

REVIEWS

Janusz Semrau, ed. *American Literature in Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, 1968 – 2008. A Selection of Articles*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009. 333 pages.
Janusz Semrau, ed. “Will you tell me any thing about yourself?” *Co-memorative Essays on Herman Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener.”* Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang Verlag, 2009. 178 pages.

A Monument to the Usher: On Two Co-memorative Collections In-scribed to Professor Andrzej Kopcewicz

Preface: The Arch Usher/The Sub-Sub

Generations of Melville scholars have marveled over the significance of “Etymology” and “Extracts”: two dangerous supplements, which, together with the “Epilogue,” provide a unique frame to *Moby-Dick* – once a “rhapsody run mad,” and today a central text of the Western literary canon. Each of the “supplements” erects a monument to a figure of unassuming posture, almost invisible and seemingly marginal if juxtaposed with the “godlike-ungodly” Ahab, yet central to contemporary acts of readings. The Sub-Sub Librarian, the least significant figure of the whole ever-underrated librarianship responsible for the shape and organization of the world-wide repository of knowledge, has gone through the long Vatican and street-stalls of the earth in an impossible effort to offer the potential seekers the *completeness of knowledge*. Dedicating himself to a task whose magnificent failure has allowed his followers to realize its ultimate ungraspability, he defies the loomings of final certainty. The pale Usher to a Grammar School, as the harbinger of the Sub-Sub’s failure, supplies transience to all principles of understanding, with serene resignation.

[The pale Usher—threadbare in coat, body and brain; I see him now. He was ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars, with a queer handkerchief, mockingly embellished with all the gay flags of the known nations of the world. He loved to dust his old grammars; it somehow mildly reminded him of his mortality.] [Melville]

Yet, the Usher certainly is not a simple *gatekeeper*: after all, the *Grammar School* is also a *School of Grammar*. It is an institution, whose students explore the intricate mat-

While you take in hand to school others, and to teach them by what name a whale-fish is to be called in our tongue, leaving out, through ignorance, the letter H, which almost alone maketh up the signification of the word, you deliver that which is not true. [Hackluyt]

lexicons and grammars must eventually grow old; dusting the old compendia of outdated principles, he beholds adepts, engaging in heated debates, with a serene smile. They will understand the mortality of grammars when the time is ripe, too, and like him, they will, in time, appreciate the old grammars, as they supply subsequent ἔτυμον λόγος, new “true words,” new “true arguments,” to the generations to come.

Andrzej Kopcewicz, who “did not care to draw in any way public applause” (“*Will you tell me*”7), ushered in three generations of Polish Americanists; having graduated from his School of Grammar, they gained a self-awareness that they now share with their own students. It therefore comes as no surprise that Janusz Semrau should wish to open his prefaces to both collections with Melvillean mottos.

It will be seen that this mere painstaking burrower and grubworm of a poor devil of a Sub-Sub appears to have gone through the long Vaticans and street-stalls of the earth, picking up whatever random allusions to whales he could anyways find in any book whatsoever, sacred or profane. Therefore you must not, in every case at least, take the higgledy-piggledy whale statements, however authentic, in these extracts, for veritable gospel cetology. Far from it. As touching the ancient authors generally, as well as the poets here appearing, these extracts are solely valuable or entertaining, as affording a glancing bird’s eye view of what has been promiscuously said, thought, fancied, and sung of Leviathan, by many nations and generations, including our own. [Melville]

ters of *correctness/incorrectness* of expression in language, in which not even a mute letter, a symbol meriting no pronunciation, is to be neglected. They study the rules of language which “maketh up the signification” of the wor(l)d. Ushering the students in, rather than keeping them out, the gatekeeper of knowledge is well aware that all

Indeed, “Forty years of whaling,” a quotation introducing the selection of texts included in *American Literature in Studia Anglica Posnaniensia 1968 – 2008*, aptly corresponds to the central idea of *Moby-Dick*’s “dangerous” supplement. The forty years Andrzej Kopcewicz dedicated to his academic and pedagogical work at the School of English of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań were the years of his unwavering chase for the ever-evasive whale-of-sense. Likewise, the four decades between 1968 and 2008, in the course of which many of his Students and Colleagues had gone through the

long Vaticans and street-stalls of the earth seeking knowledge, gave birth to the hereby presented “extracts,” painstakingly compiled by Janusz Semrau: a representative fraction of what the community of Polish and international Americanists, contributing, over time, to *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, have “promiscuously said, thought, fancied and sung” of a plethora of aspects of American letters.

This volume commemorates the continual presence of American literature in *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* since its founding in 1968. Safely over the formidable quota of three-score and ten, the number of contributions on American literature in a yearly devoted predominantly to linguistics itself is a cause for modest celebration and an opportune pretext for a selective revival. The present essays have been selected and revised for the commemorative re-issue with a view of reflecting (i) as broad a range of authors, themes, genres and critical methods as possible, (ii) the international character of the journal, (iii) something of a history of the Department of American Literature at the School of English at A. Mickiewicz University. The essays are arranged chronologically in order of their original appearance, appended with the bibliography of all publications relating to American literature in *SAP* between 1968 and 2008. (7)

Thus arranged, the book gains a dimension which renders it much more than a valuable collection of re-issued articles, a historical summary of the Americanist presence in one of the most respected learned journals of Poland, or a conventional *Festschrift*. In fact, Semrau, albeit belittling his own achievement by reducing his “Preface” to a mere triplet of brief paragraphs, has managed to compile a monument of a volume. The collection not only offers a variety of chronologically arranged, excellent academic texts, thereby narrating the story of the evolution of the dominant theoretical and methodological trends lending shape to (and shaped by) Polish American studies, but also testifies to the significance of the intellectual legacy of the mentor of the discipline. It is, after all, Andrzej Kopcewicz’s students (often holding professorial titles today) and colleagues (from all over the world) who penned the majority of the essays making up the collection. Indeed, “A man lives for so long as we carry him inside us” (Brian Patten quoted in Semrau, 7) – and the contents of *American Literature in Studia Anglica Posnaniensia 1968 – 2008* certainly confirm the validity of this statement.

The book opens with Kopcewicz’s study of “Poe’s Philosophy of Composition” (1968), in which the idea underlying the critical stance professed by the author of “The Raven” is analyzed in the context of its “amazing resemblance to Eliot’s concept of the objective correlative – the single most important aspect of his depersonification theory

and of symbolic forms in poetry” (12). Nearly three hundred pages and forty years later, the volume closes with a 2008 essay by Jørgen Veisland on Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*.” Needless to say, the author’s analytical tools, markedly different from those fascinating scholars in 1968, are symptomatic of the development of the discipline. As Veisland declares, his tools include:

a selection of excerpts from the Danish poet Søren Ulrik Thomsen, from pre-Socratic philosophy (specifically Heraclitus’ remarks on fusion and diffusion), Kenneth Burke’s philosophy of literary form; Nietzsche’s concept of grades, degrees and opposition; Derrida’s concept of totality and excess; Kristeva’s concept of abjection; and... Roth’s own aesthetic reflection and philosophy of language and subjectivity as they appear implicitly in the text. (313)

Texts located between the thus designated “chronological” poles represent a wide spectrum of methodological and theoretical approaches, whose centrality changed over time, beginning with New Criticism, structuralism and semiotics, to early attempts at deconstructivist reading and full-fledged poststructural theories. Hence, following the opening essay, the editor (aptly!)¹ offers his readers Marta Sienicka’s text dedicated to the immanent poetics of “William Carlos Williams and some younger poets” (1972), Teresa Bałazy’s “soteriologico-critical” article on Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood* (1977), George Sebouhian’s study of mythographic discourses underlying apocalyptic narratives (1980), Stephen H. Goldman’s important analysis of cultural mechanisms responsible for the association formed between the genre of science fiction and discourses of Americanness (1981). Next comes Khalil Husni’s classic phenomenological/metaphysical essay “Ishmael’s leviathanic vision: A study in whiteness” (1981), followed by Marek Wilczyński’s innovative “misreading” of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown”, following deconstructive procedures (1988), and Marshall Walker’s reflections on edenic utopias, poetics and historical material in “Robert Penn Warren, Audubon, and imagination” (1989).

These articles are further complemented by three contributions by Americanists from Maria Curie Skłodowska University of Lublin: Jerzy Durczak’s on Ihab Hassan’s “paracritical” autobiography (1992), Joanna Durczak’s on David Wagoner’s “experimental didacticism” (1992), and Jerzy Kutnik’s on John Cage’s musical holism, decentralization

¹ Andrzej Kopcewicz and Marta Sienicka have become the landmark Americanist tandem to most, if not all, Polish students of American literature owing to the publication of *Historia literatury Stanów Zjednoczonych w zarysie*, tom 1 i 2 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983), a canonical coursebook used in the Polish academic classroom.

of the Western discourses and poetic experimentation (1992). Next, Alan H. Pope comments on “Lexical repetition in American poetry” (1992), and Janusz Semrau on Walter Abish’s “playful dialogue” with George Painter’s conceptualization of Marcel Proust’s oeuvre (1992). The volume’s “intermezzo” is the “Postscriptum” to the previous essay: Semrau’s interview with Walter Abish. The interlocutors raise issues concerning the position of the author of *Alphabetical Africa* in the American literary arena in the light of the “anxiety of influence,” tropes of sexuality, politics and humor characteristic to his oeuvre, as well as his unique writerly strategies.

The second part of the collection begins topically with K. Narayana Chandran’s study of Donald Barthelme’s allusions to T. S. Eliot’s poetry in the story “Great days” (1995) and Andrzej Kopcewicz’s “paradigmatic reading” of “the machine” in Henry Adams, Frank R. Stockton, and Thomas Pynchon (1995). These two studies in self-reflexivity are then followed by Steven Carter’s “A note on Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway,” a brief observation on the game of complementarity understood in terms of non-resolvability of the duality of interpretive potential (1997). Next comes Magdalena Zapędowska’s exploration of Emily Dickinson’s poetics of renunciation, in which absence manifests itself as the principle of the organization of the spatial structure of the poet’s universe (1999), followed by Agnieszka Rzepa’s gendered analysis of Anne Rice’s characters in the context of the transformations of the concepts of masculinity and femininity in contemporary popular culture of the United States.

Rice’s thematic preoccupations offer a convenient bridge linking Rzepa’s insightful analysis with Marek Wilczyński’s attempt (2001) to “redeem” Annie Trumbull Slosson’s underrated writing by locating it at the crossroads of the tradition of “literary scripturism,” the “standard American psycho-gothic” and the genre of the “spirit of the place,” thus reinscribing her within the canon of female domestic Gothicism. Contributing his voice to the debate on American literary canon, Janusz Semrau (2006) offers a complex analysis of the “hypercanonized” *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a cultural phenomenon and of the novel’s eponymous hero as a figure inseparably twined with the evolving concept of the American identity. Through a reference to John Gower’s *Mirour de l’Omme*, Semrau presents the novel as America’s unique looking glass, a discourse both revelatory of, and tributary to the American (moral) character.

The last two texts in the space between the mentioned chronological poles are the 2008 essays by Paulina Ambroży-Lis on Marianne Moore and Gertrude Stein, identifying the elements of *écriture féminine* in American letters back to the onset of modernism, and by Joseph Kuhn on irony and the eclogue in the poetry of Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, tracing the transformations of the traditional, allegedly extinct, pastoral genre.

Jørgen Veisland's closing essay is followed by a seven-page, comprehensive bibliography of articles published in *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* between 1968-2008, compiled by the editor of the volume, Janusz Semrau. Addressing a wide variety of aspects of culture in a time-frame spanning pre-colonial and post-contemporary America, the texts have been contributed by leading Polish and international Americanists representing three generations of scholars, a solid contingent of whom were once "ushered in" by none other but Andrzej Kopcewicz – and have continued his passionate chase for the ungraspable ever since.

The other collection edited by Janusz Semrau, "*Will you tell me any thing about yourself?*" *Co-memorative Essays on Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener,"* although founded upon a very different set of assumptions, is likewise in-scribed to the memory of Andrzej Kopcewicz: "*facile princeps* – a scribe easily preeminent and indisputably first in our field (*scribe*: a person who could read and write)" (8). The inscription, however, unlike in the case of the *American Studies in Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, is a purposefully decentralized homage. Almost concealed in the footnote to Semrau's introductory essay, it steals away from the main body of the text, thus allowing the editor to bring to the forefront the *continuous presence* of the "preeminent scribe," rather than his *absence*. Such a maneuver throws the tangibility of the latter's intellectual contribution into a much sharper relief, embodied in the opening essay of the provocative, erudite collection under an equally provocative and erudite title.

Indeed, rather than commemorate the eminent mentor, the authors of the texts included in the volume *join* him in a collective, albeit individually exercised, effort of memory. Co-memoration is hence effected through critical acts of reading, which not only involve remembering and recalling, but also the revision of the significance of the self-effacing commemorative inscription: the footnote inscription, ultimately, renders itself null and void. Presence effaces absence. And hence, the only absence looming large as central presence in each of the meticulously selected texts in the collection, is that of "Bartleby"/Bartleby; a dead letter; a scrivener; a (proto)photocopier; The Story, who would prefer not to.

This, however, does not exhaust the interpretive potential of the multi-dimensional title. Far from it: *Will you tell me any thing about yourself?* – apparently – is a question as haunting as it is self-contradictory. "Silence permeates all things," Melville writes, "it brooded upon the face of the waters" before the world *was*, before the first word *named* that, which previously had been inconceivable, ineffable and thus non-existent. Telling *things* reveals itself as a lexical non-sequitur, unless the *thing* is a letter, which, until read out, remains silent and dead. Bartleby "unread" must remain a sequence of dead letters; silence, permeating them, permeates him. That, which calls him into uneasy, ambivalent,

cumbersome existence is an act of reading, which carves him into memory, co-memorates him with other memories, reshaping him, revising him, reinventing him in an unending hermeneutic exercise. This, I believe, is what the title of the demanding, yet intellectually entertaining, brilliantly focused, yet methodologically diversified collection promises, and the book certainly lives up to its title. *All things considered*, anyone familiar with the “Story of Wall-Street” should know better: the authors of the subsequent articles will *not* tell him or her *any thing* about *Bartleby*.

