EAST – WEST
CULTURAL PASSAGE

East-West Cultural Passage is the journal of the "C. Peter Magrath" Research Center for Cross-Cultural Studies. It appears annually and publishes work by scholars interested in the cross-cultural dialogue in areas such as literature, history, film, popular culture, institutions, politics and related subjects. The journal is devoted to the study of cross-cultural understanding with a clear humanistic emphasis. Articles with an interdisciplinary character are particularly welcome. The journal also publishes notes and comments, review essays and book reviews.

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AMERICAN SCRIVENER
IN PERSPECTIVE

Ştefan Avădanei
"Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi

This paper is not any kind of scholarly attempt to review and redefine the long debated question of what has been American about American literature/writing, its Americanism, which would have had to take us back to St Jean de Crevecoer's "What Is an American?" (1782), to James Kirk Paulding's "National Literature" (1820), to William Gilmore Sims's "Americanism in Literature" (1845), Margaret Fuller's "American Literature" (1846), Emerson's "American Scholar" (1837), to Hawthorne's "prefaces," and Melville's "Hawthorne," William Dean Howells, Twain, and all the way down to Kenneth Burke, R. P. Blackmur, Leslie Fiedler, Lionel Trilling, T. S. Eliot, Henry Louis Gates, Walter Ben Michaels's "The Vanishing American," Frederick Jameson and so on, and so on.

It is, rather, a simple putting in perspective of three stories and their basic, often overlooked, theme; the scrivener in my title is a scribe, a writer, and a copyist or transcriber, often, in Medieval times, on top of an erased text, whence the suggestion of America as a rewriting of European culture, or a writing on top of an erased European culture that can still be seen as a palimpsest—this much, at least, is what we gather from such authorities as Perry Miller and Sacvan Berkovitch.

America, in its colonial variant, comes into being and into history, first after Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and Johann Kepler (1571-1630), all of whom contributed in removing the earth from

its privileged, authoritative, monarchical position as center of the universe onto a cosmically democratic orbit, toiling among other planets in the solar system and in the galaxy; secondly, it comes after Martin Luther (1483-1546) and his understanding of God's favor as depending upon proclamation and interpretation of the Word, and after John Calvin (1509-1564) whose *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) contain not only puritanical beliefs, but also ideas about popular control of politics and a welfare system for the poor, sick, and handicapped; third, future Americans come to the New World, each of the 102 pilgrims on the Mayflower with his or her own copy of *King James' Bible* (1611), a source of great wisdom and of great language; but, most importantly for our purposes here, America is born and grows after Johannes Gutenberg (1400-1468), the inventor of printing, and after William Shakespeare, the great, fortunate, and unexplainable event in the history of any culture and literature, obligating Harold Bloom, for instance, to talk about the world after Shakespeare; anyway, after Gutenberg and Will, writer and writing become something else in the history of human culture.

With these antecedents, plus any of a multitude of European and world cultural-literary accomplishments that far, the American writer had little hope of breaking new ground before having transplanted onto the new soil whatever seemed to be favored by the new climate and conditions. No wonder thus that the colonial period is dominated by religious and travel writings and chronicles or histories, with few claims to originality, and much less to literary merit as such; moreover, the 18th century is characterized by translations from and imitations of European models, mostly in the theater, but not only.

Both historically and culturally, American literature proper begins after the Revolution and the Constitution, i.e. in the 19th century, when the writer as a real professional comes to the foreground, and when one of the great American themes gets to be

shaped and approached in a variety of forms; interestingly, but consistently enough, that theme is the writer and writing themselves; and not only writing, but, primarily, copying, or imitating, or transcribing.

Having the whole of British literature behind, with Shakespeare looming authoritatively not very far in the background, with a language that had already been brought to expressive and communicative feats and heights that could hardly be expected to be surpassed easily, the American writer seems to be obsessed with his role as a copy-maker, a scriptor, a scrivener, a scribe writing on top of another, not well-erased text; the palimpsest complex might be an issue that not a lot of scholars or critics have approached convincingly so far, and the three stories I have in mind are only as many samples in a longer series showing the American scrivener confronting his antecedents; the idea of writing as a craft and of copying as a sense of guilt seems to be transparent from behind writings that have other overt themes.

To illustrate this constant preoccupation, I will look at three stories, covering, as it were, one-and-a-half centuries of American writing about the writing of stories: *Rip Van Winkle (1819), Bartleby, the Scrivener (1856),* and *The Bear (1942);* but I could just as well taken threesomes by Hawthorne, Stephen Crane, and Steinbeck, or Poe, James, and Hemingway, or Gilman, Fl. O'Connor, and Cheever.

Washington Irving, as a real author, transcribes or writes on top of what his pretended author, Geoffrey Crayon wrote, who copies, from another distance, Diedrich Knickerbocker, who was inspired by the legend of the German Emperor Friedrick der Rothbart and thus the story about Rip, corroborated by Peter Vanderdonk, a descendant of historian Vanderdonk, gets to be told over and over again by Rip himself, with variations from one telling to another: and Rip is the one who heard a call, which became his calling into a world of wonder—strange, mysterious, unknown—i.e. literature.

Rip is the American writer with all the features of the profession: aversion to all kinds of profitable labor; kind neighbor; obedient; good-natured; a thirsty soul; henpecked; with a meekness of spirit; popular; a hunter; altruistic; generous; foolish; absent-minded; loved by women, children and dogs; taking the world easy; idle; careless; a philosopher and lover of the arts. His craft as a story-teller is both challenging and rewarding: to decipher the "impenetrable wall" of the forest he "made shift to scramble up…/from the gully/…, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path." Writing is like a network of paths. Consequently, *Rip Van Winkle* is the intertextually knit story of a writer in search of himself and of a story by means of a story about himself. Irving takes Rip as his double, as his fictional projection, as an implied narrator in a typically framed narrative meant to reveal the journey in quest of one's own fictional truth. He abandons the real world for the universe of fiction, where he looks for a way of understanding and describing what he had left behind. After repeated versions and revisions of his story, he succeeds in getting it right for the world, a world he prefers to abandon forever in favor of contemplating it (with himself as a virtual member) through the lenses of language and imagination.

Therefore, as a writer you can do one of two things: a). copy over and over again what has been written before; and b). refuse to do that, and turn this very attitude into the subject and theme of your writing. And this is what the nameless lawyer in *Bartleby* chose to do: he certainly had started as a copyist or scrivener (copying the old masters…) and then became a lawyer and a writer; he came into his new life and avocation when the Bartleby in him died. More specifically, he had started as a reader—of abandoned texts, addressed to no one in particular (the Dead Letter Office)—

and implied reader, for that matter—, then went on into copying and imitating the old masters, whom he had the decency and courage to consistently, stubbornly and fatally refuse, however politely, so that, thirdly, when he came into his own as a writer, the most profitable theme to approach seemed to be that of his own failure as a man; the Street was there for him, but the Wall seemed to be the more powerful symbol, so that the paradox of (artistic) humanity is that of Wall Street; the promising street, the vista is always there, but the walls are also high and uncompromising; copying the ways of the great old masters, side by side with simpletons (Turkey) and youngsters (Nippers) may most likely narrow your field of vision and exploration, and thus turn you into an anonymous writer, without identity. *Bartleby* is the simple story of "Wall" and "Street," and a "Scrivener" (Scriptor?); it is the story of a creator's life as a series of daring confrontations and challenges ("I would prefer not to"), followed by resignation and acceptance of defeat ("I am a rather elderly man…"—so much sadness in these few short words!), but also of triumph (the writing, the writing of the story as such, its poetry: "And so I found him there, standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a high wall, while all around, from the narrow slits of the jail windows, I thought I saw peering out upon him the eyes of murderers and thieves…").

