into thematic sections which contextualize visual culture—history, race and ethnicity, space and geography, politics—the editors have managed to create a very logical and consistent book structure and thus balance the heterogeneity of the essay topics. The latter not only deal with a great variety of visual materials, from photographs to monuments, public spaces and internet, but they also cover the historical timeline from the eighteen century to the first decade of the twenty-first. And they are written by scholars representing different research disciplines: historians, media scholars, cultural studies scholars, geographers and film critics. Worthy of note is also the agenda of the editors who emphasize the collection to be a contribution to the debate on visual culture rather than an attempt at its diagnosis or evaluation. *Visual Cultures* begins with an essay by the accomplished visual studies specialist, Martin Jay, who offers a general theoretical framework to

the entire collection by presenting the history and media specificity of what the French film theorist Christian Metz has called the modern "scopic regimes," that is the patterns of visibility and invisibility, of gazing, looking and appearing that dominate the Western culture since Descartes. As Jay explains, the most prevalent model of visual experience in modernity is "Carthesian perspectivalism" that is a model founded on the domination of nature by the framing technological apparatus. The Carthesian regime manifests itself in architectural, artistic and discursive tendency towards some total and complete pictures of things. Think about a palace panoptically overseeing its garden, nineteenth-century pastoralist painting, or Hegel's philosophy. Notably, Jay emphasizes that the notion of regime entails far more than merely a pattern or frame of regulating social norms and behavior. Quoting the political theorist Leo Strauss, he stresses that those regulated ways of living, seeing and thinking undergo habituation and naturalization—a fact which must be acknowledged and analyzed by everyone who attempts to contemplate and discuss phenomena of visual culture. Thus, Martin Jay sets a crucial criterion for critical analysis of the phenomena of visual culture, a criterion which all the essays in *Visual Cultures* respect by de-naturalizing the visibility/invisibility binary in its various historical, aesthetic, and political manifestations.

The second section of the collection, entitled "History and Visual Sites," consists of three essays devoted to the visualizations of national identity in both Europe and America. In "The Face of the Nation: George Washington's Image and American Identity" the art historian Mark Thistlethwaite discusses the iconicity of the portrait of the first American president painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796. Presenting how the portrait has framed the presidencies of such figures as Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Thistlethwaite stresses the symbolic weight of the media images featuring American presidents against the background of Stuart's painting, whose frequent out-of-focus blurring sends a message of ethereal, "even heavenly" authority and prestige to the figures of the photographed subjects that remain in-focus. The ways in which the painting almost imperceptibly lends credibility to the speakers captured against its background are very ambiguous and contradicting; in the case of Obama, for example, the credibility rests on the juxtaposition of the first president who was a slaveholder and the first African-American president, a juxtaposition which paradoxically reifies the American ideals of liberty. In a slightly different way, a similar process of reification is occasioned by the contrast between the figure of president Bush speaking about economic rescue plan and the figure of George Washington who embodies the prospect of America's economic prosperity. The second text in the section by the historian Sarah J. Purcell, "Seeing Martyrdom: Elmer Ellsworth, James Jackson, and Revolutionary Martyrdom at the Onset of

the U.S. Civil War" continues Thistlethwaite's argument by examining the modern tendency to construct the image of national identity through the figures of war heroes. Purcell case study involves a comparison of martyrologies of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. As Purcel demonstrates, it is especially during and after the Civil War that the ideological power of images of Ellsworth and Jackson materialized in the deepening, complication and subsequent repression of the social conflict between the South and the North on the issue of the sacrifice of white manhood. The third essay in the historical block, "Visualizing Democratic Legitimacy and Authority: The Case of the Weimar Republic" by Wolfram Pyta, counterbalances the emphasis on the American images of national identity by investigating the causes of the failure of the first German democracy to permeate culture with its ideological message. According to Pyta, the regime was never habituated precisely because it did not produce a coherent visual representation of presidency. Despite the advantageous technological support of photography and film, the country's constitutional order remained essentially "faceless" and thus impossible to identify with from the perspective of the citizens.