Co-memorating *Bartleby* seems to require a semblance of an act of conversion. By virtue of its reference to St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, the title of Janusz Semrau’s introductory essay (“Tolle lege, tolle lege!”) seems to suggest that *Bartleby* – who, after all, *is* the story – simply *must* be read in order to exist. Yet, once the act of reading commences, is its “impossible to dememorate him as a matter of indifference.” The reader, mesmerized, becomes a convert, co-memorating *Bartleby* as a matter of *(in)différance*: “A faint compositional echo of the authors own piazza tales strung together for book publication in 1856 – ‘Bartleby’’s proper send-off into the world, C.O.D. – the present essays, written independently over a period of time, are markedly different in method, style, focus, scope, and length” (9).

Their divergent perspectives notwithstanding, the seven essays remain in an unending dialog. Contrary to Janusz Semrau’s provocative claim, shedding light unto one another, overlapping, or veering off to go separate ways, the reflections proposed by the seven excellent scholars are anything but *sideways reflections*. On the contrary: each of them seems to be a *head-on reflection*, or more precisely, a head(s)-first plunge into a flickering co-memorative reflection of *Bartleby*, the ungraspable phantom of life. If no unquestionable, unchangeable grammar of *Bartleby* exists, even a meandering argument cannot be, with any degree of certainty, dubbed as *sideways*, unless all of them, with identical adequacy, merit the term.

All profound things, and emotions of things are preceded and attended by Silence. Why a silence is that which with the pale bride precedes the responsive I will, to the priest’s solemn question, Wilt thou have this man for thy husband? In silence, too, the wedded hands are clasped. Yea, in silence the child Christ was born into the world. Silence is the general consecration of the universe. Silence is the invisible laying on of the Divine Pontiff’s hands upon the world. Silence is at once the most harmless and the most awful thing in all nature. It speaks of the Reserved Forces of Fate. Silence is the only Voice of our God.

Nor is this so august Silence confined to things simply touching or grand. Like the air, Silence permeates all things, and produces its magical power, as well during that peculiar mood which prevails at a solitary traveller’s first setting forth on a journey, as at the unimaginable time when before the world was, Silence brooded on the face of the waters. [Melville]

Janusz Semrau's exhortative "Tolle lege" (circumferentially) invites the central metaphor of the opening essay of the volume: Andrzej Kopcewicz's "Dark Rooms and Bartleby." The "intertextual reading" revolves around the idea of narrative centers and circumferences, not incidentally reminiscent of the traditional concept of God as a circle, whose center is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere – a concept, which Ralph Waldo Emerson in his *Circles* attributed to none other but St. Augustine.² The self-deconstructive idea powers the hermeneutic "x-ray," which, penetrating stacked texts of Auster's *New York Trilogy*, Melville's *The Confidence-man*, Emerson's "Over-Soul," Borges's "The God's Script," Poe's "William Wilson", Hawthorne's *Fanshawe*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and, eventually, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, uncovers a palimpsest, "made up of... a handful of images: a tower, a dark room, a temple, a prison – all written into the formula of the center and the circumference"(21). These images "mirror, complement, and negate one another," entering into a sylleptic relationship within the intertextual frame. In such a context, the apparently incompatible meanings, rather than cancelling each other out, invite the intertext *into* the hermeneutic process, as an *interpretant* of the Peircean triad. Such an understanding of the dynamics of the palimpsest narrative "assumes a reciprocal, loop-like reading, since the intertext may also be informed by the text that it interprets in the discourse of intertextual transactions" (21). This hermeneutic formula allows Kopcewicz to bring his argument to the point in which he brilliantly demonstrates the function of "Bartleby the Scrivener" as a sylleptic intertext in Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*.

The images of the tower, temple and prison, central to in Kopcewicz's erudite essay, bridge his argument with that offered by Joseph Kuhn, whose inspiring study, "Bartleby in Egypt," relies upon Hegelian understanding of architectural/sculptural figurations in the history of culture. In his analysis, Kuhn draws upon the idea of Symbolic Art, which the German philosopher presents as

designating the first historical phase in the development of art, one that is found in India, Persia and especially in Egypt. It precedes the fuller, more translucent manifesta-

² Cf.: Alan de Lille's "geometrical" definition of God in *Regulae, seu Maximae theologicae*: "Deus est sphaera intelligibilis, cuius centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam" in comparison with "Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam" in *Liber de XXIV philosophorum* by Hermes Trismegistus. The concept was later adopted by theologians such as Nicholas of Cusa in *De docta ignorantia, II, cap.2* ("God is like an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere") and Pascal ("God is a circle; His centre is everywhere, His circumference is nowhere"). Also, cf. Giordano Bruno's claim: "We can assert with certainty that the universe is all centre, or that the centre of the universe is everywhere and its circumference is nowhere." Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 247.

tion of subjectivity in the art object that is evident in the classical (Greek) art and romantic (Christian, German) phases. In the schema of Hegel's western-moving *translation imperii* that underlies *Aesthetics* the human spirit recognizes itself with increasing understanding through its objectification in art, which is to say through symbols. (32)

With its starting point in the architectural rhetoric of "Bartleby" – involving frequent references to the gone-by orders of Rome, Greece, Carthage and Egypt – Kuhn's argument evolves along the Hegelian line, allowing him to finally present Melville's story in the light of the essential conflict between the Greek aesthetic principle, represented by the narrator, and "modern-Egyptian" aesthetics, represented by the enigmatic scrivener. Kuhn's reading calls into existence a "hieroglyphic Bartleby," whose "opacity" he explains thus:

Bartleby, as a preeminently urban being, begins as a creature of script and of the 'noble' science of legibility, but he is eventually sealed up in architectural form and in a glaze of meaning. He dies with 'his dim eyes... open'... because, at the story's final moment of revelation, everything his careful speech has said has 'sunk' back into this glaze and remains fixed in his eyes. (40)

The crisis of communication is thus presented as a function of the inapplicability of the aesthetic paradigm of Symbolic Art to later discourses, including those central to the Jacksonian era. The conflict, however, seems to simultaneously relate to what could (at least from the perspective of the narrator) be perceived as the crisis of representation. Such an assumption also underlies the central argument of the insightful study of the "Narrative uses of medical discourse in 'Bartleby' and *Billy Budd*" by Marek Paryż, whose point of departure is Stephanie P. Browner's observation concerning the affinity of the (professionalized) discourses of nineteenth-century literature and medicine, in which "the somatic" and "the narrative" would both parallel and complement each other. The synergic effect of these two discursive domains is the emergence of a self-debarring meta-narrative, indicating the contextualization of the structure of a literary work in the central metadiscourses, responsible for the perceived shape of the extra-literary world.

In his analysis of "Bartleby" and *Billy Budd*, Paryż returns to theoretical propositions of Michel Foucault, looming large in his previous work. In the present study, however, particularly useful is the Foucauldian concept of the "narrative of exclusion" and his understanding of the language of literature in terms of the "interplay of mirrors," a concept somewhat reminiscent of the *mise en abyme*, which Kopcewicz introduces as an

alternative to syllepsis in his intertextual reading discussed above, yet – if I read Paryż consistently – applied by him to the intratextual, albeit not intraliterary, analysis. Thus positioned, the article demonstrates that

the language of medicine provides succor to Melville’s narrators who appear to have reached the limits of their speech. They seem to have experienced an epistemological crisis that becomes translated into narrative through the stylistic and structural complications as well as through the modifications of tone. It is, as if, within the space of the text, the immanent death of narration were replaced by the actual death of the hero. (44)

Compellingly (as he would), Marek Paryż offers what might be treated as a point of departure for a much-needed analysis of subsequent stages in the advancement of Melville’s existentialism in terms of the transmogrification of his antebellum rhetoric of romantic figurations of reality into a rhetoric leaning toward post-war pragmatic scrutiny of its narrative foundations.

Marek Paryż’s shift toward intratextuality seems to have paved the path for a study of “Bartleby” as “the scrivener,” which becomes the focus of a brilliantly provocative text by Tadeusz Rachwał – “Undeliverables. A response to Bartleby.” The author, not without a pinch of deconstructivist humor, opens his – as is predictable – “undeliverable response” with a motto from the Wikipedia definition of “scrivener” as “a text editor designed for writers.” The motto, complemented by the famous quote “He’s a real nowhere man” from the eponymous evergreen by the Lennon/McCartney tandem, induces the discourse decentralizing the (alleged) subject, perhaps ironically collapsed into the object of letter-writing:

Letters do not receive their addressees for various reasons. One of them is, of course, the death of the addressee, of the recipient of the correspondence, those letters that will remain unanswered, ‘unresponded’ to. A response to a letter, to writing, testifies to one’s living on, and it is perhaps this living on that Roland Barthes, a long time ago now, enlivened through his declaration of the death of the author, thus also slightly disturbing any straightforward understanding of correspondence. Letters are dead without readers, and Bartleby’s alleged work in a Dead Letter Office might well have been a lesson of undeliverable reading, a reading that could not consolidate into a response. (57)

Lucid and disciplined, the analysis consistently relies upon the interplay between the idea of Bartleby being a scrivener, i.e. an entity written in a programming language and

thus a product of its grammar; upon the *double-entendre* of the word “letter” alternately invoking the mutually exclusive senses of an “alphanumeric symbol” and of the “product of epistolography,” upon the phraseology of “death” in the fixed phrase “a dead letter” and in the concept of the “death of the author,” and, finally, upon the etymological affinity of the words “lesson” and “reading.”

Rachwał’s reading activates further oscillations: writing, especially academic, as inevitable copying of originals lacking originality (where that which is original occupies a position of authority) plays on the “authoritative” power of the “original” in the context of legal documents formulated on the basis of other, almost identical, documents. This, in turn, feeds back to the idea of the “scrivener” as a computer program, which “contains a document, note and “metadata” managing system allowing the user to keep track of notes, concepts, research and whole documents for reference,” feeding back to Bartleby as a copyist, who does not interpret the letters he reads, thus leaving them dead, and himself, if “unread” is a chain of dead letters. Since “a written response to a text, to a writing, to a letter, it is exactly an undeliverable act of reading,” and since “the *I* of the one who writes *I* is not the same as the *I* which is read by you,” a response to such a letter must inevitably be undeliverable: Bartleby, as a letter, cannot be *addressed* in either, or both senses of the *double-entendre* squared, ultimately rendering the correspondence another dead letter.

Simultaneously, as a computer program, the “scrivener” embodies the third order of simulacra, thus entering yet another discourse of a copy-without-the-original, which further advances the collapse of the “preferred” position of an original as opposed to a copy which, albeit lacking the authority of the original, must be identical to it. This idea ushers in the concept of the “origin of the original” and invokes the discourse of technical reproducibility, returning, on the one hand, to the digital technology of the “scrivener,” and tied to the notions of modernity and progress, which land the interpreter face to face with the walls of Wall Street, the epitome of early capitalism and further objectification of the subject.

Since his arrival in the law office at Wall Street, walled-in by the language always different from itself, Bartleby chooses to be stationary/stationery: not only a pre-lapsarian page, but also one “topographically” fixed at his workplace, an “inhuman” object whose “land” thus a “no-man’s-land,” yet an essentially homeless, originless, unbiographable “nowhere man,” whose obstinate “I would prefer not to” bears a marker of conditionality and, simultaneously places future in the past. The verbalized protest, which in the presented world, where “scrivening” rules galore, is *not a written protest*. As such, it is the voice, which as Derrida quoted by Rachwał asserts, “brings outside the inside” without abandoning the outside, and “conserving the inside while putting it out-

side” thus giving “existence, *Dasein*, to internal representations ... makes the concept of the signified exist” (66). This allows the author to suggest an interim conclusion to his, notwithstanding, undeliverable response: “Melville’s story seems to explore this complexity of the delivery of the signified, the violence of language producing undelivered messages, still promising a final delivery. Language feeds on signifieds Bartleby would prefer not to consume or materialize, which is the source of the narrator’s ‘continual misunderstanding’” (66).

Bartleby’s refusal to “consume” translates to his life “without dining,” which inevitably must end in death, or – more precisely – leads back to the *death*, the primary attribute of the (undeliverable) letter, which step keeps the hermeneutic circle endlessly rolling. And even though the article is an “undeliverable” reading of an “undeliverable” letter promising to be an “undeliverable” response to the former, it certainly offers a most enjoyable, often humorous, yet most seriously committed, eye-opening read.

Equally challenging is the erudite article by Janusz Semrau: a fifty-five-page long – arguably successful – attempt to dislodge the “undecidability, helplessness, worklessness, incompleteness, dissipation, scriptlessness and loss” from their privileged positions and to offer an alternative reading. Semrau proposes an interpretation somewhat reinforcing his own statement from the introductory essay, “Tolle lege, tolle lege!”: “in its textual *propria persona*, ‘Bartleby’ is not beyond decipherment. The narrative is not an impossible ‘boulder rolled down on the reading public’... and it is no *baga de secretis* sealed with seven seals” (8). The author, almost literally, “unpacks” the alleged “bag of secrets.” Alleged, because the rather powerful comparison *does* invoke, albeit via negation, documents relating to high treason, or – more specifically – what has been *construed* as high treason in the light of the laws gone-by. Teasingly, the author purports the “unambiguity” of the text “spelt out in black and white,” yet dedicates fifty five pages to the interpretation to its allegedly “non-treacherous” contents. “Unpacking” the text, he unpacks the “bag,” which seems to contain more than is describable in less than the length of the article, and in his act of writing, he shares the secrets unavailable to other eyes: the secrets his eyes construed. He *reveals* the secrets without fear of punishment (!), yet if the contents of the bag were available to all, spelling them out would obviously be a vain exercise. Moreover: the idea of domestication, inevitably, implies the notions of uncouth wildness, an obvious epitome of the unknown, the incomprehensible, the terrifying, the gothic. That these concepts largely overlap with, or involve, the idea of a “secret” seems to be beyond contestation, at least in the popular sense of the word. Hence, the starting point of the article is rooted in the presupposition that “Bartleby,” in fact, is a mystery and, as such, calls for a *positive* solution. In other words, the “treachery” needs to be brought to light.