The author of *Moby Dick* has a worth re-writer in Faulkner, as his Ben is Melville's white whale; it does not and it cannot exist other than in a story and it <u>is</u>; it is inherited, and widowed, and childless, it is smart, and shaggy and absolved of mortality, it is tremendous, ruthless, and irresistible, it is huge, dimensionless, too big, it is fierce, and wild, it is red-eyed, invincible and solitary, it is solid as a phantom, an anachronism in its furious immortality and inviolable anonymity; anonymous, yes, but it has its signature, a print, a crooked print, a "warped…, tremendous indentation"; "it was almost completely crumbled now, healing with unbelievable

speed, a passionate and almost visible relinquishment, back into the earth from which the tree had grown." But it also was, as a bear, Ike McCaslin's "college," his "alma mater," his class of creative writing. *The Bear* is the story of a teenager writing his way into or toward a book and truth it tells (Keats's "cold pastoral" teasing us out of thought); his schooling takes him into the mysterious world outside, while his knowledge and understanding come from the symbolic print left for him by the embodiment of the unknown; education is not always the result of learning – though this may help a lot –, but rather of a confrontation with the fear and consciousness of death. Fr. R. Karl (*William Faulkner, American Writer*/Scrivener?) describes this story as that of the "artist seeking coherence…; the boy and his quest for understanding is analogous to the artist seeking among his materials for what can hold the pieces together. The boy's exploration of the woods – his ability to manage without even compass, stick, or watch – is the artist's exploration of his material without any tools but his imagination. The boy forsakes the gun because he knows, through Sam Fathers, that the bear will avoid him with an artifact present; if he wants to experience the bear he must expose himself completely to the wilderness, without aids. He must, in effect make himself a rhythmic part of that experience as a way of getting close to the world of the bear, which is eternal and pure…," (657) like the story on the Grecian Urn. "With *The Bear* Faulkner had a metaphor for the writer, the artist, the man of imagination." His story is a memorable commentary on the relationship between nature and culture in the making of a writer – of an American <u>writer</u> or scrivener.

And a final personal note, as this is what my students in Iaşi and elsewhere think to be, in me, the Humpty-Dumpty syndrome; for H.-D. words mean what he chooses them to mean; for me, stories may mean what I choose to see through them, depending on the purpose and intent of my reading; which may mean, among

other things, that some other time, I could write about Rip and Bartleby and Ben in completely different terms; which is not the mark of perceptive reading, but the mark of great writing and story-telling.

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MORTAL INTERRUPTIONS:
AUTOBIOGRAPHY, DEATH, THANATOGRAPHY

Anthony O'Keeffe
Bellarmine University

Abstract

A literary and decidedly human problem faced by autobiography as a genre is its inevitable incompleteness—the autobiographer creates a text about a subject that cannot be written of as complete: namely his or her life. Critic James Olney has argued that the genre has been neglected in part because it cannot, by definition, present the kind of wholeness that literary aesthetics has long embraced as a standard of judgment. Two contemporary autobiographical works—Philip Roth's *Patrimony* and Rodger Kamenetz's *Terra Infirma*—focus on the death of a parent (for Roth his father, for Kamenetz his mother) as a way of enacting a new sense of autobiographical completeness. Both writers discover—as they unfold these texts of "self-in-relation-to" the now completed life of so significant an other—a reality that gives them a new sense of the "completed" pattern of their own lives; and they each discover this through what Kamenetz insightfully identifies as "family-grounded typology."

As a literary genre, autobiography encounters a problem at once aesthetic and decidedly human. The nature of that problem is neatly (and accurately) demarcated by these observations from two of the genre's most distinguished critics. In his "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment," James Olney writes:

> [One] reason for the neglect of autobiography as a subject of literary study is that critics (...) insisted that for satisfying aesthetic apprehension a work must display (in Stephen

Daedalus's phrase) "wholeness, harmony, and radiance." Now some autobiographies may display a certain radiance and a few may strive for and achieve some sort of harmony, but no autobiography as conceived in a traditional, common-sense way can possess wholeness because by definition the end of the story cannot be told, the *bios* [the life] must remain incomplete. In effect, the narrative is never finished, nor ever can be, within the covers of a book. (25)

And in his "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," Georges Gusdorf comments on another reason for the endless incompleteness of the genre:

Any autobiography is a moment of the life that it recounts; it struggles to draw the meaning from that life, but it is itself a meaning in the life. One part of the whole claims to reflect the whole, but it adds something to this whole of which it constitutes a moment. (43)

I have conveniently called this incompleteness—the result of intrinsic limits at once human and formal—a "problem," but it only seems so if we neglect what Gusdorf so interestingly defines as the great formal and psychological ambitions of autobiography, embodied in his quotation of Lequier: "To create and in creating be created, the fine formula of Lequier, ought to be the motto of autobiography" (44). Hence the close of Francois Jacob's *The Statue Within*, perhaps the only "honest" ending for any autobiography: "As I was leaving the [Luxembourg] gardens, I suddenly had an idea for an experiment on cell division. A quite simple experiment. All I had to do was…" (321).

As the title of my essay implies, I am concerned here with the first of those reasons for "incompleteness"—the mortal interruption of death. The autobiographical texts through which I've chosen to explore that interruption are *Terra Infirma*, by the poet Rodger

Kamenetz, and *Patrimony*, by the novelist Philip Roth. The two works share a single, powerful subject—the death of a much-loved parent. And in exploring that subject, both writers practice what I have termed, in another essay, "autobiographical displacement": lending their textual skills to the creation and re-creation of an *other* central self, attempting to give (and give back to) that self a voice that death has erased. Of course, such displacement cannot cancel the primacy of the living, textualizing self that so clearly longs to give still-enduring life to its subject, and so each work is as much revelation of that textualizing self as it is re-creation of the lost other. Hence these two texts, given the enduring primacy of the textualizing autobiographical self, and the intense focus of that self on the matter of death, provide an unusual opportunity to textualize within autobiographical discourse this mortal reality that, in one way, makes all autobiographies "incomplete." The term I would like to suggest for this kind of textualizing is "thanatography."

What I'm really pursuing here—since the actual embodiment of the autobiographer's death within the autobiographical narrative is impossible—are a set of autobiographical texts, and their common denominators, that make a particular kind of effort to recognize and textually encompass this impossible limit, bringing death home *to the textualizing self* through both "autobiographical displacement" and a particular formal and thematic response to mortality.

I. Patterns and typographies

Perhaps the most important warrant for this exploration lies in that small bit of text that Kamenetz himself provides in the subtitle of *Terra Infirma*: "A Memoir of My Mother's Life in Mine"— (adaptable to Roth's *Patrimony* through the shift from mother to father). Within the necessarily incomplete autobiographical narrative that Kamenetz's text embodies is the more complete narrative—up to and through death—of his mother's life. This "box within a box" structure allows death its natural place as the event

that completes the pattern of a life. *Terra Infirma* recognizes this at its start, which is Miriam Kamenetz's death scene: "I knew I had witnessed something extraordinary at the instant of her death. Her last gesture had moved right into me. It was staying with me all through the mourning, there in the place from which I am writing this down. (...) I could see her whole life gathering around her last moment. I felt that I could hold its pattern in my hand" (2).

The issue of "pattern" has long been a concern of autobiographical criticism. As Gusdorf puts it in "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," "the original sin of autobiography is first one of logical coherence and rationalization. (...) the illusion begins from the moment that the narrator confers a meaning on the event which, when it actually occurred, no doubt had several meanings, or perhaps none" (41-42). Even though Kamenetz feels some visceral sense that he can hold the pattern of his mother's life in his hand, he admits immediately "But I could not put it on paper then . . . the fabric would dissolve and I had the gesture of lifting a wave out of water" (2). Roth is more skeptical from the start, suggesting that the patterns we find in a life tend to be only trivially meaningful— "patterns" we all share: work histories, typical family conflicts, etc.