The essays in the third thematic section of *Visual Cultures* concerns representations of race and ethnicity, and therefore the focus shifts slightly from how images control societies to how they are received and restructured on the community level. The essays in the section all undertake the notion of imagined community and performance of citizenship. In the essay on the work of Augustus Washington, a nineteenth-century African-American daguerrotypist, Shawn Michelle Smith proposes a reading of Washington's daguerreotypes as performative acts of citizenship aimed at ideological de-marginalization of the oppressed members of the American society. From a different perspective, the second contributor to the section, Astrid Boger writes about the institution of World's Fairs and their role in the shaping of the multi-cultural as well as the imperial facet of American identity. Aided by the technologies of photography, the fairs created and perpetuated the visual narrative of expansiveness, righteous conquest, and objectification of Native or African people as curiosities. Having argued this, however, Boger suggests that we also see the other side of the story and observe that however distorting was the optics of the Fairs, and however contaminated the consciousness they fostered, the visual representations of "otherness" document and mark its presence and visibility on the White horizon.

Inevitably, the essays on race and ethnicity touch upon the problematics of space and spatial distribution of identity. But it is the fourth thematic block of *Visual Cultures* that fully explores the topic. The section "Visual Culture and the Construction of Space" consists of three texts, each engaging with different modes

of partitioning and re-partitioning of space. Michael P. Conzen, resonating classical Foucauldian interpretation of spatial mapping, reminds the reader about the political and economic implications of cartographic discourse. With solid scientific data as evidence, Conzen proves how Maps of the American West during the times of the country's expansion not only were devised with political, military, or industrial benefits in mind but also shaped and transformed those spheres of activity through the manipulation of national geographical knowledge. In other words, cartography has had a much stronger impact on the format of national identity, the modes of how the economic and legal system evolved since the times of territorial expansion, and the sense of relation to the space that remains outside of the U.S. The second author of the section on the construction of space, Ingrid Gessner choses to investigate the scopic regimes that frame the perception and reception of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, arguing that the design of the Memorial creates a heterotopic space for interactive mourning. As people see themselves reflected in the Memorial's surface or inscribe their own names on it, they manage to externalize grief and mediate it through an interactive experience. The final case study of visual spaces comes from Julia Lossau who writes about the architectural transformation of Gorbals, the unkempt project district of Glasgow, whose modernization would never be complete without the element of public art, a sculpture called *The Gatekeeper*. According to Lossau, the sculpture complements the modernization process because through its theme it preserves the spatial memory of the old Gorbals while at the same time it retouching its negative aspects.

The last thematic section of *Visual Cultures* entitled "Mediality and Visuality" covers the problematic of power mechanisms that underlie the dissemination of information in the news media and the ways in which it is made intelligible to television and newspaper audiences. Michael Griffin's detailed analysis of the imagery in war reporting during the Gulf War and after the publication of Abu-Ghraib photos of torture shows how the media manipulate the images of war by detaching them from their contexts and thus voiding them of any meaningful reference. The discussion of medial power would not be complete without a reference to the workings of the Internet, and so the Web-based format of political communication becomes the topic of Caja Thimm's "The Visuals of Online Politics: Barack Obama's Web Campaign." In her discussion of how the Obama camp experimented with the medium of the Internet to exploit the visual aesthetics of participatory democracy, Thimm demonstrates that despite the ambivalent reception of the experiments, the camp's strategy did redefine the standards of political interaction with online communities and stimulated political activism of younger voters.

The final word of *Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives* comes with Robert Blaetz's essay "Home Movies: Thoughts on Framing the Domestic Sphere in Experimental Cinema," which isolates what Blaetz calls the gendered "tropes" of home movie-making in the films of Marjorie Keller, Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas and Marie Menken to mention only a few. As Blaetz argues, home-movie making defies in various ways the orderly normativity of conventional filmic narratives by deconstructing scopic regimes of imaging childhood, sexuality, and gendered space and time. Even if this essay represents the "Coda" section to the entire collection, it does not so much close the discussion of visual cultures at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century as open a new one, to be realized in another publication. All in all, therefore, the volume is a recommended read for any researcher in cultural studies as well as anyone willing to broaden their general knowledge how visual regimes structure all fields of contemporary cultural production.

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