These introductory remarks already suggest that the scope of Semrau's essay is vast, as it must be, if prefaced by the following Heideggerian motto: "all questions that do justice to the subject are themselves bridges to their own answering. Essential answers are always but the last step in our questioning. The last step, however, cannot be taken without the long series of first and next steps" (69). The long series of first steps involves the identification of the dominant tendencies in reading "Bartleby" in terms of "negativity," the delineation of narrative configurations conducive to such readings and the mapping out of potential parallels in other narratives, American and otherwise. This, eventually, leads to (juris)prudential/prudent, matter-of-fact revision of all of the textual(ized) "propositions" in terms of their proneness to- and potential of legitimization/disregard – both within the presented world, and outside of it. Meticulously, gradually, in a multifaceted fashion, Semrau un-covers the un-concealed "secrets" of the text long proclaimed "enigmatic."

The critic "demystifies the mystical" and domesticates the "un-heimlich" which process, irrespective of the awe-inspiring vastness of documentation, references, allusions, erudite range of contextualizations, proves to be... as refreshing as it is entertaining. Semrau's text, attempting perhaps to "can the uncanny," may be read as an elaborate, self-conscious, intellectual pleasantry, leveled at the established learned tradition of reverently reading "Bartleby" in "negative" terms. At the same time, as a tongue-in-cheek attempt to deflate the pompous, loftily dignified, almost "automatized" tradition, the endeavor collapses upon itself in the light of the legitimation of the very need to document a (juris)prudential reading with tens of footnotes supporting a meticulously built methodological frame. Hence, even though the "aletheia" supersedes the "aporia," the allegedly "obvious" seems far from "self-explanatory": to attain his goal, Semrau finds it necessary to reference as many as eighty-odd authors, from Henry Fielding to Jacques Derrida, from Abraham Maslow to George Lakoff and from Avicenna to Camus. Only then is he at peace with the conclusion that

Bartleby is no guardian of fragmented historiological residue, no custodian of troubled memory, antiquarian of failure, connoisseur of betrayal, troubadour of drama, archivist of grievance, steward of opprobrium and contrition, or alchemist of frustrated longings. Instead, in his one true commitment/call(ing), with his sheer existence as in-sistence, subsuming the-past-and-the-future in-the-present, as both the manner and the matter, both the 'who' and the 'what,' as a perpetual sentry – he may be finally contemplated as a Heideggerian shepherd of Being. (116)

A shepherd, not the lord of being, Bartleby of "Melville's story may be born of estrangement," yet – as Janusz Semrau succeeds to demonstrate – it is not unthinkable that

“nevertheless at the end of the day – ‘arm in arm with Bartleby’ – we are given a possible answer to the ever pertinent query...: ‘What has this got to do with me?’” – and that, on more than one level, by far exceeding the scope of the “administrative-judisprudential” dilemma towering in the title of the essay.

This last statement is magnificently testified to by a magnificent text(ile) of reflections – or perhaps “philosophical/philological investigations,” – carefully woven by Tadeusz Ślawek. His text, “Bartleby, *almost* Bartleby,” is perhaps the most challenging essay to address in a manner simultaneously descriptive and critical. Organized in numbered paragraphs, the text resembles a series of “intellectual snapshots” included in a thematically cohesive album. Arranged to be regarded in a linear fashion, yet demanding multifaceted in terms of the sheer range of addressed problems, ideas and plethora of references, it manifests itself as a tightly (inter)twined meta-digression. Ślawek chooses a complex, yet most lucid, somewhat Nietzschean formula of addressing Bartleby: a discourse legitimizing an inconclusive ending to the hermeneutic process, informing the final shape of the text of interpretation (and doing justice to the story by virtue of its coming to terms with the impossibility of conclusion), and a conclusion drawing upon the open-endedness of the presented reflection. Compelling one to recommence the reading as soon as one has finished, the text haunts the reader with its approximative “almost,” yet disarms the language of academic violence by liberating it from sharp statements, which – like sharp tools – may well be the original cause of the ultimate rigor: *rigor mortis*.

Its wide scope notwithstanding, Ślawek’s text, preeminently, is a “text of friendship.” An act of “philosophical life,” as much as a close reading of the Melvillean narrative, it reaches out to its contexts, both those directly addressed and those potentially available. As the scholar explains it:

A contrast between the Lawyer and his business associates and friends and the utter friendlessness and loneliness of Bartleby projects itself over the question of philosophy, traditionally conceived as the ‘friendship of wisdom,’ *philo-sophia*, that now reveals an uneasy paradox: if modern world understood friendship merely in terms of a declaration of assistance, then friendship does not seem to have much to do with wisdom. If ‘philosophy’ is to save its connection with the latter, it must turn away from the idle talk of and about ‘friends’ and abandon itself to loneliness and recognition of one’s alienation.... Bartleby is a study in the de-formation of friendship and a difficult attempt at its re-constitution. (137 – 138)

It is in such a context that Tadeusz Ślawek proposes to read Bartleby’s “unbiographable” existence in terms of the “ontological insecurity” it evokes and the character’s “re-

sistance,” which he perceives as an act of rejection of a world that insists on “naming everything away,” rather than that of the denial of “personal charity,” of friendship “distorted” and selfishly reduced to a strategy of “frictionless” functioning (145).

Sławek’s thought-provoking analysis of *Bartleby* transgresses the limits of its own scope, becoming a warm reflection upon the condition of *human-kind*. Friendship, which involves the readiness of the “I” to be-little in the space of the other, to accept the anxiety without insisting to define the other out, without reinforcing the pedestal of one’s own *Weltanschauung* at the cost of silencing the Other, is prerequisite to survival and the condition of hope. Ultimately, in Sławek’s text, Melville’s New York narrative, the sepia snapshot of the past, coincides with the post 9/11 New York of today. “There is,” Elizabeth Harwick observes, “something of Manhattan in *Bartleby*, and especially in his resistance to amelioration. His being stirs the water of pity, and we can imagine that the little boats that row about him throwing out ropes of personal charity or bureaucratic provision for his ‘case’ may grow weary and move back to the shore in a mood of frustration, and finally, forgetfulness”(150). And Gus Franza’s letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*, with which Tadeusz Sławek prefaces his reflections, drives his point home: “‘I would prefer not to’ is a good existential philosophy. President Bush should have employed it in Iraq.”

Bartleby’s enigma, “embarrassingly difficult” to the Lawyer and powerfully inscribed into the world looking for “effectuality and meaning,” connects Sławek’s essay to the perspective adopted by Marek Wilczyński in his “Melville after Lacan: ‘*Bartleby*’ and the reader’s desire.” Taking the idea of the “ontological insecurity” to a meta-level, Wilczyński nevertheless attempts to save the story from becoming a complete “loss to criticism.” In the Lacanian fashion, the author reads psychosis as the condition experienced by an outsider to the symbolic order, and points to the parallelisms between the Lawyer’s desire to “understand” his employee and critical acts of the story’s countless exegetes.

Built upon the concepts of the Name-of-the-Father/Fatherlessness, the symbolic order/psychosis, the (m)Other’s Desire/existential lack, and concentrating on the psychoanalytic interpretation of metaphoric functions of the concept of the “dead letter” in the appendix to the story and on the rhetoric of *Bartleby*’s reactions to the Lawyer’s queries throughout it, Wilczyński’s analysis successfully avoids the pitfalls of the “medicinalization.” Rather than diagnosing *Bartleby*, the scholar focuses his reflection upon what the assertion of the eponymous character’s psychosis “mean *in* the tale” and “*for* the tale,” emphasizing that “a psychiatric diagnosis, even though it appears clinically correct, refers only to the fictitious individual, and not to Melville’s tale in its tantalizing complexity. Recognizing the scrivener as a psychotic, it promises to ease the reader’s anxiety

with a familiar label, which, however, has little to do with literature” (163). The above notwithstanding, the author employs the Lacanian model of psychic growth to disclose a “gap between the Symbolic and the Imaginary,” and hence to offer a consistent reading of the copyist’s “notorious responses” within both the intra- and the extratextual perspective.

Bartleby’s acts of refusal, puncturing the comprehensible order which the Lawyer (apparently) shares with the story’s reader, gain on an interesting dimension when Wilczyński invites two other “Gestalts” into his analysis: Gilles Deleuze’s and Jacques Derrida’s. The former allows Wilczyński to couple the idea of the symbolic order with the concept of social order, in which Bartleby, a “pure outsider,” epitomizes the impossibility of the attribution of any social position, as well as to comment upon the characteristics of the French philosopher’s “Gestalt,” in which the juxtaposition of the “filial” relations within the story are paralleled by the Desire of the Other manifest in his perception of the juxtaposition of Europe and America, “translated” into/onto the text of his interpretation. The latter, in turn, invokes a hermeneutic prejudgment derived from the observation of the parallelism between Bartleby and Job, as characters “who dreamed of not being born” and between Bartleby and Abraham, whose *preference not to* kill Isaac is comparable to Bartleby’s. The scrivener’s “I would prefer not to,” as Derrida observes, “is also a sacrificial passion that will lead him to death, a death given by the law, by a society that doesn’t even know why it acts the way it does” (171), which gains on centrality in the context of the debate upon democracy as an order denying one the right “not to answer,” thus feeding back to the discourse proposed by Deleuze and, ultimately, providing a frame to Wilczyński’s brilliant analysis:

Clearly, Bartleby has become a political text case, a proof that democracy is founded on force that can put an individual to death when he does not agree to have his subjectivity violated. Apparently, this is another all-too-familiar reading in terms of martyrdom, but the last two sentences [Derrida’s analysis] come to the rescue. Having noticed that [while declaring ‘I would prefer not to’] the scrivener does not explicitly say either ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ Derrida... claims in a somewhat helpless, if also in a vaguely promising, way: ‘There is a great deal to be said about the immense text of Melville’s.’(172)

Translating the Lacanian concept of psychosis, through “Bartleby,” onto a much broader plane of discursive paradigms and their “ordering” functionality, Wilczyński’s text opens up a vista, in which Melville’s “perforated story” may be seen as both a “pre-text” for a debate on the psychosocial conditioning of the ethics of exclusion and as

a metanarrative “post-text” to hermeneutics. As such, it is also a “pallid,” yet legible inscription upon the parchment of the Western culture, a palimpsest, of which a fraction was described by in the essay opening the collection by Andrzej Kopcewicz: the preeminent scribe, to whom of all of the letters painstakingly typed up by the participating contributors pay homage and whose continued presence, as evidenced by the present review, cannot be doubted. The intellectual superiority of both hereby described collections testifies not only to the quality of the American Studies in Poland, but also to the importance of the academic and pedagogical contribution Andrzej Kopcewicz indisputably made to the development of the discipline. His monument, evidently, is not of the dead matter of motionless stone or black letters on white pages: the matter of which it is constructed is gray, and very much alive.

So fare thee well, poor devil of a Sub-Sub, whose commentator I am. Thou belongest to that hopeless, sallow tribe which no wine of this world will ever warm; and for whom even Pale Sherry would be too rosy-strong; but with whom one sometimes loves to sit, and feel poor-devilish, too; and grow convivial upon tears; and say to them bluntly, with full eyes and empty glasses, and in not altogether unpleasant sadness—Give it up, Sub-Subs! For by how much the more pains ye take to please the world, by so much the more shall ye for ever go thankless! Would that I could clear out Hampton Court and the Tuileries for ye! But gulp down your tears and hie aloft to the royal-mast with your hearts; for your friends who have gone before are clearing out the seven-storied heavens, and making refugees of long-pampered Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, against your coming. Here ye strike but splintered hearts together—there, ye shall strike unsplinterable glasses! [Melville]

Paweł Jędrzejko

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, ed. *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej. Od Nathaniela Hawthorne'a do Joyce Carol Oates* [Exploring the Canon of American Prose. From Nathaniel Hawthorne to Joyce Carol Oates]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SWPS Academica, 2007. 190 pages.

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, ed. *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej. Z placu Waszyngtona do Domu z liści* [Exploring the Canon of American Prose: From Washington Square to The House of Leaves]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SWPS Academica, 2009. 262 pages.

What the two volumes of *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej* edited by Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich achieve is striking a happy balance between considering canon an immutable pedagogical device for presenting an established modernist ideal of humanist education by familiarizing students and the reading public with isolated works recog-

The grounds on which canon revision is to be achieved, as much as the arguments for leaving it intact, are more often than not pragmatic and instrumental: one for taking art to be politically effective in promoting the interests of marginalized social groups, the other for assuming that canons are tools for organizing conceptions of the past, and both for valuing them only to the extent that they are useful pedagogical devices.

To cripple the ability of art to conceive of things as *other* than they happen to be is to naturalize reality as given, which is the most insidious form of ideology

E. Dean Kolbas

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million – a number of possible windows not to be reckoned... they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other.