But both Kamenetz and Roth discover—as they unfold these texts of "self-in-relation-to" the now completed life of so significant an other—a reality that gives them a new sense of the "completed" pattern of their own lives: and they discover this through what Kamenetz sharply identifies as family-grounded typology. Chapter four of *Terra Infirma* is actually titled "On Typology," and makes explicit the presence, in the individual life, of a powerful, often unrecognized, shaping template. Kamenetz writes: "Every mind structures its world into a family. The great founding act of any science—Mendeleev's in chemistry, Linnaeus' in biology—is creating a family from formerly unrelated elements. Linnaeus' charts and Mendeleev's periodic table are family trees" (42). Out of this recognition comes a range of family stories in which

Kamenetz discovers, over and over, ancestors and present relatives who seem to have been acting out, unknowingly, a script created for them by an inescapable family history. Usually, we have the saving grace of ignorance: "We do not know whose history we are enacting. We do not see the repetitions behind the act" (50-51). But if one has access to that history, typographical knowledge becomes inevitable, as Kamenetz shows in these lines about his father, his mother, and his maternal grandfather:

> When I was a child, I never had any idea of what I wanted to be. So powerful was the radiation of my father's regret that it obliterated the idea of any career. (52)
> She was silent. And over the years she was silent about her silence.... I came to love secrecy myself. Without realizing it, I repeated the pattern, a typology that frustrated her. (41-42)
> I didn't know I was repeating the life of Benjamin, her father. The man of Talmud had become a barber. With the kabala of Rimbaud, I was janitor, dishwasher. (74)

In *Patrimony*, Philip Roth is also confronted with the discovery of his real place in a family typology he thinks he already knows. As he lives through the stages of his father's death, as Herman's stories and memories become more urgent in the face of extinction, Roth finds himself connecting to those stories and memories in a new and unsettling way. It begins with his recognition of himself as something of a self-chosen outsider—this prompted by the strength with which Herman faces his bad news: through a process of recalling the family's past history of illnesses (his own father's, his brother's, those of aunts and uncles and cousins, etc.):

> On and on, remembering the illnesses, the operations, the fevers, the transfusions, the recoveries, the comas, the vigils, the deaths, the burials—his mind, in its habitual way, working to detach him from the agonizing isolation of a man at the edge of oblivion and

to connect his brain tumor to a larger history, to place his suffering in a context where he was no longer someone alone with an affliction peculiarly and horribly his own but a member of a clan whose trials he knew and accepted and had no choice but to share. (70-71)

A paragraph later, Roth comments: "I was not so lucky. I couldn't find *any* context to diminish my forebodings" (71). In many ways, *Patrimony* becomes the finding of that context, a reconnection with the family typology that both chastens and renews Roth's sense of who he is. He finds himself re-enacting, with his father, Herman's own tender care for *his* stroke-afflicted father; he finds himself acting as both father and mother to Herman (whom he even overhears telling a friend on the phone, "Philip is like a mother to me" [181]—and is both surprised and consoled at the gender switch).

In an important scene—at once comic and poignant—Roth foregrounds his own awareness of these reconnections. Herman's face has been disfigured by a partial paralysis caused by the tumor, and he has been having a great deal of trouble getting a set of new dentures (necessitated by that disfigurement) precisely fitted. As he and Roth walk through his Newark neighborhood, Herman yanks them abruptly, angrily from his mouth—and then doesn't know what to do with them. Roth intervenes:

> "Here," I'd said, "give them to me," and I took the dentures and stuck them in my pocket. To my astonishment, having them in my own hand was utterly satisfying. Far from feeling squeamish or repelled, as I continued along, guiding him by one arm up onto the curb, I was amused by the rightness of it, as though we'd now officially become partners in a comic duo—as though I'd assumed the role of straight man to a clown whose ill-fitting false teeth invariably brought the house down, a joke on a par with Durante's nose or Eddie Cantor's eyes. By taking the dentures,

slimy saliva and all, and dumping them in my pocket, I had, quite
inadvertently, stepped across the divide of physical estrangement
that, not so unnaturally, had opened up between us once I'd
stopped being a boy. (152)

Out of such reconnection grows a more complex understanding,
much explored by Roth in the remainder of the book, of a long
pattern of protectiveness toward Herman's vulnerability ("as an
emotional family man vulnerable to family friction, as a
breadwinner vulnerable to financial uncertainty, as a rough-hewn
son of Jewish immigrants vulnerable to social prejudice" [180])—a
typology in complex conflict with such traditional typologies as the
son's natural rebellion against the father, the extravagantly
successful son's rejection of any material inheritance from his
father, etc. These are made starkly available in a long scene in
which Roth pretends to be a psychiatrist, and helps his brutal cab
driver come to terms with the violent Freudian typologies through
which that driver conquered his own father (153-159).

In the end, the recognition and retelling and embodiment of
typology itself gives to both Roth and Kamenetz a more complete
sense of the patterns of their lives, a sense that need not wait upon
the death that has closed the patterns of a father's life, a mother's
life, for the fullness of narrative closure. Such typology represents
one strategy by which the completeness that comes with death is
allowed to enter into the narratives of their own lives, and into their
awareness of the shapes of their lives.

II. The engagement with death itself

Terra Infirma and *Patrimony* are, definitively, motivated by and
centered on death, and in each case a death that breaks a line of
living continuity with one of the writer's actual creators. The
intimacy of this connection is, I think, fundamental to the kind of
text I am calling *thanatography*—as are the manner in which death

is treated, and a certain level of "theoretical" awareness of, and address to, the nature of autobiography itself**.**

The intimate connection

If family typology provides a more general (though still quite immediate) template of each writer's "pattern of life," the direct connection with the lost parent—and the dramatic intimacy of that connection—provides one of the two most significant embodiments of both that typology *and* of a deep individuating experience of how death completes pattern and confirms typology. As Roth's close friend Johanna Clark tells him when he calls her for comfort during the early stages of Herman's decline, "The death of a parent, it's horrible... Half, or more, of life goes. You feel poorer, you know: somebody who knew me all those years..." (127). And Kamenetz, after going through the necessary establishing of himself against his mother's definitions of and hopes for him (enacting *the* generic typology of most children and parents), is moved to re-embrace the earliest deep connection with Miriam in the face of her death: "And yet I was drawn back to her. In the last year of her life, I played my old role as favorite son" (115).

In *Patrimony*, that intimacy is confirmed in several vivid, unexpected ways. On the night after his mother's death, Roth sleeps with Herman, the beginning of those intimacies of care which will provoke the phone remark Roth later hears—"Philip is like a mother to me" (181). As Roth reports: "After turning off the light, I reached out and took his hand and held it as you would the hand of a child who is frightened of the dark. He sobbed for a minute or two—then I heard the broken, heavy breathing of someone very deeply asleep, and I turned over to try to get some rest myself" (100). Most startling for its brutal imposition of a difficult intimacy upon Roth is the scene in which he must clean up the bathroom that has been wrecked by Herman's terrible moment of incontinence:

> The shit was everywhere, smeared underfoot on the bathmat, running over the toilet bowl edge and, at the foot of the bowl, in a pile on the floor. It was splattered across the glass of the shower stall from which he'd just emerged, and the clothes discarded in the hallway were clotted with it. It was on the corner of the towel he had started to dry himself with. In this smallish bathroom, which was ordinarily mine, he had done his best to extricate himself from his mess alone, but as he was nearly blind and just up out of a hospital bed, in undressing himself and getting into the shower he had managed to spread the shit over everything. I saw that it was even on the tips of the bristles of my toothbrush hanging in the holder over the sink. (172)

Roth's comment after the heroic work of both comforting Herman and cleaning up the disastrous mess, is a stark recognition, and one connected directly with his book's title: "So *that* was the patrimony. And not because cleaning it up was symbolic of something else but because it wasn't, because it was nothing less or more than the lived reality that it was" (176).

In *Terra Infirma*, that intimacy is woven throughout the book, but manifests itself notably in several key scenes. After describing the complex dream which prompts the writing of *Terra Infirma*, Kamenetz comments: "My mother came in a dream to tell me about my mind which was appropriate since she had landscaped so much of it" (14). When Kamenetz marries his first wife, his mother pre-empts that wife's primacy in a startling way: "When I escorted my mother down the aisle, she gripped my arm until her knuckles turned white. There were gasps as we entered. She was wearing a white gown.... I had the feeling of publicly enacting a dark taboo. I was marrying my mother. What was left? Even Oedipus could plead ignorance" (67). And late in his mother's illness, Kamenetz enjoys his first public success as a poet—a commission from a Baltimore synagogue to write a cantata borrowing its material from his first book, *The Missing Jew*. Miriam's appearance at its

premier—despite tumors in her brain, her spine, her liver; despite the fact that no medical van would take the risk of driving her—astonishes both Kamenetz and the audience: "As the choir sang the first notes, heads turned to the back. My mother was riding down the center aisle in a gurney chair. Her face was broken with tears. My brother and sister were pushing her. Why people were staring at her was obvious. My mother had left her deathbed. No makeup could camouflage her condition" (85).

Death itself

Central, of course, to the argument for a distinct enterprise that can be termed *thanatography*, is the nature of death's textual presence within each book. If that presence is to allow the writer to enact, with a special reference to the textualizing self, the complete and completing reality of death, his or her connection with it must, I think, also be of a deep and unsettling intimacy. In my reading of these two texts, that intimacy is manifested by a continuous engagement with death as both physical reality and contemplative subject, as well as by a presentation of the moment of physical death—a more or less traditional "death scene"—that embodies again both the physical reality and its contemplative force.

In *Patrimony*, the ongoing engagement is manifested in the whole arc of Roth's care for Herman as the book unfolds: "Alone, when I felt like crying I cried, and I never felt more like it than when I removed from the envelope the series of pictures of his brain—and not because I could readily identify the tumor invading the brain but simply because it was his brain, my father's brain, what prompted him to think the blunt way he thought, speak the emphatic way he spoke, reason the emotional way he reasoned, decide the impulsive way he decided.... I had seen my father's brain, and everything and nothing was revealed. A mystery scarcely short of divine, the brain, even in the case of a retired insurance man with an eighth-grade education from Newark's Thirteenth

Avenue School" (16-17). Throughout Roth's memoir, such empathetic intimacy creates the clearest sense of what Herman himself must be feeling so inexpressively: "he was utterly isolated within a body that had become a terrifying escape-proof enclosure, the holding pen in a slaughterhouse" (171).

In a decidedly ironic twist of fate, near the end of Herman's life Roth has his own brush with mortality, and is saved only by emergency heart surgery. As his condition deteriorates and the decision to operate must be accelerated, Roth comments: "I realized that never had I been more at one with my father than I was at that moment: not since college ... had our lives been, if not identical, so inter-meshed and spookily interchangeable. Helpless at the center of this little medical hubbub, I confronted, with a clarifying shock, the inevitability in which, for him, every second of existence was now awash" (225). Six weeks after his own near-death, Roth is finally able to be with Herman again, and is startled by how much ground he has lost to his illness: "He who had given Abe a ninety-fourth birthday party had himself become one of the aged whose age is incalculable, little more than a shrunken thing with a crushed face, wearing a black eye patch and sitting completely inert, almost unrecognizable now, even to me" (229-230).

A similar engagement with the deep physical afflictions of slow death marks Kamenetz's *Terra Infirma*. Typical is the scene when he wheels Miriam, for the last time, through the hospice garden: "When it came time to roll over the copper sill to take us outside, I agonized but I could not spare her the jolt. Her face tightened and she yelped; tears flew from her eyes. Two inches of metal but the small wheels were stuck and I couldn't get her over. Damn it, damn her, damn everything, I pushed it, not so much for her as for myself; I couldn't stand her stuck and hopeless, one set of wheels into the garden. / 'Mom, are you all right?' / Tears streamed down her face. I gave her time to compose herself, then wheeled her down the path" (14). And, like Roth, Kamenetz registers painstakingly the

all too obvious deterioration of the dying parent: "Her face was swollen and on one side flushed with injected dye. Stubble surrounded a plastic bubble on the top of her head. Her hair had grown back curly after the radiation treatments, a mild gray like ash. She held her back stiffly and when she stood, she felt pain in the back of her neck that seemed to emanate from the purple surgical scar" (87).

For both Roth and Kamenetz, the stages of illness, and its inevitable progress toward the only possible end, lend to their texts a structural wholeness unusual in autobiographical writing. Kamenetz speaks to this directly, and what he says is both echoed and confirmed throughout *Patrimony* as well: "The phrase is strange. 'My mother's illness'—as though it belonged somehow to her, like her eyes. Yet one cannot help seeing it that way after living with it. The illness becomes a feature of the person, in many ways, the dominant feature. It is the fact that organizes everything. Chiefly, it organizes time into a dramatic landscape. Sharply etched cliffs with steep descents provide views of valleys below. And then, caverns, holes slashed in the earth, abysses with underground passages and black cold rivers. It is *terra infirma*, shaky ground" (94-95).

The scenes of each parent's death are both too long and—in many ways, too painful—to be quoted in their entirety, but they are crucial as both emotional and textual moments in each work. They are, as one would expect, very moving. They are also touchstones of the textual ways in which each writer has engaged with death throughout their works. Each scene fully presents the stark physicality of the suffering each particular death brings; each creates a sense of continuity with and completion of something essential in the character and individuality of the lost other (Herman the laborer, Miriam the dramatic with-holder/sharer of secrets); and most importantly, each is double in its intentions, being *biographical* for the subject (Herman or Miriam), and importantly

autobiographical for the writer (Roth, 231-233; Kamenetz, 109-116). The completeness of pattern for the lost parent is consciously registered for each writer, and leads out to a "second completion"—emotional and textual—beyond the moment of, and recognition of, death: in the death-inspired dreams that give fundamental meaning, and a different center, to the two books' autobiographical enterprises.

III. The dreams of thanatography

The kind of autobiographical writing to which I have speculatively and exploratively attached the term thanatography is founded upon and dominated by the death of a family-connected other—in these two texts, a parent. That much seems an obvious necessity of the argument (given what I have claimed for family typology and a particular intimacy of emotional and physical connection). But it is also profoundly marked, in its own completions, by the way in which each parent is recognized as the *double author*—of both the writer, and of the text to which the writer has committed (anything missing?)*.* For both Roth and Kamenetz*,* each parent continues the text's "writing," its generation *through* them—and beyond their conscious control; having inspired each text, the lost parent adds the final reality of "correcting" or "critiquing" the writer's autobiographical enterprise, after death, through dream.