Henry James

nized as masterpieces and a more flexible vision where canon is not a static list but can be understood, in the words of E. Dean Kolbas, as a “changing constellation” (*Critical Theory and the Literary Canon* 142) of texts of culture, a tour of a Jame-sian house of fiction, or – as Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich suggests herself in the preface to the second volume – an excursion that will take the readers to a succession of various houses of fiction, situated at different crossroads and forking paths in the space-time of the history of American Literature.

If the first volume whose subtitle, *Od Nathaniela Hawthorne’a do Joyce Carol Oates*, invokes what might be referred to as certain established cultural constants, i. e. names that have kept appearing in the syllabuses of university American Literature courses in Poland for a long time now, the

second volume, titled *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej: Z placu Waszyngtona do Domu z liści* seems to view canonization more as an ongoing cultural process of transformation. Along with changing cultural and political circumstances new works emerge as worthy of canonization, while the works hitherto regarded as masterpieces (as the editor emphasizes in the preface to the first volume, this certainly pertains to the works established as canonical by F. O. Matthiessen in *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*) are continually rewritten and reproduced thus becoming so assimilated in a culture that they might even appear familiar and commonplace.

Therefore, as Kolbas points out – and what some essays collected in the volumes edited by Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich clearly demonstrate – “canonicity as a measure of aesthetic quality can also be the judgment of a work’s radically critical potential, one which is as subversive of the status quo as it is of its own institutional accommodation” (139-140). The essays included in *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej*, in particular

those by Mikołaj Wiśniewski, Piotr Skurowski, Tadeusz Rachwał, Tadeusz Pióro, Ewa Łuczak, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, and Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, show that this is especially true of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" and *The Scarlet Letter*, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Devoted to the discussion of selected texts of American literature published since 1844 (the publication date of "Rappaccini's Daughter" by Hawthorne) and the vicissitudes of their canonicity, not only are the two volumes of *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej* complementary, but can also be jointly regarded – and this is what Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich stresses in the preface to the second volume – as a voice in the Polish debate concerning canons (ignited by the controversy over Polish literature reading list for schools) by indirectly offering a new perspective on the process of Polish literary canon formation. The thirteen essays included in the first volume and the fourteen essays in the second volume, written by scholars who, immersed in different generational ideas of what texts American literary canon should comprise, offer a variety of textual readings, theoretical approaches and angles on discussing canonicity.

Mikołaj Wiśniewski's excellent essay on *The Scarlet Letter*, which reframes the reading of the Gothic tale of Puritan New England in terms of an urge for political compromise in the antebellum United States, opens the first volume, *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej: Od Nathaniela Hawthorne'a do Joyce Carol Oates*. On the other hand, Piotr Skurowski's essay locates the unflagging fascination with which generations of readers approach Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* in its mythopoetically firm, clear-cut, and autonomous answer to the question "how to live and what for?". Dorota Kwiatkowska-Bagniak's reflection on Henry James's founding of what might be considered a fledgling feminist perspective on the portrayal of women's victimization by their own sex in *The Portrait of a Lady* is followed by Mikołaj Wiśniewski's incisive reading of Mark Twain's ambivalence about race based paradoxically, against the thrust of previous canonization, on the discussion of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Tadeusz Rachwał's elegantly written essay employs the rhetorical figure of litotes to stake out the space of unmanliness in Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*. This constitutes the author's point of departure for the discussion of the writer's indirect construction of androgyny as a figure of the renouncement of war and situating the space of love *outside combat*. Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich brings back into the attention of younger academics John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the novel ever-popular with the readers on account of its blending of naturalism and archetypal efficacy but ignored by scholars.

Tadeusz Pióro, in turn, demonstrates that it is blues as a musical form that functions as the vehicle for expressing Ellison's ethical concerns and anxieties about American democracy in *Invisible Man*.

Paulina Stec discusses different aspects of experiencing America in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. It is surprising, however, that even as the author mentions Edgar Allan Poe, she links the character of Annabel (Leigh), Humbert's first sweetheart, as well as his paradoxical and venomous attempts to regain the bliss of his lost love, with Francis Scott Fitzgerald's characters' quest in search for lost origins rather than with Poe's obsession with the death of a beautiful young woman and his poem "Annabel Lee."

In the essay devoted to Philip Roth Marek Paryż succinctly presents the writer's artistic biography and discusses three novels representative of different stages of his career. These are: *Portnoy's Complaint*, *The Ghost Writer*, and *The Human Stain*. The discussion of the latter novel that touches on multiple unarticulated traumas of contemporary American history is followed by Ewa Łuczak's essay on historical traumas sustained by women of color. By employing the image of creating home on and out of the ruins of a previous oppressive order Ewa Łuczak refers in her text on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* to the struggle of culturally stigmatized women (the African American – by the legacy of slavery; the American Latina – by omnipotent patriarchal structure of the family) to achieve autonomy as subjects fully aware of their traumatic history and their place in it. In the article devoted to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* Jerzy Kamionowski, in turn, compellingly interrogates complex relationships between the incommunicability of primal experience, deep memory, and the process of democratization of history making discussed by Zygmunt Bauman.

Andrzej Antoszek reflection on Don DeLillo's novel *Underworld* leads the scholar to consider it the likeliest candidate for the designation of the Great American Novel because with its non-linear narrative, excess, and celebration of both systems and waste it most perfectly represents the spirit of contemporary American life. What follows is the perspicacious analysis by Marek Paryż of the new prose (published after 2000) by Joyce Carol Oates, a prolific and versatile American writer, who employs realistic convention with an admixture of such genres as romance and Gothic in order to capture the social and cultural dynamics of contemporary America. The discussion of *Middle Age: A Romance*, *The Tattooed Girl*, and *The Falls* closes the volume.

Dorota Kawiatkowska-Bagniuk's essay on the struggle for awareness and autonomy on the part of the female protagonist of *Washington Square* by Henry James, Catherine Sloper, opening the second volume, *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej: Z placu Waszyngtona do Domu z liści*, complements Kawiatkowska-Bagniuk's reflection on Henry James's construction of women's identity, included in volume one. In the essay on the

mechanism operative in the tradition of American Gothic, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska investigates the ways in which the tension between knowledge and horror inherent in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter" informs the Gothic texts of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ambrose Bierce and H. P. Lovecraft and has bearing on the formal developments in the field of Gothic horror. Aptly, Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska's remarks on Lovecraft's horror of dissolution in the cosmos are followed by the discussion of a female's willing dissolution in universe as a way of transcending social limitations of Victorian culture. In presenting Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* as the inversion of the fairy tale "The Sleeping Beauty" on the one hand and in noting, on the other hand, the pre-Christian symbolism that evokes the pagan glorification of female as goddess in Chopin's novel, Ewa Konopka clarifies why the novel entered the canon only as late as the second half of the twentieth century.

Piotr Skurowski, in turn, draws the reader's attention to the once canonical writer, Sinclair Lewis, and his bestseller, *Babbitt*, a novel featuring Zenith city, a sublimely exaggerated image of the modern civilization, and the Babbitts as an embodiment of the middle class success, by now sunk into oblivion. Mikołaj Wiśniewski continues the discussion of the 1920s culture proposing in his excellent and incisive essay a reading of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as the portrayal of the times when a new mass subjectivity is born and identity becomes a product in the capitalist market. In the light of such careful and cogent reading of the text of the novel it almost seems improbable that the author stumbles against a detail whose significance is, paradoxically, enhanced by his own interpretation. Benjamin Franklin-like time-tables and self-improvement resolutions are not inscribed by a young James Gatz in a notepad, but, very tellingly, on the last fly-leaf of *Hopalong Cassidy*, a Wild West adventure book. The essay that debunks the myth of Gatsby's passionate love is followed by Beata Zawadka's reflection on the struggle of Miranda, the protagonist of several short stories by Katherine Anne Porter to overcome the illusion of female identity, romantic in form and oppressive in content, imposed by the patriarchal society of the American South on young women.

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich discusses postmodern intertextual response by Antonio Tabucchi in *Tristano Dies* to the canonical status of Ernest Hemingway as a writer and to his thinly disguised autobiographical story self-consciously thematizing the ruin and death of a canonical author, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." The canonicity of the text that self-consciously and autopoetically cannibalizes its own rhizomic cannibalization of numerous other canonical texts and canons of culture has been taken up by Mikołaj Wisniewski in his short but fascinating treatise on Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. Appositely, the following essay by Jerzy Kamionowski also touches, as it were, on fire. Kamionowski discusses Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade*:

A Duty-Dance with Death as a never-fulfilled postmodern apocalypse and juxtaposes it with both canonical and apocryphal apocalyptic texts, such as the biblical *Book of Daniel*, apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, and the *Revelation of St John*.

Marek Oziewicz's reflection on Ursula Le Guin's cycle *Earthsea* and the role of her writings in admitting fantasy in the canon is simultaneously a story of how the transformations in the writing of the canonized writer, and changing political and cultural emphasis in her works contributed to the transformation in understanding of the concept of the canon. In DeLillo's *Libra*, discussed by Mikołaj Wiśniewski, on the contrary, the sense of agency is an illusion. The scholar suggests that the yarn of plot spins itself, while the identity of DeLillo's Lee Harvey Oswald character, who might or might not be a part of a global plot to assassinate John F. Kennedy, is de-centered and shattered – a rhizomic plimpest of entangled narratives. The story of investigation of the apparent plot becomes a canonically postmodern autotelic investigation of the story plots.

The following two essays by Marek Paryż present and interpret novels written after the year 2000 by such canonical writers as Philip Roth and John Updike, while Andrzej Antoszek's critical text on Mark Danielewski's *The House of Leaves* closes the volume. Antoszek's essay that imitates the writer's play with typography, visuality and materiality of the printed text is situated on the cusp of literary criticism and the so called *liberature*, thus gesturing towards possible new directions of extending the canon. The young scholar invites the vision of the canon open to hybridity that unites the literary with the critical and, simultaneously, the verbal and the visual.

Written in Polish, *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej* both presents to the Polish reader a valuable survey of outstanding works of American literature, all but *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros and Danielewski's *House of Leaves* translated to Polish, and provides literary, historical, social, and political contexts for the discussed texts. The essays collected in the two volumes can also serve as additional reading for students of American literature and culture, ambitious reading for secondary school students planning to study American literature and culture as well as being used by teachers of American culture as background material.

Although it is perhaps regrettable that the investigation of the concept of canonicity in American literature and culture has not reached as far back as to consider the writings of Puritans, it must be emphasized that owing to the range of problems discussed, wealth of bibliographical and biographical information, interesting readings of texts and new interpretative perspectives *W kanonie prozy amerykańskiej* is indisputably a very useful and valuable publication.

Zofia Kolbuszewska

Ewa Łuczak and Andrzej Antoszek, eds. *Czarno na białym. Afroamerykanie, którzy poruszyli Amerykę* [In Black and White: African Americans Who Challenged America]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009. 336 pages.

The anthology *Czarno na białym. Afroamerykanie, którzy poruszyli Amerykę*, edited by Ewa Łuczak and Andrzej Antoszek, familiarizes the Polish reader with profiles of selected African American artists and politicians, whose lives, activities, and cultural productions have profoundly influenced contemporary American culture. The volume opens with a preface where the editors introduce and justify their selection of figures. They also elaborate on the position of African American culture within the wider historical context and discuss its common characteristics: the political and socially engaged character, the fact that it privileges the community over the individual, and that it is characterized by the blurred boundary between high and low culture. For the Polish reader, such an introduction enables a better understanding of the essays which follow.

Czarno na białym is divided into five sections devoted respectively to literature, politics, music, art, and popular culture. The first section begins with Małgorzata Chrzan's profile of Ed Bullins, an artist whose output is almost unknown in Poland. Chrzan's essay introduces quite a detailed biography of Bullins, with the focus on his relations with the Black Panthers and the Black Arts Movement. On the one hand, Bullins's texts were faithful to the basic tenets of the 1960s movement; they focused on the black experience and served as consciousness-raising sessions produced by black artists for the black audience. On the other hand, Chrzan claims that his plays transcended the black nationalist paradigm since Bullins avoided didacticism and ready answers. The Black Arts Movement recurs also in the following essay, in which Jerzy Kamionowski presents the most influential of radical black artists from the 1960s, Le Roi Jones/Amiri Baraka. The essay opens with the recent controversy surrounding *Somebody Blew Up America*, Baraka's poem about the 9/11 events, due to its allegedly anti-Semitic content. Kamionowski's close analysis of the poem convincingly refutes the discriminatory charges against it as well as illuminates its experimental poetics rooted in the black vernacular. What follows is a detailed overview of Baraka's artistic output, from his beginnings in the Beat Generation, through his central role in the Black Arts Movement, Marxist fascinations, and back to the controversial poem. This meticulous outline of Baraka's artistic career is presented from a wide variety of critical perspectives on his art, ranging from the Brechtian theater tradition and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty to black feminist accounts of Baraka's masculinist art. Such a multifaceted reading of Baraka supports Kamionowski's thesis that as an artist, he is difficult to classify, and that it is an oversimpli-

fictionation to identify him solely with the Black Arts Movement tradition. Since Kamiński provides a more detailed insight into black culture of the 1960s than Chrzan and since Baraka's art influenced that of Bullins, the section on literature would be easier to follow if it began with this essay.

The Nobel-prize winning novelist, Toni Morrison, analyzed in Ewa Łuczak's essay, is a figure familiar to the well-read Polish reader. Łuczak focuses on the literary output of Morrison rather than on her biography and introduces central aspects of her fiction, such as its interest in the past, memory, and history; formal experimentation; dialogue with American mythology; celebration of female communities; and references to African American music. Łuczak warns against labeling Morrison's writing with restrictive names such as modernism, postmodernism, or magic realism, pointing out that it is more effective to focus on the way her narrative techniques are rooted in different traditions. Morrison's self-acknowledged literary inspiration, James Baldwin, is the focus of the next essay. Magdalena J. Zaborowska familiarizes the Polish reader with Baldwin's biography and interpolates it with summaries of his literary output. Zaborowska claims that due to the representation of the complex relationships between racial, gender, sexual, and religious sections of identity, his works are fundamental for both African American studies and queer studies.