As James Olney has pointed out in "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment," autobiography is a genre marked by an unusual and persistent strain of self-critique:

> Autobiography is a self-reflexive, a self-critical act, and consequently the criticism of autobiography exists *within* the literature instead of alongside it. The autobiographer can discuss and analyze the autobiographical act as he performs it (…) from St. Augustine on a compiler could have put together a vast collection of critical, theoretical pieces drawn from and reflecting

on autobiographies and the creative process that has brought them
into being. (25)

The deepest and most interesting autobiographies are
characterized—in Olney's view, and, it seems, in the general
critical view—by a certain amount of "theoretical address" on the
part of their authors. Roth and Kamenetz demonstrate that
theoretical awareness throughout their texts, in their meditations
upon the nature of narrative, memory, formal completeness,
metaphor, and their own conflicted roles as writers. But they also, I
think, advance the possibilities through what they make of dream
within their texts.

In *Patrimony*, Roth records two important dreams—one shortly
before Herman's death, another shortly after. Here is the first:

> I dreamed I was standing on a pier in a shadowy group of
> unescorted children who may or may not have been waiting to be
> evacuated. The pier was down in Port Newark, but the Port
> Newark of some fifty years ago, where I had been taken by my
> father and my Uncle Ed to see the ships anchored in the bay that
> opened in the distance to the Statue of Liberty.... In the dream, a
> boat, a medium-size, heavily armored, battle-gray boat, some sort
> of old American warship stripped of its armaments and wholly
> disabled, floated imperceptibly toward the shore. I was expecting
> my father to be on the ship, somehow to be among the crew, but
> there was no life on board and no sign anywhere of anyone in
> command. The dead-silent picture, a portrait of the aftermath of a
> disaster, was frightening and eerie: a ghostly hulk of a ship,
> cleared by some catastrophe of all living things, aiming toward
> the shore with only the current to guide it, and we on the pier who
> may or may not have been children gathered together to be
> evacuated. (...) Ultimately the dream became unbearable and I
> woke up, despondent and frightened and sad—whereupon I
> understood that it wasn't that my father was aboard the ship but
> that my father *was* the ship. (236-237)

Of this dream, Roth comments "this is not a picture of my father, at the end of his life, that my wide-awake mind, with its resistance to plaintive metaphor and poeticized analogy was ever likely to have licensed"; it is indeed sleep's "wisdom" that has "kindly delivered up to me this childishly simple vision so rich with truth" (237). But the dream that follows Herman's death is far more harrowing, and far more deeply concerned with the textual enterprise upon which Roth has been engaged—which it violently and tellingly critiques:

> Then, one night some six weeks later, at around 4:00 a.m., he came in a hooded white shroud to reproach me. He said, "I should have been dressed in a suit. You did the wrong thing." I awakened screaming. All that peered out from the shroud was the displeasure in his dead face. And his only words were a rebuke: I had dressed him for eternity in the wrong clothes.
>
> In the morning I realized that he had been alluding to this book, which, in keeping with the unseemliness of my profession, I had been writing all the while he was ill and dying. The dream was telling me that, if not in my books or in my life, at least in my dreams I would live perennially as his little son, with the conscience of a little son, just as he would remain alive there not only as my father but as *the* father, sitting in judgment on whatever I do. (237-238)

In *Terra Infirma*, Kamenetz is visited by three dreams shortly after his mother's death; two seem the ordinary product of grief and of the interrupted connection with the one who has been lost. But the third—so much deeper and richer and unsettling—actually comes to generate the text that is *Terra Infirma,* and brings to its author an understanding that he could not have known without it:

> Her visit this time was so calm and regal, I no longer cared for interpretations. The dream had authority, its own manner of speaking. I'd no more quarrel with it than with an apple.

> My mother and I were walking in a French garden, a careful neat garden with fountains at intervals. We were silent, as though under a spell of enchantment, one of those moments that comes sometimes at the end of a long afternoon of walking and talking on a perfect fall day. We stopped and looked back along the way we had come. A goldfish splashed in the water, an oriole flew from an apple branch, a coin dropped on the tile edge of the fountain. Three events, one after the other. A voice, which seemed to be coming from everywhere at once, said "All these things pass through the spirit like a single wave through water."
>
> I took this to mean that the three events that had just occurred, though apparently distinct, were actually part of a single motion like a wave. And that my mother came from a place where you could see the wave. Then the voice added, "There are two voices. One is continuous and belongs to us both. The other..." I woke with the sensation that "the voice" speaking with such deep authority was my own. (11)

And Kamenetz closes *Terra Infirma* with a final recognition of the power—still unfolding—of that dream:

> I see now I have been mistaken about the origin of that dream. It was not our walk in the hospice garden, not the white tulips. The dream grew from her last gesture, her last words. And a voice that spoke from a dying body, from beyond life.
>
> Now in the wake of that dream, word after word has risen and fallen, broken and receded. This book is one wave, her legacy and her will. (116)

For both Roth and Kamenetz, these dreams continue and somehow complete something crucial to their autobiographical selves—as lived, and as textualized.

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Perhaps, in the end, no comment better sums up what both writers have aimed at and achieved—both consciously and unconsciously—in the way of formal wholeness, than the line with which Rodger Kamenetz ends this early justification of *Terra Infirma*: "at best, history aggregates, only poetry unifies" (3):

> I was afraid it would be too sentimental. For what story is more sentimental than the death of a boy's mother—even though Edgar Poe, for one, called it the most "poetical" of subjects? Poe also promised immortality to the author who wrote a simple volume, "My Heart Laid Bare"...
>
> Here is such a volume. But I can be true to the subject only by straying from it. I have read a few books that have been more dutiful. They were all published by the vanity press. Like mine, they were haunted by the loss of a loved one. But their authors make no distinction between history and poetry, as Aristotle does. They tell every detail in chronological order, as though the reader already acknowledged their significance. They do not see that, *at best, history aggregates, only poetry unifies* (my italics).

In the formed work of each writer, the "poetry" of thanatography offers an unusual purchase on that usual reality which at once closes off and keeps incomplete the autobiographical text.

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LUCIAN BLAGA: AN AMERICAN PRAGMATIST
IN EUROPE

Michael S. Jones
Liberty University, Virginia

Introduction

There is no contradiction between the assertion that Lucian Blaga was an original thinker and the admission that the influence of numerous other thinkers can be seen in his work. Blaga composed a systematic philosophy whose single most striking feature may be its creativity. Nonetheless, the influences of many preceding philosophers are unmistakably evident in his opus. The neo-Kantian aspects of Blaga's philosophy are well documented.[1] The Neo-Platonic elements, and, Blaga's dispute with Stăniloae not withstanding, the related influence of Orthodox theology and Orthodox religion,[2] virtually shout themselves to the non-Orthodox reader. The similarities between Blaga's philosophy of culture and

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[1] See G. G. Constandache, "Critique of the Unconscious: Kantian Influences in the Works of Lucian Blaga." *Man and World* 30 (1997): 445-452; Petru Ioan, "Matricea Kantiană a Filosofiei Lui Blaga." *Revista de Filosofie* 44 (1997): 213-221. Blaga alludes to the influence of Kant and also of Marburg neo-Kantianism in his autobiography, *Hronicul şi cântecul vârstelor*, vol. 6 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1979), 129. Kant's influence on Blaga is very clearly seen on page 56 of *Cultură şi cunoştiinţă*, where Blaga writes that the most significant problem in the theory of knowledge is that of the categories. Blaga devotes a whole chapter of this book to this problem, Lucian Blaga, "Categoriile," in *Cultură şi cunoştiinţă*, vol. 8 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1983).

[2] On the influence of Orthodoxy, see Vasile Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga, energie românească*, 2nd ed. (Timişoara, RO: Marineasa, 1995), 80.