The political section begins with Zbigniew Mazur's essay on Martin Luther King. Although he is probably one of the most recognizable of the selected persons, Mazur's historical introduction of the Civil Rights Movement usefully deepens the understanding of King's position in African American culture. The essay also analyzes the poetics of King's speeches and his debt to the tradition of black ministers. Finally, Mazur exposes the ways in which King's public image was created to fit American mythology of individualism and progress, which erased his left-wing political affiliations or the controversial issue of academic and oratorical plagiarism. Aneta Dybska introduces Dr. King's political foil and the icon of the Black Power movement, Malcolm X. The essay provides the historical context of Jim Crow segregation and the emergence of the second ghetto, which makes it instrumental to the understanding of black power politics. Dybska analyzes the separatist media image of Malcolm X as a conscious strategy of attracting nation-wide attention, which, however, proved to be a hindrance when Malcolm X's political views evolved. This is one of the reasons why his later political message is absent from American collective imagination. Since Malcolm X is traditionally regarded as a representative of separatist and hence Anti-American cultural politics, it is interesting that at the end Dybska reads Malcolm X through the prism of traditional American narratives and myths such as the discourse of civil rights and independence, the conversion narrative, or Horatio Alger's success story.

Just as other European countries, Poland keenly kept trace of the last American presidential election. Therefore many Polish readers will be happy to learn more about the life of Barack Obama, the first African American president in the history of the US. Anna Bendrat provides insights into Obama's fascinating and extraordinary life and political career. She reads his success through the prism of different theories of presidential power and concepts such as personal persuasion and emotional intelligence. Bendrat also claims that Obama's public image is so convincing because it fits the myth of the American Adam, which focuses on the future, progress, and change.

The section devoted to music presents two figures. The first one, Muddy Waters, is hardly recognizable to the Polish reader, which issue is explored in Grzegorz Welizarowicz's essay. Welizarowicz introduces both the life and the musical output of the bluesman who was an inspiration to bands such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin. Welizarowicz analyzes Waters's evolving musical aesthetic of the urban blues and its fusion of the Southern tradition with the contemporary urban experience. The essay also discusses the difficult predicament of the black musician, who faces the appropriation of black music by white artists and the economic exploitation by American music industry. Małgorzata Ziólek-Sowińska introduces the figure of John Coltrane, who, unlike Waters, is one of the most popular musicians among Polish jazz aficionados. She traces Coltrane's hybrid search for the metaphysical, in which he draws from such different traditions as Christianity, Buddhism, Kabbalah, and African folklore. She links his new jazz aesthetic with the politics of the Black Power Movement. However, as Ziólek-Sowińska argues, in contrast to other contemporaneous jazz productions, Coltrane's music avoids masculinism both on the level of its form as well as when it comes to the artists he performed with.

The art section also consists of two essays. The first one is an overview of the African American artistic scene inspired mostly by the Black Alphabet exhibition which was held at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in 2006. This extraordinary event introduced the Polish audience to the art of the most significant contemporary African American artists such as Kara Walker and her famous black cut-paper silhouettes exploring the pathologies of American racial myths; Michael Paul Britto, who engages in dialogue with American popular culture; or Kehinde Wiley, an artist who infuses the traditional representations of saints with hip-hop aesthetic. Antoszek's essay is illustrated with high-quality photographs from the Warsaw exhibition. The second essay in this section is devoted to Bill T. Jones and his experimental dance projects. Jacek Łumiński discusses the ways in which Jones explores the issue of marginalized identities in his performances. His work challenges and rewrites the stereotypes projected onto minorities through intertextual references to high art, political discourse, and popular culture.

Łumiński specifically focuses on the black male body and the politics of masculinity in Jones's art. His essay is an interesting complement to the texts on the black theater tradition introduced in two essays in the first section.

The popular culture section opens with Antosik's overview of the two areas of African American culture which the Polish audience is most familiar with – hip-hop music and basketball. He introduces both cultural realms and focuses on one representative of each field – Tupac Shakur and Michael Jordan respectively. The focus on hip-hop culture is continued in Mateusz Durczak's article on the celebrity musician Shawn Carter aka Jay-Z. Durczak's claims about the inseparable link between hip-hop and African American musical traditions of jazz, soul, and funk refer the reader back to the earlier-mentioned essays on black music. On the example of Jay-Z, Durczak analyzes the creation of the self-image in hip-hop culture. He examines the strange yet typical of hip-hop combination of gangsta ghetto reality and luxurious life-style, which is convincing to the audience thanks to the self-identification the artist's persona with the ghetto life and his confession about his ghetto upbringing.

The last essay in the volume is devoted to the director whose name is recognizable to an average Polish movie-goer, however, whose most important independent films are much less familiar. Krystyna Mazur begins her examination of Spike Lee's film output with a reference to the American tradition of minstrelsy and its influence on the stereotyping of black representation in American cinema. This serves as a perfect introduction to Lee's position as a black director in American movie industry and, more specifically, to his recent movie *Bamboozled*, which is a meta-commentary on the black representation politics and the appropriation and exploitation of the black tradition by mainstream culture. Mazur locates Lee's output in the tradition of the New Black Aesthetic, which is at once racially conscious but culturally more hybrid than the tradition of the Black Arts Movement. She ends with a reference to Lee's latest mainstream productions and juxtaposes them with the films that were most likely possible only due to the revenues the former produced – Lee's recent documentaries on tragic events in African American history.

Czarno na białym is definitely a valuable and significant contribution to the Polish literary market. The fact that the editors decided to introduce very familiar figures along with less famous artists gives the Polish reader a wider perspective on African American culture. Analogously, the juxtaposition of black artists and politicians is a choice that reflects the close relation between black political tradition and black writing as well as the politically and socially engaged character of African American art. Moreover, many of the authors provide social and historical contexts which go beyond personal biographies. This strategy facilitates a deeper understanding and a fuller appreciation of black

cultural productions. The variety of artistic forms introduced in the volume, ranging from music, theater, dance, fine arts, film, and literature, is still another feature which gives an insightful and multifaceted representation of African American culture. The plurality of art forms, however, is also the reason why the order and division into sections is not always transparent.

The only reservation to be made regarding the selection of the figures is the lack of women artists and activists with the sole exception of the essay devoted to the Nobel-prize winner Toni Morrison. This may seem at first to be a fastidious objection, however, this absence is particularly visible in the context of American identity politics, the canon debates, and the more recent focus on the issue of intersectional identity in American studies. In addition, it gains further significance in the light of black feminist rewritings of African American history, which traditionally privileged male activists and artists. Since the 1970s, studies such as Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), Hazel V. Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood. The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987), or the more recent Angela Y. Davis's *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (1999) have evidenced the significance of black women's cultural contributions. This major trend in the discourse of African American studies is also reflected in Toni Morrison's preoccupation with female community, which is emphasized in Łuczak's essay. It must be admitted, however, that despite the underrepresentation of women artists, many authors such as Kamionowski, Ziótek-Sowińska, Łumiński, and Mazur, provide a gender perspective and discuss the predicament of masculinism in black aesthetics and sexism in black community.

The anthological conception of the volume reinforces its multifaceted character and provides the reader with a broad variety of perspectives coming from the fields of political, cultural, and music studies as well as history and sociology, which makes the volume such a valuable and interesting contribution. However, this plurality of perspectives introduces some confusion regarding terminology and translation. The editors decided not to impose the translations of "African American" and "Negro." Thus, despite the fact that in the title and in the preface the term "Afroamerykanie" (African Americans) is used, in some essays scholars decided either to use only the terms "Murzyn" and "murzyńskie" (closer to the English term "Negro") or to use both terms interchangeably, which may generate some confusion in the Polish reader. What can further add to the disorientation is the fact that Chrzan explicitly claims in her essay that the term "Murzyn" is offensive, whereas Dybska and Mazur briefly discuss the politics of self-naming and the shift from the term "Negro" to "African American" as a significant issue in postwar black cultural politics (22, 157, 307). These incongruities interestingly

reflect the current disagreement in the Polish academia with regard to which names are neutral and which are offensive as well as the more general debate concerning the relationship between language and social reality.

All in all, *Czarno na białym* provides the Polish audience with a valuable insight into African American culture. Most of the essays go beyond the form of historical accounts and contain brilliant analytical perspectives and references to a plethora of theories central to African American studies. The fact that the volume combines high culture with popular productions and politics is significant not only because it reflects the thesis about the blurred boundary between the high and low in African American culture, but it also targets a wider audience than the average academic publication.

Anna Pochmara

Scientific Cultures – Technological Challenges. A Transatlantic Perspective. Ed. Klaus Benesch and Meike Zwingenberger. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009. 244 pages.

Over 50 years have passed since C. P. Snow's diagnosis of "The Two Cultures," first published in *New Statesman* in October 1956 and later, more prominently, delivered as a Rede lecture at Cambridge University in 1959, in which the English novelist and physicist addressed a rift running through Western systems of learning. For Snow, hard sciences and the humanities were two bodies of knowledge separated by an unbridgeable – or at least it seemed so at the time – "gulf of mutual incomprehension." This bifurcated vision of academic standards, discourses, methods and values informed the mutual relationship of both sides for decades, resulting not only in academic wars of discourses and competition in the political and economic contexts but also in such fascinating works as Neil Postman's *Technopoly* (1992), which expanded upon and creatively developed the antithesis of the value systems represented by sciences and the arts.

In the last two or three decades, however, this perception of divorced human knowledge has infrequently fallen short of narrating the increasingly complex relationship between sciences, both hard and soft, technology and the humanities. This revised correlation of previously disparate fields can be rooted in the alleged transformation of Western societies into technologically-advanced, even posthuman, entities but can also stem from the progressing interdisciplinarity of numerous fields and discourses. Consequently, the contemporary landscape of knowledge production is not one of deep fault lines and insular fields, but instead that of multiple intersecting vectors. Next to game studies or animal studies, science studies, whose name still remains fluid and un-engraved,

focuses on and fosters connections in which rigorous scientific enquiry is enmeshed with free-ranging and philosophical extrapolation. Whether it is dubbed technoculture, philosophy of science or science studies, this new approach utilizes tools and perspectives of both sciences and the arts, whose variety is best exemplified in the works of such diverse thinkers and scholars as Arthur Koestler, Thomas Kuhn, Friedrich Kittler, Bruno Latour, Michel Serres and Katherine Hayles.

Scientific Cultures – Technological Challenges. A Transatlantic Perspective is a recent contribution to this fascinating discourse. Even though its inception owes to the 2007 annual conference of the Bavarian American Academy, the volume is much more than conference proceedings and features commissioned articles next to the extended versions of the symposium presentations. It is also this mixed origin that, to my mind, accounts for the only criticism one can hold against this otherwise very competently edited collection – the lack of clear thematic focus. The contributions are spread really far and wide between such polarities as the use of the latest web technologies for academic publishing, genetic genealogy testing, and the structures of R&D funding. On the one hand, such diffusion demonstrates the variety and breadth of preoccupations at the intersections of sciences and the humanities, but on the other it may be somewhat disorienting for someone who only recently entered the field. Consequently, it is not entirely clear who the intended readers are. *Scientific Cultures – Technological Challenges. A Transatlantic Perspective* does not aspire to being a reader or a comprehensive introduction – especially since the volume features only 11 contributions. On the other hand, those already working in individual disciplines represented here will find most articles fairly general and the scattering of topics adds to the a certain sense of randomness. Given the second part of the title, the collection could also benefit from at least one articles attempting to compare the approaches or preoccupations on both sides of the Atlantic – as it stands now “transatlantic” merely indicates nationalities of the contributors. All in all, however, where the volume lacks in coherence and the absence of the central concept, it entirely makes up in the quality of individual essays.

This is evidenced right at the beginning of the collection. Introductions to multi-author volumes often tend to be dry run-downs through the table of contents with hardly any contextualizing or situating of the contributions. Although relatively brief, Klaus Benesch’ “Diverging Cultures, Competing Truths?” brilliantly sketches out the often conflicted relations between science, technology and the humanities by discussing two academic hoaxes – Luigi Serafini’s *Codex Seraphinianus* and Alan Sokal’s contribution to *Social Text*. Benesch’ discussion of both texts illuminates the many ways in which the discourses of one side may be adapted by but also abused by the other.

The core articles are divided into two groups: “Science, Technology and the Literary Imagination” and “Technoscience and its Publics: Theories and Practices,” comprising five and six articles respectively. The first in the former, Ursula Heise’s “Cultures of Risk and the Aesthetic Uncertainty,” is a very apt example of the blurred boundaries between science and the humanities. Focused on the emergence of risk theory and its position in the contemporary culture, it rather marginally concerns itself with literary representations and could be equally successfully included in the second part of the volume. The same concerns Hanjo Berressem’s profoundly philosophical “‘The habit of saying I:’ eigenvalues and resonance,” which only on the last two pages references Thomas Pynchon’s fiction. On the other hand, it shows the diversity of the territory which the volume charts by tracing “the migrations of the term ‘eigenvalue’” (45) between Hilbert’s mathematics, Schrödinger’s physics, von Foerster’s and Luhmann’s system theory, Dilthey’s literary studies, Deleuze’s philosophy and, finally, Pynchon’s writing.

Suzanne Nalbantian’s “The New Alliance of Neuroscience and the Humanities: Interdisciplinary in the Making” is a fairly straightforward introduction to one of the newest of critical theories, which attempts to rethink readings of cultural artifacts in the light of the latest developments in neuroscience as well as consciousness and cognition studies. What is interesting, in the face of “the crisis of the humanities in our age” Nalbantian sees the “prospective alliance” (90) of the humanities and sciences as the only hope for the former to maintain its relevance – as the discipline most particularly concerned with the human, neurosciences appear to be most open to cross-pollination. The departure point for Joseph Tabbi’s “All Over Writing: The Electronic Book Review (version 4.0)” is a polemic with Arjun Appadurai’s assertion that electronic media are delinked from reading and writing. One of the editors of probably the best electronic journal in the new humanities, Tabbi treats the essay as an opportunity to demonstrate how electronic interfaces, exemplified by the latest revision of *ebr*’s code, can be customized to foster original critical writing.

The last essay in this section, Peter Freese’s “From Ludwig Boltzmann’s Formula to Meatball Mulligan’s Party; or How to Fictionalize the Entropy Law,” represents probably the most traditional approach to the cross-linking of scientific metaphors in literary analyses – in this case the familiar ground of Pynchon’s preoccupation with entropy in short stories and *The Crying of Lot 49*. Although covering a fairly haphazard ground, taken together the articles in this section definitely demonstrate a breadth of the field and a variety of the modes of intersection. As such, they should be of decisive interest for all readers with the background in literary and cultural studies as well as philosophy.

The same cannot be said for the second grouping, in which only half of the essays come even vaguely close to traditional humanities: Robin Morris Collin's "Sustainability and the Challenges of Race, Gender, and Poverty to Contemporary Scientific Cultures," David Nye's "From Black Box to White Box: The Changing Life Worlds of Communication Technologies" and Denise E. Pilato's "A Signal Success: An Illuminating History of One Woman, One Invention." The scope of the first two is ultimately summarized in their titles while the latter is essentially a biographical essay devoted to Martha Coston, a 19th-century inventor of the signal flare and international code system, paying special attention to her femininity in the era in which the archetype of a male inventor was forged.

The remaining three contributions in the technoscience section make very few gestures in the direction of the humanities although some of their concerns can, from certain perspectives, become objects of study for social scientists or historians. In "Bio Science: Genetic Genealogy testing and the Pursuit of African Ancestry" Alondra Nelson describes the ways in which the latest genetic technologies can bear upon the process of identity formation. Heike Mayer's "Constructing Competitive Advantage: The Evolution of State R&D Investment Funds in the United States" is primarily targeted at economic historians while Rebecca Slayton's "Disciplining Technopolitics: Physics, Computing, and the 'Star Wars' Debate" discusses what she calls "disciplined projection" (222), in this case connected with the American military presence in space.

This brief overview of individual essays may give an impression of random multiplicity of critical voices – and, as I indicated earlier, this impression is not entirely unjustified. Given this variety, it is remarkable that even the pieces devoted to the discourses somewhat arcane to most humanities scholars remain uniformly clear and never descend into jargon. Whether this is the result of the authors' talent or their commitment to the scientific clarity of expression is irrelevant, although I suspect both factors come into play. What is relevant is that *Scientific Cultures – Technological Challenges. A Transatlantic Perspective* may easily serve as a starting, if somewhat chaotic, insight into the cultural terrain in which two cultures permeate and resonate with each other.

Paweł Frelik

Zbigniew Lewicki *Historia cywilizacji Ameryki. Era tworzenia 1607-1789* [History of American Civilization. The Creation Era, 1607-1789]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2009. 803 pages.

Zbigniew Lewicki, in his *Historia cywilizacji Ameryki. Era tworzenia 1607-1789*, has given us a holistic vision of the early American civilization. His book is an interdisciplinary attempt to answer the key question for each nation: how was its identity shaped in

the early days of its history? Lewicki makes us also aware that without understanding the historical past one cannot understand the present. American mentality, which Poles need to comprehend in the light of our special expectations about the United States, is strongly rooted in the specific historical conditions of the colonization of the continent and the struggle for independence. *Era tworzenia* is a major attempt to bring uniqueness of America closer to the Polish reader.

Lewicki's book provides a detailed and multi-faceted account of the first three hundred years of the presence of white people on the North American continent. Lewicki tells us the story of how America grew up and he does so in a thoroughly modern way, fully accounting for the specificity of the early development of the American civilization. Even though his story ends with the moment when America gained independence, it gives the key to understanding the United States as it is now. History in Lewicki's book is not reduced to its political and military aspects, but, above all, it comprises culture, customs, material conditions and daily living.

The picture of the early presence of Europeans on the North American continent, importantly, sheds light on the significance of nations other than the English – the French, the Spanish, the Dutch. Also, the Author leaves no doubt as to the barbarian attitude of the Europeans towards Native Americans, who, in turn, are shown as both victims and cruel attackers themselves. Lewicki also demonstrates very clearly that one of the main causes of the conflict was a different attitude towards the land – whether it was to be treated as common good, or as a private property. The attitude to nature of all actors on the American scene is one of the more important themes in the book, also in the context of how nature was used for farming as well as to create rural and urban space. Conflicts with Indians and the history of the slavery are presented with utmost care, showing Native American and Afro-American stories from the perspective of the colonial times, and not only through the lens of contemporary sensitivity.

The book is highly absorbing for the reader in the way it focuses on facts and myths of America. It provides an endless amount of fascinating information. For instance it explains the origin of the Halloween or the game lacrosse, it discusses the custom of bundling, it talks about fashion, garbage removal, cooking, indeed of all aspects of the settlers' life. The history of the economic development of the colonies is shown as interrelated within the political, social and military context. The book underlines the link between the material side of the colonists' lives and the growing ideology of individualism. The sources of American expansionism are also well documented. Another significant issue which has received attention is the demographic situation in the colonies, its impact on the formation of the social roles of women and men, the appearance of various professional groups and the system of

education. The intellectual and artistic life of the colonial period has received a full panoramic picture.

An interesting aspect of the book is the presentation of the specific socio-political solutions applied in the colonies, which largely account for the differences of the American civilization as compared to the European (another good example of how history informs the present). Also the specificity of the geographical spread of colonies is stressed, which has resulted in regional variation of American culture, often not realized by Poles who tend to see the United States in a monolithic way. The legal documents of the eighteenth century, discussed in detail, also had a strong impact on the later development of the United States, again an important issue to be shown to the Polish reader. The presentation of religious diversity, typical for American civilization from the very beginning of the country's history, is also highly useful for the Polish reader who, as an aside, receives an explanation of various denominations (e.g. Quakers) and a fascinating picture of the impact of faith upon customs of social life. Considering the Polish audience of his book Lewicki introduces the issue of the Polish presence on the American continent, already in the early period of colonization, and later on he of course also addresses the significance of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski.

A bonus for the Polish reader lies in the linguistic explanations that accompany many of the phenomena described by Lewicki. Thus, for instance, the reader learns the meaning of phrases such as "the elect," "visible Saint," "Yankee tinkerer," or "cotton gin," acquires the knowledge about the origins of words such as "chairman," "buck," or "moonshine." This linguistic dimension will endear the book to the students of English. Also extensive (even though the Author claims it had to be limited) bibliography, both Anglo and Polish, included in *Era tworzenia* can be useful for students and researchers of American culture and history.

The book represents excellent scholarship, yet is written in a light, accessible style, which makes it highly readable. Frequently Lewicki quotes fragments from original historical sources, but these are never too long to become tedious for the reader. Eloquent written historical discourse breaks every now and then with attractive short narratives. The reader has a strong sense that the book recreates for him the true climate of the times it devotes itself to.

The book is weighty – both academically and literally (hardcover, 803 pages!). Should the reader get confused about the sequence of historical events, on pages 757 to 773 there is a useful chronology of the most important facts taking place on the North American continent from 1565 until 1790. The book is organized within twelve chapters. The account of the early expeditions of Europeans to the North American continent is followed by general characterization of the English colonies and then a detailed descrip-

tion of how various groups of colonies came into being, dividing the topic into four chapters reflecting the geography of the continent, the foundation of today's diversity of the United States. Chapter VII focuses on the details of daily life, such as the use of space in inhabited areas, trade and finances, customs of daily living, professions, food and drink, and country inns. Chapter VIII, in turn, relates the culture of the colonies in the seventeenth century, as reflected in the educational system, literature, painting, music and theatre. Chapter Nine provides a political, social and economic panorama of the colonies in the eighteenth century, while Chapters X and XI focus on the wars with Great Britain and the American Revolution. Finally, Chapter XII, entitled "New nation in the new state", discusses key political documents, the role of religion in the newly established state as well as the society, literature, theatre and arts of the United States in the first several decades after the Declaration of Independence. *Era tworzenia 1607-1789* ends in the way confirming the Author's promise, given in the Introduction, to continue this fascinating story of America in next volumes.

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich

Christopher Flynn, *Americans in British Literature, 1770-1832. A Breed Apart*. Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2008. 155 pages.

Christopher Flynn's *Americans in British Literature, 1770-1832* discusses British literary responses to America in the decades following the Revolution with respect to the category of time as a way to signify cultural difference. Taking his cues from anthropologist Johannes Fabian, Flynn writes that the narrative of the encounter with the Other assumes a diachronic structure which designates the Other "as someone who occupies an earlier, often primal time" (3). In the case of British writers and travelers, who described America at the turn of the nineteenth century, the deployment of such a narrative paradigm served to translate spatial separation into temporal gap, and thus accelerated the discursive process of othering Americans. Flynn distinguishes four categories of texts which use concepts of time to explain the disparity between England and America. The first category is represented by sentimental novels from the closing decades of the eighteenth century, whose authors strove to redefine the relationship between America and England in emotional terms, instead of political, but they eventually admitted that the gap between the two nations is unbridgeable. As Flynn puts it: "In these works the traumatic recognition of spatial distance appears as temporal irreconcilability" (5). The second category includes the narratives based on the utopian model; in creating utopian visions of America, British authors implicitly related to the social and political unrest in Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Flynn argues that the liberal and

radical writers and thinkers in England regarded the French Revolution as an impetus for a new beginning of European history, and some of them used the American interior as the setting for the reenactment of the fantasy of the new beginning. The third category comprises literary works whose authors envisage America as “a place where history could be escaped altogether” (5). This idea had to do with the combination of the concepts of time ascribed to different epochs in the course of history. The most symptomatic reflection of such a way of thinking about time was the recognition of concomitant savage and civil qualities of American people. The last category is represented by travel accounts written after 1815; the authors of these narratives aimed to prove America’s cultural backwardness despite its indisputable economic growth. Their use of temporal concepts was inextricably connected with their anthropological investigations. Christopher Flynn’s argument in the book is built around these four types of narratives and the respective ways of understanding time as a factor of cultural difference.

Chapter One, focusing on the presentation of America, in particular of the American Revolution, in British sentimental fiction, deals with the literary construction of affect as a way to sustain an emotional connection between England and its former colonies in America. Flynn claims that the subject of sympathy, which thematically defines the genre of sentimental fiction, provides the emotional script for preserving the link across the Atlantic at the time of political turbulence. However, the necessity to render sympathy in discursive terms defers the very act of communicating the emotion. Flynn emphasizes the importance of the body politic metaphor in the representations of the American Revolution, supporting his point with references to the anonymous *Tales of Truth* (1780) and Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* (1794), where gendered imaginings set America in the role of a feminized victim of a violent assault. The images evoking physical violence and bodily suffering figuratively correspond to political separation whose temporal dimension acquires a very meaningful form in epistolary novels. Three epistolary novels discussed by Flynn in greater detail: *Mt. Henneth* by Robert Bage (1788), *Euphemia* by Charlotte Lennox (1790) and anonymous *Louisa Wharton* (1780), show how the genre creates temporal distance. All three plots include an exchange of correspondence across the Atlantic. The characters who write letters witness the growing gap between England and America and try to prevent this through emotional involvement. The point is that, within the structure of the epistolary novel, the discursive act, which is a vehicle for the expression of emotion, is always inevitably belated and describes an irreversible course of events.

Chapter Two is tellingly titled “English Reforms in American Settings” and discusses the place of America in the British utopian doctrines developed in the 1790s. In general, America in British utopian narratives features as a space which would be useful for Brit-

ish social and political reformers; this results in a very reductive presentation of the inhabitants of the land who are portrayed as dependent on England and ideas imported from there or altogether ignored. Such a depiction is part and parcel of the way the British writers re-imagined their own nation. The first text discussed by Flynn in this chapter is *America: A Prophecy* by William Blake (1795). In Flynn's words, this work "serves as a model for reform in that it clarifies the nature of radical political action in the late eighteenth century" (54). Blake's symbolic vision of the movement of energy, which represents radical ideology, evokes a spatial configuration with America as a place where the idea of liberty can be forged anew. In turn, liberty is to constitute the foundation of a new order and a new stage in history. Flynn observes that Blake's symbolic narrative enables the writer to control the historical events which anguished him. The next work presented in the chapter is *The Emigrants* (1793), a novel ascribed to Mary Wollstoncraft, but most probably a result of her collaboration with Gilbert Imlay. One of the particular subjects of the book is oppressive marriage which, in a broader sense, reflects the corruption of English institutions. The American characters turn out to be the most outspoken critics of the English way of life, but without embodying any uniquely positive American qualities. The book advocates emigration to America where social and moral regeneration of British people, especially British women, can be achieved as well as their physical strength recovered. Flynn proceeds to talk about the presence of America in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's writings. Coleridge takes to a certain extreme the split between American and Americans, discernible in *The Emigrants*, specifically when he writes about the land without mentioning the people. A characteristic aspect of Coleridge's depiction of America with respect to its difference from England is his emphasis on language as a primary marker of America's cultural inferiority. The poet's criticism of America, not infrequently steeped in nationalistic rhetoric, came after his Pantisocratic phase when he envisaged America as "an unpopulated paradise with unlimited room for a community of the elect on Earth" (67). Flynn concludes Chapter Two with a discussion of *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* by Gilbert Imlay (1792) and *Some Information Respecting America* by Thomas Cooper (1794), which further enhance the picture of America as a place for the English who have been spared the necessity to brush shoulders with Americans.