Spengler's cultural morphology are well known.[3] Many other influences have been detected in Blaga's philosophy as well. Scholars have noted the parallel between Blaga's differentials and Leibniz's monads,[4] a possible relation between Blaga's epistemological modesty and the subjectivism of German Romanticism,[5] the important influence of Freud and Jung on Blaga's understanding of the subconscious,[6] and even certain similarities between Blaga's thought and Indian philosophies.[7] However, one very American aspect of Blaga's philosophy seems to have escaped notice by most of Blaga's Romanian commentators. This aspect is his epistemological Pragmatism. It is the thesis of this article that Blaga's philosophy contains all of the elements necessary for him to be considered a pragmatist in the American sense of the term.

In order to sustain this thesis, I will need to accomplish two things. First, I must briefly describe what it means to be a pragmatist in the context of American philosophy. Second, I must show that Blaga's philosophy fits this description.

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[3] Michael S. Jones, "Blaga's Philosophy of Culture: More than a Spenglerian Adaptation," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, seria Philosophia*, XLVIII: 1-2 (2003), 167-174; Alexandru Boboc, "Blaga, Nietzsche si Spengler. Demersuri moderne asupra paradigmei <<stil>>," *Seculum*, serie noua, 1:3-4 (1995), 28-34.

[4] Lucian Blaga, *Diferenţialele divine*, in vol. 11 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1988), 95, 165ff.

[5] Vasile Muscă, "Specificul creaţiei culturale româneşti în câmpul filosofiei" in *Lucian Blaga – cunoaştere şi creaţie* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), 468-469.

[6] Liviu Antonesei, "Repere pentru o filosofie a culturii," in Ghise, Botez, and Botez, *Lucian Blaga – cunoaştere şi creaţie,* 402ff; Muscă, "Specificul creaţiei culturale româneşti în câmpul filosofiei," 471, 473

[7] Mircea Itu, *Indianismul lui Blaga,* (Braşov: Editura Orientul Latin, 1996); see also Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul şi cântecul vârstelor*, 174.

Pragmatism Defined

Pragmatism is a school of thought. Like many schools of thought, those thinkers who are considered to belong to this school differ from each other on so many points that scholars have found it difficult to single out exactly what elements are pragmatism's defining characteristics. There is a popular conception of pragmatism as an attitude that espouses a practical approach to resolving difficult or problematic situations. However, this simple conception of pragmatism is not an adequate description of the philosophical school that bears the name. As Philip Wiener has observed, "We cannot simply equate the "pragmatic" with the "practical" as is so commonly done by popular writers."[8]

Pragmatism may be thought of as a school of philosophical thought that is characterized by a set of attitudes and doctrines most of which are shared by most of its proponents. In this, Pragmatism is a "family resemblance" in the Wittgensteinian sense: not all of the family traits are visible in every member of the family, but each member bears enough of the traits in order to be recognized as belonging to that family. John J. Stuhr, in the introduction to *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy*,[9] discusses what he considers to be the essential elements of classical American Pragmatism. He lists the following seven themes that can be traced through the writings of Peirce, James, Royce, Santayana, Dewey, and Mead: 1. Rejection of the practices and options that had become the accepted tradition of modern philosophy. 2. A fallibilist view of the human epistemic situation. 3. A pluralist view of human

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[8] Philip P. Wiener, "Pragmatism," in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, Philip P. Wiener, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973-74), vol. 3, 553, http://www.pragmatism.org/companion/pragmatism_wiener.htm. Viewed 4/1/2005.

[9] John J. Stuhr, ed. *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*, 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 1-7.

experiences and values. 4. A radical empiricism in which it is recognized that the subject is active (rather than passive) in experience and that experience admits of no subject-object distinction. 5. The methodological continuity of science and philosophy as pragmatically justified experimental inquiries. 6. The belief that one goal of philosophy should be the improvement of the human situation. 7. An emphasis on the social context of all human endeavors.

The details of this analysis of the core of Pragmatism could be disputed. Most, and perhaps all, of the characteristics that Stuhr lists can be found in other schools of philosophy. It might also be argued that some of them might better be seen as secondary traits not central to the movement. However, from these themes enumerated and elaborated by Stuhr can be distilled a draught that flows from the very headwaters of American Pragmatism. This draught is epistemological by nature. The *sine qua non* of pragmatism is its particular approach to the theory of knowledge.

Pragmatism's Negative Element
The epistemology of American Pragmatism contains two essential elements, one negative and the other positive. The negative element is a response to the objectivist epistemological tradition of the West. From Descartes through to 19th and 20th century Positivism, and continuing in some figures in contemporary analytic and phenomenological philosophy, the Western epistemological tradition has pursued the goal of apodictic certainty and has sought objective criteria of truth. Postmodern philosophy has gained fame by repudiating this goal. However, even before Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, et al. pronounced the end of modernity, Pragmatists such as James and Dewey had presented strong arguments showing that beliefs are historically situated, that knowledge is a construct, and that the criteria that one employs in making assessments of truth are

subjective and contingent upon the perspective of the person doing the assessing.[10]

Going against the current of epistemological objectivism, Pragmatists have argued for a much more "modest" epistemology, one that is more in keeping with human nature and the situation in which we find ourselves. This is evident in James' understanding of the nature of truth. James embraces a multi-faceted theory that combines correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic elements.[11] According to James, the pragmatist view of truth is part of a process-oriented epistemology that relates to a process-metaphysical world. Because the world is dynamic rather than static, truth is changing, and therefore human beliefs must change along with it. Therefore beliefs are necessarily both constructivist and contextual: "...the absolute truth will have to be made, made as a relation incidental to the growth of a mass of verification-experience... so far as reality means experienceable reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly in process of mutation – mutation towards a definite goal, it may be – but still mutation."[12]

This epistemological modesty in Pragmatism is also reflected in Dewey's instrumentalist approach to Pragmatism, the contextualism of which is sensitive to the developing contexts of belief. Dewey was aware of this, and saw it as a key feature of Pragmatism: "'pragmatism' is, in its truth, just the fact that the empiricist does

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[10] Wiener emphasizes this anti-objectivist aspect of Pragmatism, 551-570.

[11] There are places in James' writing that seem to oppose the correspondence theory of truth, but what he is really opposing in these places is a view of the correspondence theory that assumes a static view of reality. See James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York: Longman, Green, and Co., 1907), 198, 223; Charley D. Hardwick and Donald A. Crosby, editors, *Pragmatism, Neo-Pragmatism, and Religion: Conversations with Richard Rorty*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 206.

[12] James, *Pragmatism*, 224-5; see also Hardwick, 206.

take account of the experienced 'drift, occasion and contexture' of things experienced."[13] The constructivism of Dewey's Pragmatism is reflected in his bold statement: "... knowing is an act which modifies what previously existed... its worth consists in the consequences of the modification."[14]

These same features are found in contemporary Pragmatism as well. Richard Rorty, for example, speaks as a contextualist when he states that "getting rid of 'the view from nowhere' – the idea of a sort of knowing that has nothing to do with agency, values, or interests – might have considerable cultural importance."[15] He speaks as a constructivist when he argues that "every belief, no matter how primitive or vicious, corresponds to some 'world' – the 'world' that contains the objects mentioned by the belief (Ptolemy's crystalline spheres or the subhuman nature of the slaves.)"[16] Historicism and constructivism are the central themes of Joseph Margolis' book "Historied Thought, Constructed World."[17] Margolis' perspectivism is clearly seen in his statement, "the choice of truth-values (or truth-like values) assigned, as a matter of policy or principle, to any sector of inquiry is a function, under symbiosis,

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[13] Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," in Stuhr, 459.

[14] John Dewey, "The Quest for Certainty," 245, quoted in Forrest Oran Wiggins, "William James and John Dewey," in *The Personalist* 23 (1942), 191.