Chapter Three addresses the conceptual combination of savagery and civility in the British literary representations of the American "natural man." This condition is not reserved for American people; an Englishman can also experience it, which attests to a powerful influence of the American environment. The state of nature as a category describing the human situation helps to interrogate the very concept of identity, showing it as essentially unstable. The instability of individual identity, resulting from the exis-

tence outside the bounds of one's culture, corresponds to the vagueness of political boundaries. It is not accidental that some of the works which revolve around the notions of savagery and civility employ the motif of captivity. It can be found, for example, in Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), where one character, a Scotsman in America, goes through a period of savagery to be eventually recovered for civil and civilized life. In Flynn's view, the writer's interest in such a process suggests that "the expansion of empire has broken down spatial and racial barriers that had seemed permanent" (93). An analogous plot development appears in Charlotte Lennox's *Euphemia*, where the character's shift from the savage to the civil state is enhanced by the use of British historical symbols. A more complex picture of America as a place for the new experience emerges from William Wordsworth's poem "The Excursion" (1814), which, according to Flynn, expresses the romantic longing to escape history. The protagonist of Wordsworth's poem, named the Solitary, travels in America in search of freedom and originality, but to his utmost disappointment, he encounters the people striving to achieve the things that Europeans have compromised. Wordsworth's feelings about America harmonize with Byron's sentiments expressed in Cantos I and II of *Don Juan*. However, the latter poet's dissatisfaction with America, connected with his recognition of the anti-heroic character of its people, gives way to a more positive view, with George Washington as the epitome of the natural state which Byron seeks.

Chapter Four discusses travel accounts of America by British authors, uncovering the presumed ethnographic subtexts of such narratives. In essence, Flynn is interested in the patterns of cultural critique in the genre of travel writing and the role of such critique in the stereotypization of America and Americans in English literary discourse from the 1830s onward. Three most important travel books examined in this chapter are Henry Bradshaw Fearon's *Sketches of America* (1818), Basil Hall's *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828* (1829), and Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). Flynn points to a number of recurring observations about American language, manners, religion etc., constituting the typical ethnographic content. In this chapter, Flynn also talks about the textual strategies of creating the effect of objectivity and authenticity, which was the basis of the British authors' narrative authority.

Christopher Flynn's *Americans in British Literature, 1770-1832* is a major contribution to the study of the Anglo-American literary relations after the American Revolution for at least three reasons. First, the book shows the continuity of the literary representations of Americans in English books at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are numerous critical books on Anglo-American literary encounters in the latter century, and Flynn's book enriches this body of criticism in identifying the earliest literary sources that helped to shape the perception of America and

Americans by the English for many decades after the Revolution. Second, *Americans in British Literature* introduces texts representing a variety of genres. This generic diversity, establishing a dialogue between works of poetry and prose or fiction and non-fiction, accounts for the impressive scope of Flynn's presentation. Third, the book discusses canonical texts alongside unknown ones, and thus it attests to the great potential of what David S Reynolds, in *Beneath the American Renaissance* (1988), has called "reconstructive criticism."

Marek Paryż

Fay Botham, *Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, and American Law*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 288 pages.

Fay Botham's highly original study, *Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, and American Law*, explores the role religion played in the legal regulation of interracial marriage in the United States from the colonial period to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Botham shows how Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the Bible concerning matrimony and race exercised considerable influence over miscegenation law, providing the first historical study of the link between Christianity and American attitudes towards intermarriage. In doing so, Botham delves into the history of religious doctrine, examining writings on marriage and racial distinctions from the Reformation to the modern era in order to establish a divergence between Catholic and Protestant views on interracial marriage's "cultural and religious legitimacy" (6). At the root of the divide is the Roman Catholic Church's affirmation of matrimony as a purely religious rite that bestows divine grace upon those who receive it, and the Protestant tradition of designating marriage a sacred yet secular institution best regulated by civil authorities. Furthermore, in the twentieth century the Vatican developed a theology of race (mainly in response to the Nazi regime) that stressed the unity of all people under God as sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, implying racial equality and creating a basis on which progressive Catholics could oppose segregation. Protestants, however, particularly in the American South, adhered to a racial paradigm that denied integration on the insistence that God had "dispersed" the races on different continents, as supposedly recounted in Genesis. In elucidating the two positions, Botham stresses that despite the sharp difference between the two theologies, not all Protestants were irredeemable racists, nor were all Catholics crusaders for integration. Nonetheless, she argues persuasively that the Catholic emphasis on unity "contributed to the demise of American anti-

miscegenation laws and racial separation at the marriage altar,” while the Protestant view provided a strong religious basis for antimiscegenation law in the American courts (8).

Two cases frame Botham’s book: the 1948 California Supreme Court case of *Perez v. Lippold*, and the 1967 US Supreme Court case of *Loving v. the Commonwealth of Virginia*. The first overturned California’s antimiscegenation laws with an appeal to religious freedom. In 1947, Sylvester Davis Jr. (African American) and Andrea Perez (of Mexican origin but considered Caucasian) decided to marry. Both Catholics, they approached a priest in the racially diverse St. Patrick’s parish of Los Angeles. He regretfully informed them that the state of California prohibited intermarriage, and that their application for a license would surely be denied. Discouraged but determined, the couple engaged the services of civil rights lawyer Daniel Marshall, who was not only a fellow church member but also president of the Catholic Interracial Counsel. On his advice, they applied to marry and were predictably refused by the Los Angeles County clerk. Marshall then filed a petition with the California Supreme Court and successfully argued that the couple, as Catholics, had been denied a religious sacrament. Because the Catholic Church did not ban marriage between different races, the state’s antimiscegenation statutes had violated Davis and Perez’s First Amendment right to freely practice their religion. After a year of deliberation, the court declared the prohibition of interracial marriage unconstitutional on the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause, and the happy couple soon wed.

Loving v. Virginia was more hard-fought. In 1958 Mildred Jeter (half black and half Cherokee) and Richard Loving (Caucasian) briefly traveled from their home state of Virginia to marry in the District of Columbia. Several weeks later, the county Sheriff entered their home in the middle of the night and arrested them for violating Virginia laws banning interracial marriage. A Catholic judge, Leon Bazile, handed down a suspended sentence of one year on condition the couple suffer banishment from the state for the next quarter century. In 1963, when Congress started debating the civil rights bill that would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Mildred Jeter, now living in Washington D.C., wrote then-attorney general Robert Kennedy in the hope of challenging the Virginia convictions. Kennedy’s office forwarded the letter to the American Civil Liberties Union, which took up the case. Their attorneys argued that the Lovings’ constitutional rights to due process and equal protection had been violated by Virginia’s antimiscegenation laws. The very same judge that had sentenced the couple years before denied the motion and reaffirmed his original ruling, stating: “Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red, and he placed them on different continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix”

(2). The Lovings' case eventually made it to the US Supreme Court, aided by a coalition of Catholic organizations that disputed the decision on grounds of religious freedom. The Supreme Court ultimately ruled Virginia's prohibition of intermarriage unconstitutional, again on the civil grounds of the Fourteenth Amendment, ending antimiscegenation laws throughout the United States.

The United States is one of a relatively small number of countries to have banned intermarriage. While Nazi Germany and South Africa initiated and ended this practice during the twentieth century, in North America antimiscegenation measures were enacted as early as the mid-1600s, even in colonies that eschewed slavery as the foundation of the economic system. Botham examines why these prohibitions appeared and endured through a comparison of the legal regulation of interracial marriage in Protestant Britain's colonies and Spanish and French-ruled Catholic regions. In British areas miscegenation statutes came about as a result of race-specific slavery and gender-based legal issues. Mainly, such laws precluded any confusion about the legal status of offspring born to unions between English and Africans. Mulatto children were generally classified as black, which served as a deterrent that maintained racial distinctions between the free and the enslaved, and implicitly denied that racial mingling could take place. Colonial law especially prohibited white females from sex with African men because of the additional complications that could arise from such unions. For example, if an indentured white woman bore a child by an African slave, who would support it, the woman's or the man's master? To resolve these legal conundrums, a 1664 Maryland law declared that if a white woman marry a slave, she "shall serve the master of such slave during the life of her husband; and... all the issues of such freeborne [*sic*] woman, so married, shall be slaves as their fathers were" (57). Reflecting the imperative of "white male dominance" over both slaves and women alike, such laws did little to prevent non-conubial sex between white men and African females due to assumptions about black women as sexually available and unworthy of protection. White women, however innately virtuous, were deemed susceptible to seduction and hence needful of paternalism. By the early 1700s all but three of the original thirteen colonies had legally forbidden interracial marriage.

Spanish and French colonies in North America were decidedly more tolerant of intermarriage in comparison to the British, and the Catholic Church played a significant role in promoting and defending mixed unions. In 1724 France did enact the *Code Noir* in Louisiana, banning marriage between blacks and whites largely against the wishes of the colonial population, but when the Spanish took over later in the century they never specifically outlawed matrimonial miscegenation. Restrictions did however come from the Spanish Crown's attempt to prevent "unequal" marriages between differing social

classes in Spain, which ran contrary to the state's interest in preserving the estates of wealthy families. These laws were later transferred to the colonies where class was often divided along racial lines, generating the same effect as British antimiscegenation laws. In Louisiana blacks and Indians constituted an underclass, and wealthier white Spaniards thereafter required permission to marry persons of color. Catholic priests in these areas often criticized these constraints and broke Spanish law by wedding couples of different classes and races to demonstrate their authority over the state in matters of matrimony. Still, in some parts of North America both the state and Catholic missionaries viewed intermarriage as a tool to conquer new lands. When Spanish soldiers and missionaries arrived California 1769, the soldiers frequently raped the native population in opposition to the moral and theological concerns of the priests. As this situation threatened any potential for conversion and peaceful settlement, the Catholic Church suggested that soldiers who married virgin natives be rewarded materially. The state agreed, offering farm animals and land for marriage in order to promote development in the region.

Botham endeavors to explain why such differences existed between the Protestant and Catholic regions. She argues that the Catholic doctrine of equality of all men under God influenced Spanish thinking (also citing their openness to manumission), while the Protestants denied such ideas. Competing theologies of marriage also emerged. The Spaniards' considerable openness to intermarriage can be traced back to the Council of Trent's (1563) designation of marriage as a sacrament, not to be interfered with by the state. Along with declaring that secular rulers had no jurisdiction over the Church, the Council affirmed the right of people to freely marry whomever they wished in an effort to curb state-sanctioned marriages of convenience between noble families. The principle of the consensual nature of the holy nuptial contract and the Catholic Church's imperative to control marriage influenced Catholic thinking from that point onwards. In contrast, the Protestant theology of marriage derived from Martin Luther's belief that only baptism and the Eucharist were sacraments, while the inclusion of marriage was not warranted by scripture. This view was subsequently seconded by John Calvin, who saw matrimony as merely "a legitimate ordinance of God" – sacred, but not a sacrament (78). In divesting their churches of the right to regulate marriage law, Protestants brought the two competing theologies into conflict, setting the stage for later battles between the two conceptions of marriage in the United States. Botham demonstrates that the Protestant theology of marriage predominated in the British colonies, "subtly fixing Protestant beliefs about marriage in American law" throughout New England and the South, and designating marriage as a civil institution best regulated by the state (79). She claims that this is a fact little noted by historians, which is vital to understanding how the Catholic theology of marriage later "created a ready space for Catholics to protest against anti-

miscegenation laws and to intervene on behalf of interracial couples whom American states prohibited from marrying” (86).

Conflicting theologies of race also marked the Catholic and Protestant positions on intermarriage in America. In the South, Protestants developed a “divine mandate for racial segregation” from a number of Biblical stories and hermeneutical traditions (93). The most important interpretation was that of Chapters 9 and 10 of Genesis. In the story, Noah curses his grandson Canaan with slavery, because his father Ham witnesses Noah naked and drunk. All Noah’s sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth, are then dispersed in three separate directions from their homeland to populate the Earth. Early Jewish interpreters believed that Shem went to Asia, Japheth to Europe, and Ham and Canaan to Africa, because the name Ham was linguistically similar to the Hebrew word for “dark,” or “black.” Therefore, all those with black skin carried “Noah’s curse,” which slowly developed as a rationalization of race-based slavery. Ham and Canaan became even more strongly associated with Africa in the 1500s due to greater European contact with Africa, further “racializing” the Genesis stories to justify slavery and explain the black skin and heathen nature of Africans. Such ideas transferred to the American colonies and survived into the nineteenth century, when proslavery advocates, many of who were Protestant ministers, invoked the story of Ham against abolitionists. After the full emancipation of the slaves in 1865, white Protestant Southerners perpetuated their racialized interpretation of Genesis to legitimize the Jim Crow regime and of course outlaw interracial marriage.

By the late 1800s the Catholic Church began to articulate its own theology of race, though to little effect in the US. Botham cites a number of historical sources from the Vatican, starting from the encyclical *In Plurimis*, written by Pope Leo XIII in celebration of Brazil’s ending of slavery in 1888. The document stressed humanity’s common ancestry in Adam and Eve, stated there was no biblical injunction for a separation of the races, and categorized “forgetfulness of our common nature” and “original brotherhood” as sin (113). In the 1930s the Vatican was forced to react to Nazi anti-Semitism, issuing an encyclical stating that exalting one race over another “distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God” (115). Shortly after the invasion of Poland, Pope Pius XII authored *Summi Pontificatus (On the Unity of Human Society)*, which propounded the Catholic teachings that “God had created all humanity in God’s own image, united the human family in Adam and Eve, and redeemed it through Christ” (117). Also influential was the American Jesuit John LaFarge, whose *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations* argued that racial separation was contrary to biblical truth. Such ideas enabled progressive American Catholics to form a perspective on race issues and interracial unions much different from the Protestant vision. Botham,

however, concedes that there existed a large gap between the Catholic theology of race and the practices of average American Catholics, who affirmed segregation as wholeheartedly as Protestant Southerners. Nonetheless, she contends their prejudice was not Bible-based. Protestant theories of race fashioned in the South largely dominated in antimiscegenation cases. For example, in *Green v. State* (1877) an Alabama couple appealed for the right to wed on basis of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, but the court upheld the right of the state to regulate marriage, adding that “there cannot be any tyranny or injustice in requiring both alike to form this union with those of their own race only, whom God hath joined together with indelible peculiarities, which declare that He has made the two races distinct” (140). Such expressions became accepted wisdom, constituting “the Southern lingua franca of race” that permeated the North, East, and West of the country (159).