[15] Rorty, 45.

[16] Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1-2. In this passage Rorty is not defending the correspondence theory of truth: on the contrary, he is employing argumentum ad absurdum against it in order to substitute for correspondence a (presumably) more pragmatic theory of truth, one that is similar to Dewey's *instrumentalism*. However, Rorty also argues that a coherent theory of the nature of truth is not possible, and states that James denied the correspondence theory (p.3). I consider both of these points highly improbable. Regarding the latter, see James, *Pragmatism*, 198, 223.

[17] Joseph Margolis, *Historied Thought, Constructed World: A Conceptual Primer for the Turn of the Millennium*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

of what we take to be the nature of the domain in question," and again, "Everything that exists and is real is socially constructed."[18]

Pragmatism's Positive Element

Counterbalancing this negative element of Pragmatism is a positive element that is Pragmatism's most noted feature: a *de facto* criterion of truthfulness.[19] The traditional criterion of truthfulness is correspondence with reality: a proposition is true if what it asserts corresponds to the way things actually are.[20] However, how to determine the truth of a proposition using the correspondence criterion is quite a boondoggle: it may be just as difficult to determine whether or not a proposition corresponds to reality as it is to determine whether or not it is true. In essence, correspondence as a criterion may be a begging of the question. As a result of this and other considerations, correspondence as a criterion of truthfulness has received much criticism,[21] and alternative criteria have been proposed.

The most prominent of these alternatives is coherence: a proposition is taken to be true if it functions coherently within a system of beliefs.[22] Another theory, one that combines correspondence and coherence, suggests that a proposition is known to be true iff it can be shown to correspond to reality or is properly

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[18] Margolis, 65, 151.

[19] Some contemporary pragmatists eschew the notion of criteria of truthfulness as being a remnant of the supposedly "discredited correspondence theory of truth" (Rorty, i) and therefore substitute notions such as *value* in its place.

[20] Brad Dowden and Norman Swartz, "Truth," in James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, ed., *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://www.iep.utm.edu/t/truth.htm#H3, viewed 4/6/2005.

[21] See, for example, Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

[22] Keith Lehrer, "Coherentism," in Dancy and Sosa, 67-70.

related to propositions that can be shown to correspond to reality.[23] The former of these views seems to overlook the meaning of the word truth in ordinary language; the later suffers from the same question-begging shortcoming as does the coherence theory. A third alternative is presented by deflationary theories of truth, which view assertions of truthfulness not as descriptions but rather as endorsements indicating what the speaker believes about the proposition.[24] However, this theory offers no criterion of truthfulness.

Pragmatism offers a unique solution to the problem of criteria of truthfulness. This solution honors the ordinary use of the term "truth" and at the same time offers a criterion of truthfulness that avoids begging the question. Pragmatism suggests that a proposition is true if it succeeds when put into practice. In this context, to succeed is to be useful in resolving cognitive or practical problems, such as problems of scientific, technical, ethical, or religious inquiry. Ideas are viewed as adaptive means of action; therefore the propositions which express them are true only insofar as they are able to adapt actions (and thoughts) to various circumstances.

James did not reject correspondence and coherence as criteria of truthfulness. However, he did observe that there are many truth-contexts in which neither empirical correspondence nor coherence is appropriate. To James, these areas are among the most important areas of human existence: religious practice, ethical decision, aesthetic choice, etc.[25] In these areas the criteria of "satisfaction"

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[23] See Susan Hack's proposed "foundherentism," in Timm Triplett, *Recent Work on Foundationalism*, American Philosophical Quarterly 27 no. 2 (April 1990), 107-108.

[24] Paul Horwich, "Theories of Truth," in Dansy and Sosa, 511-514.

[25] For James, "this entire spectrum of objective knowledge of matters of fact merely provides the stage, setting and backdrop for the really important issues of our lives. The important questions are not about

and "power" are more appropriate.[26] By "satisfaction" James means expedience in a particular context. This is the most clearly pragmatic area of James' theory of truth. A belief is "true" (or taken to be true, considered to be true) if it satisfies a person's need to perform a task at a particular time. James' famous statement, "You can say of it then either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean the same thing..."[27], expresses his view concisely.

James proposes a pragmatist approach to justification: consequentialism. This approach encompasses evidential justification where appropriate, but does not rely on it exclusively. According to consequentialist justification, a belief is justified iff it produces desirable consequences. If two competing beliefs both produce desirable consequences, the one that produces the best consequences is justified, or the one that produces desirable consequences most reliably is justified. If a particular ethical system can be seen to produce the best consequences, that ethical system is justified. If religion produces desirable consequences that would not be had without religion, then religion is justified.

Dewey's "instrumentalism" is a pragmatist approach to knowledge wherein knowing is viewed as an activity that is directed towards the overcoming of the "problematic situations" that arise during enquiry. Knowing is an experiment: conclusions are tentative hypotheses that may be revised when a new problematic is confronted. This is reflected in Dewey's pragmatic description of truth, "Just as to say an idea was true all the time is a way of saying *in retrospect* that it has come out in a certain fashion, so to say that an idea is "eternally true" is to indicate *prospective* modes of application which are indefinitely anticipated. Its

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matters of fact, but about our justification as persons and whether our lives are worth living." Hardwick, 210.

[26] Hardwick, 212.

[27] James, *Pragmatism*, 204.

meaning, therefore, is strictly pragmatic. It does not indicate a property inherent in the idea as intellectualized existence, but denotes a property of use and employment."[28]

In instrumentalism, ideas or thoughts are instruments that relate experiences, making predictions possible, which guides actions. These predictions (and consequent actions) are in turn tested by other experiences, which show whether or not the actions are expedient, and therefore whether the predictions were true. In this scenario, "true" is seen to refer retrospectively to the value of ideas or thoughts and predictions judged according to their effectiveness in guiding actions expediently. A proposition, then, is taken to be true if it is thought that it will effectively serve to predictively guide actions, or retrospectively is taken to be true if it has been seen to be an effective guide to actions.[29]

These views from early Pragmatism are reflected in the thought of contemporary pragmatists. A pragmatic tendency is evident, for instance, in W. V. Quine's program of naturalized epistemology when he writes: "But why all this creative reconstruction, all this make-believe? …Why not just see how this construction really proceeds? … If we are out simply to understand the link between observation and science, we are well advised to use any available information, including that provided by the very science whose link with observation we are seeking to understand."[30] According to Quine, the traditional projects of epistemology no longer offer any hope of success, and the task that remains for epistemology is the psychological one of analyzing how human cognition succeeds to the degree that it does. The truth of cognition is evident in its

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[28] John Dewey, quoted in Stuhr, 436 (italics are Dewey's).

[29] Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin' Press, 1979), 175.

[30] W.V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, 75-76.

functionality: therefore the task of epistemology is not the justification, but rather the explication, of our belief mechanisms.[31]

Although there are significant differences between Quine and Rorty, Rorty also evidences this pragmatic view of justification. "…the question 'Do our practices of justification lead to truth?' is as unanswerable as it is unpragmatic. It is unanswerable because there is no way to privilege our current purposes and interests. It is unpragmatic because the answer to it would make no difference whatever to our practice. But surely, it will be objected, we know that we *are* closer to truth. Surely we have been making both intellectual and moral progress. Certainly we have been making progress, by our lights. That is to say, we are much better able to serve the purposes we wish to serve, and to cope with the situations we believe we face, than our ancestors would have been. But when we hypostatise the adjective 'true' into 'Truth' and ask about our relation to it, we have absolutely nothing to say."[32] Rorty's point seems to be that our beliefs are justified by their successes rather than by their relationship to some abstract ideal of truth.