In her final chapter, Botham returns to both the *Perez* and *Loving* cases. *Perez* demonstrates how Catholic progressives such as attorney Daniel Marshall used both the Catholic theologies of race and marriage to challenge antimiscegenation law, while *Loving* begs the question of why Judge Bazile, though a Catholic, ruled against the Lovings. Ultimately, Bazile’s attitude towards the supposed divine imperative to separate the races clearly indicates that “a Protestant orientation towards the Bible” had achieved ubiquity in the United States (163). Bazile stands as symbol of what Botham deems a Catholic acquiescence to the Protestant theology of race and marriage, which made the Vatican’s theologies anathema to many American Catholics, save a few enlightened activists within the Church. This sound conclusion caps *Almighty God Created the Races*. Though Botham’s book provides an excellent historical account of the religious bases for antimiscegenation law, it is marred by an incongruous epilogue entitled “A Postmodernist’s Reflections on History and Knowledge.” After presenting her study, she tacks on a brief flurry of shallow ruminations on epistemology and hermeneutics (she curiously defines both terms for the reader, though she has already used them in the body), which quickly devolve into banal statements, such as: “And even though the words on the page of a text may remain the same over time, how people understand those words change. These change because people, not God, *interpret* the passages. [emphasis in original] People, not God, make claims about what its ‘God’s’ will, based on what they think they ‘know’” (189). Wholly unnecessary, the postscript does little but detract from a book that otherwise improves our understanding of intermarriage’s history in North America. But aside from this reservation, Botham has produced a solid effort that has much to recommend it.

Tadeusz Lewandowski

Małgorzata Poks, *Thomas Merton and Latin America: A Consonance of Voices*. Katowice: Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania Marketingowego i Języków Obcych, 2007. 288 pages.

Małgorzata Poks's *Thomas Merton and Latin America: a Consonance of Voices* fills in a vast gap in our knowledge about the output of the eponymous Catholic individualist, poet, thinker and Trappist. It exposes his dedication not only to the study of art and spirituality but also to the building of monastic and inter-cultural communities based on essential, universal religious values. In the "Conclusion" of the book one finds a particularly interesting passage:

Although not all of the translated poets [Latin American poets whose texts were translated by the Trappist – W. G.] shared Merton's religious affiliation, their poems reveal the same spiritual awareness, sometimes expressed in terms of a secret (at times so 'secretive' that hidden from the poet's conscious mind), of a common ground of reality that is both transcendent and immanent.... In the Latin American poetry of 'life and hope'... man's triumph over death is present, more often than not, only 'kenotically,' in consonance with the inverted logic of the Cross. To Merton – the professed monk, the paradigm of the Cross was more than a figure of thought. His poetic meditation is inscribed within the context of *inquisitio veritatis*, the search for truth, and the Cross becomes for him the fullest revelation of the Truth, defined in the optics of the Incarnation as a 'Person... whose essence is to exist.' (256)

This succinct summary of Merton's attitude points to the mystery of person, of "the other," at the core of religious and moral values Merton shared with such poets as Jorge Carrera Andrade, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Alfonso Cortes, Ernesto Cardenal, Pablo Cuadra, Nicanor Parra and Cesar Vallejo. At the same time, Ms Poks emphasizes a significant fact, namely that his study of Latin American poetry inevitably lead him to the topic that preoccupied his literary friends representing the Southern cultural circle, i.e. the truth about the indigenous past of that region, and its confrontation with imperial eruptions of its own and of invading Europeans:

Merton's sophianic studies allowed him to make interesting connection between the wisdom books of the Bible, the prehistoric wisdom of Mesoamerican Indians, and the wisdom of Asia.... Mesoamerica's 'sacred cities,' agricultural, indifferent to technological progress, and uncontaminated by the spirit of militarism, were built on the same values as the wisdom cultures of the East, Merton decided.... For Merton,

the traveling back to the lost world of the Maya or the Chorotega Indians had nothing to do with a romantic renunciation of modernity. On the contrary, it was his conviction that a poetic confrontation with the past should elucidate the root causes of the contemporary world's predicament, as well as sensitize modern humans to the ways of overcoming the crisis of Western culture. (255)

What this conclusion confirms is the central position of Merton's search for earthly spiritual paradise of a culture perfectly balancing awareness of transcendence with respect for nature. It creates an effect of particular resonance with such of his theological writings as "St. Bernard of Interior Simplicity," *New Man*, and *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. Whether utopian or, on the contrary, realistic, this theme is vitally connected with his social involvement and that of his poetic Latin American correspondents. Thus it points to an important field of study to be addressed by other interpreters of Merton's writings alongside the poetry of South America.

Chapter VI, "The Early Legend that Returns: Thomas Merton, Ernesto Cardenal, and Pablo Antonio Cuadra," is a fascinating introduction into the historical drama of the Pre-Conquest peoples of America. It signals the significance, for anthropological studies, of the subject of the contrast between the classical, naturally balanced, traditions of the Mayan civilization and their Toltec and Aztec successors. The study of Merton's essays and poems touching upon this theme brings out the motif of the contemporary Christian examination of historical conscience linked with the background of Spanish and Anglo-Saxon conquest of the New World. Chapter I, "Two Continents, One Destiny: The American Hemisphere of Thomas Merton," explains the deep sources of Merton's involvement in the study of the Latin American past and present. At the heart of his motivation Poks finds not only his criticism of the post-industrial North but also his sense of complicity in its dualism and responsibility for the future of his society. While the subchapter "The Meeting of Strangers" (of Chapter I) reads almost like a well written narrative of action. The description of his initiation into the topic in question, of his encounters, friendships and correspondence with Latin American poets, offers an intriguing story of their struggle for a new humanistic shape to their cultures and of Merton's intellectual journey into a world so close to the borders of North America and so distant from it in terms of mentality. The fact that the story develops on the background of violent political changes in that region adds the sense of tragic tension. At the same time, it exposes the tremendous impact, not fully realized yet, of Merton's poems, essays and translations on a literary environment of the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese South. They show that his encounter with it was an event of exceptional importance. In order not to spoil the ultimate effect I leave the details to the reader's own inquisitiveness.

Chapters discussing Merton's translations, and, at the same time, interpretations, of Latin American poets are instructive. Penetrating analyses, presented by Poks, are a mine of testimonies concerning Merton's poetic empathy, richness of personalities of the poets he translated, and their deep contemplative wisdom. Obviously, political allusions of some of these texts and ideological affiliations of such poets as Cardenal require more extended commentaries or even a dose of criticism. However, Merton's willingness to keep up a deep dialogue with them, despite the differences of social philosophies, and to give witness to the Christian attitude, leaves little margin for commentators of his work. At the same time, his approach suggests that criticism should be preceded by a close understanding of the psychological condition and the external context, which in the Latin American case is especially difficult. Moreover, his focus on the literary qualities of translated texts, as well as on their spiritual and humanistic messages exposes the quality of poetry that makes it a hopeful plain of understanding across ideological divides.

One of the passages which arrest the reader's attention with unusual intensity is the reading of a poem (Merton's translation of it) "The Truth" of a Nicaraguan *poeta loco*, "mad poet," Alfonso Cortés: "Fate is dead. God is in man / What man is in God. Art caves in / Upon itself. Truth is a name / Reason a dilemma: all is a tomb."

With deep intuitive empathy, Małgorzata Poks explains the poet's insight: "The death of Fate announces the resurrection of God and the awakening of man to a new destiny: that of freedom in Christ." (125) The rest could have been left for silence, if this were the end of the poem. But the meditation continues, and it is for each reader to follow the rest of it as well as the whole wealth of the remaining interpretations.

Wacław Grzybowski

Kacper Bartczak, *Świat nie scalony* [A World Without Wholeness]. Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2009. 230 pages.

Świat nie scalony is the latest, seventh addition to a series published by Biuro Literackie under the umbrella of "Estetyka. Poetyka. Pragmatyka" (Esthetics. Poetics. Pragmatics). The very name of the formula encourages the kind of writing that Bartczak refers to in a passage that made its way to the book jacket: "to approach poetry from a holistic, non-dualist perspective that would allow to speak of it not in terms of separate spaces of the material world, such as body, memory or language, but as a kind of tool that facilitates a smooth exchange and transition from one of those spheres into another" (10; trans. A.W.). Elsewhere in the *Introduction*, commenting on the possibility of

a pragmatic poetics, he adds: “The book I’m putting forth doesn’t deal strictly with poetry, philosophy or theory; it emerges from the liminal spaces between those fields.... Any attempt to read those philosophers without making references to poets would be incomplete” (11). Pragmatic thinkers, continues Bartczak, remained open to the possibility of correction or addenda to their work from the field of poetry and the notions of exchange, co- and interrelation, and interstices from and through which meanings are born also characterize the discussion that Bartczak himself holds with his texts. He confesses: “Eventually, I started to treat poems as I would treat an odd and unpredictable conversation partner, who not only talks to me, but also acts towards me” (10). Indeed, the object of Bartczak’s analysis – that which emerges from the liminal spaces of poetics, esthetics and pragmatics – also becomes his method.

Seeing a potential instead of a dreaded hiatus in the openness (or incompleteness, “the post-romantic discontinuity that we live in”; 14), is what distinguishes Harold Bloom from Paul de Man, writes Bartczak in the first essay of the volume. Where de Man focuses on the gap, Bloom directs his attention to the potentiality of a jump or a bridge, the poetic trope: the first critic “is transfixed by the paralysis”, the latter “continues to speak of open possibilities” of the self-aware text (15). To counter possible accusations of the propagation of the notion of deep structures on the existence of which Bloom appears to be insisting, Bartczak proposes to read the Yale scholar the way Bloom himself reads Emerson, almost *against* him. In the result, Bloom’s vision of the poetics of indeterminacy, says Bartczak, is richer than that of Marjorie Perloff, whose undoubtedly exquisite readings still tend to bring out the incapacities rather than the potentiality of the poetic text:

Instead of throwing us into an un-world, this conceptual breakthrough [the abandonment of great unifying meta-narratives] proposes a new kind of being in the world. The reading of poets such as Ashbery, and critics such as Bloom, appears to suggest that there is an alternative. In order to exist, the world does not require totality. The lack of a unifying principle facilitates the making of a completely new world: dynamically transient, dependant on the perceptual gift of the subject / poet, prone to fall apart and yet, a world nonetheless. (23)

A separate essay in the volume, paradoxically entitled “Poetyka totalna Johna Ashbery’ego” (The total poetics of John Ashbery) is devoted to the poet championed both by Perloff and Bloom. One infers that this time under the notion of “totality” Bartczak understands the completely open and hospitable character of Ashbery’s poetic language (and not any form of an all-encompassing universalism):

Ashbery... has shown not only how diversified the sources of the poetic language might be but also highlighted the network of relations between poetry and the remaining spheres of life. Through its connections to other art forms, philosophy, even science, poetry reaches a capacity much greater than that assumed by traditional esthetics based on the strict separation of cultural disciplines, discourses and expert cultures. (100)

Bartczak proposes to Ashbery with the help of William James whom he calls a proto-deconstructivist for breaking up with the notion of a monolithic world and declaring that “things are with each other in many ways but nothing includes everything or dominates over everything” (87). The indiscriminating openness and generous hospitality of Ashbery’s poetic language to other fields of human activity is compared to a hotel, a recurrent trope in his work. Hosting numerous guests and voices, holding several rooms, the hotel a polymorphous and ever-changing space: “The poem is none of the separate rooms: it’s only a hypothesis of their contiguity, a walk through and from one into another” (92). Elsewhere, Bartczak writes that reading Ashbery resembles walking through a building “in which each splendidly illuminated room reveals itself as a passage into another one” (197).

The metaphor of the hotel also applies to Bartczak’s own book: it is in the liminal spaces of its rooms – poetics, esthetics and pragmatics - that the object of his inquiry begins to emerge. *Świat nie skalony* contains theoretical essays sketching out the conceptual plane of his analysis (pragmatism, organicism, the abandonment of the idea of the transcendental character of language), as well as readings of selected poets and schools of poetry whose texts seem to perform what philosophy only describes. Bartczak examines manifestations of the pragmatic tradition in the poems of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens in the context of the Emersonian view of language, and the non-dualism of language and body in the work of Miron Białoszewski and Gertrude Stein. He talks about “texts that act” in his discussion of Robert Creeley, Andrzej Sosnowski, Piotr Sommer and John Ashbery, and the relation between the poetics of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, the New York painting and the New York poetry in his review of Piotr Sommer’s anthology of translations. A separate room is allotted to Richard Rorty’s “literary culture,” but Rorty’s voice and thought seem to vibrate through all adjacent spaces.

Bartczak never ceases to remind us that his book is an account of a series of personal conversations he’s been holding with the texts he presents. It is also an attempt to open the reading process to the possibilities offered by the pragmatic approach. In its insistence on the importance of the in-between it offers a new way of problematizing the gap, seeing the beginning where others saw the end.