Thus we have seen that Pragmatism contains two seminal moments, one negative and the other positive. We shall now see that both of these key elements are present in the epistemology of Lucian Blaga.

Blaga's Philosophy
Blaga's philosophical writings encompass a systematic philosophy that includes most of the major divisions of modern philosophy. This fact distinguishes Blaga from most American Pragmatists, who tended to avoid constructing philosophical systems along the lines of traditional philosophy. Furthermore, one of the most striking and central features of Blaga's system is his elaborate metaphysical proposal. Although many of Blaga's insights could stand on their

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[31] Quine, 82-83.
[32] Rorty, 3-4.

own without the support of his metaphysics, it is precisely the metaphysics that binds the various elements of his philosophy together as a system. This significantly separates Blaga from American Pragmatists, since the great majority of Pragmatists have disavowed speculative metaphysics in favor of what they see as a more empirical and more practical focus to philosophy.[33] Although Blaga's metaphysics does relate to the empirical and has significant practical implications, it is perhaps best described as a conjectural and suggestive heuristic.

However, although most Pragmatists have eschewed speculative metaphysics, there have been exceptions. Peirce, for example, held a metaphysical/epistemological view that included "psycho-physical monism," the belief that the physical universe is essentially mind.[34] Most American Pragmatists have espoused metaphysical realism, either implicitly or explicitly, and although they may refrain from elaborating metaphysical systems, this does not protect them from the accusation of harboring metaphysical views. Margolis' previously-cited book, for example, can be read as being precisely a (anti-metaphysical) metaphysics.[35]

These examples indicate that it is not the absence (or presence) of speculative metaphysics that makes one a Pragmatist. Nor is it the particular conclusions that one reaches in one's philosophizing: Pragmatists range from left to right across the range of

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[33] Stuhr, 3.

[34] Burch, Robert, "Charles Sanders Peirce", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2001 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2001/entries/peirce/>. Viewed 4/24/2005.

[35] In support of this interpretation, it need only be noted that Margolis considers the following metaphysical assertion to be the first of six "master themes" from his book: "There is no principled difference between the world (the world as it is, independent of our inquiry) and the intelligible world (the world as it appears to us to be). Call that doctrine *symbiosis*." Margolis, 300.

philosophical issues. Rather it is the presence of the aforementioned two elements, one negative and the other positive, in one's epistemology that qualifies one as a Pragmatist in the American sense. Therefore in spite of the prominence of metaphysics in Blaga's philosophy, if these two elements can be shown to be present in Blaga's epistemology, one may say that, in his epistemology if not in his philosophical tradition, Blaga is a Pragmatist.

A Similar Negative Element in Blaga's Epistemology

That there is a prominent and very important epistemological modesty in Blaga's theory of knowledge is doubtless very well known by all who have studied Blaga's philosophy. Both epistemological and metaphysical considerations lead Blaga to assert that "positive-adequate cognition" is not humanly possible.[36] Epistemologically, Blaga analyzes cognition into the following seven theoretically possible "modes": 1. Positive-adequate cognition. 2. Quasi-cognition. 3. Negative cognition. 4. Cognition which is in part positive-adequate and in part quasi-cognition. 5. Cognition which is in part positive-adequate and in part negative cognition. 6. Cognition which is in part positive-adequate, in part quasi-cognition, and in part negative cognition. 7. Cognition which is in part quasi-cognition and in part negative cognition.[37] According to Blaga's analysis, only the second (quasi-cognition) and the seventh (part quasi- and part negative-cognition) of these modes are humanly realizable. The first mode listed, positive-adequate cognition, is realized by the Great Anonymous.

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[36] Blaga's term "positive-adequate cognition" refers to that mode of cognition that accurately grasps its object in all of the object's aspects and details. Blaga also refers to this as "absolute cognition." Using language common in analytic philosophy, positive-adequate cognition would be described as that cognition which has a 100% correspondence to its object.

[37] Lucian Blaga, *Cenzura Transcendentă* in vol. 8 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1983), 545-6; see also 529ff.

Blaga articulates an interesting argument for the thesis that humans do not have positive-adequate cognition. In brief, his argument is that, by definition, cognition is an act wherein the subject surpasses itself in possessing the cognitive object. By definition a phenomenon is an existence centered in itself. Therefore cognition cannot be a phenomenon. This leaves two possible conclusions regarding cognition: either it is something paradoxical, an existent non-phenomenon, or it does not exist. Blaga favors the latter conclusion, and argues that all human "cognition" is mere quasi-cognition, either distorting its objects or incomplete in its grasp of them.[38]

One of the most interesting parts of Blaga's philosophy is his discussion of specific modes of cognition permitted to humanity in order to allow humans to approach the unknown, to cognize mystery. These are the three forms of "luciferic cognition." These approaches do not eliminate mystery, but they allow a deeper understanding of mystery or an accumulation of information about the mysterious.[39] The preservation of mystery even in luciferic cognition is another indication of Blaga's epistemological modesty.

Another important aspect of Blaga's epistemology is its constructivism. Constructivism, the view that human knowledge is a human construction, is an ubiquitous element of Blaga's philosophy. This open acceptance of constructivism is seen in his freely creative metaphysics. It is also reflected in his epistemology in the role accorded to culture and in the analyses of mythic, occult, paradisiac, and luciferic cognition. That human knowledge would be a human creative construct is no surprise once one understands Blaga's metaphysics. The human destiny to be a creator, ever provoked to this effort by the abilities and limits given to humankind by the Great Anonymous, leaves no option but that

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[38] Blaga, *Cenzura Transcendentă*, 505-6.
[39] See Lucian Blaga, *Cunoaşterea luciferică* in vol. 8 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1983).

humanity will strive to cognize the unknown without ever quite reaching it. This scenario sounds macabre, but seen from within Blaga's metaphysics it becomes a gift to humankind and to creation: to humankind, because it gives humanity purpose and pleasure; to creation, because it perpetuates creativity while at the same time protecting creation from potential self-destruction.

There have been numerous other constructivist philosophers, and it cannot be said that Blaga was the first. Nonetheless, there are several important things about Blaga's constructivism that make it particularly noteworthy. The first of these is how neatly and consistently constructivism fits within the larger philosophical picture that Blaga paints. Blaga's philosophical system gives constructivism a context, an explanation, and a purpose that are sometimes lacking in other constructivist philosophies. A second noteworthy aspect of Blaga's constructivism is that it is argued for in a wide variety of cognitive contexts: Blaga shows that human thought is constructivist whether it occurs in math, in the natural sciences, in philosophy, in theology, in the arts, or in any other cognitive context.[40] A third important aspect of Blaga's constructivism is *how* it is argued: Blaga does not cease being a constructivist when he argues for his own philosophical system. He views his own system as merely a possible thesis supported (but not proved) by evidence and pragmatic utility. Therefore he does not seek a foundationalist justification of his system: he argues for his system using evidences and illustrations taken from a wide variety of intellectual domains, and by showing the fruitfulness of his proposals for further philosophical research. He does not try to prove his system beyond all possible doubt. Were he to attempt to

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[40] See Traian Pop, "Inteligenţă şi intuiţie în cunoaştere," in *Introducere în filosofia lui Lucian Blaga*, 141-146. Although each of these modes of cognition is unique in comparison to the others, they also share certain elements, including constructivism, and Blaga considers them to be equally valid ways of approaching mystery, Blaga, *Fiinţa istorică,* in vol. 11 of *Opere*, ed. Dorli Blaga (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1988), 508.

show that his theory is apodictically certain, he would be inconsistent with his own system. However, that he does not argue for the certainty of his system does not indicate that he does not believe his system to be correct. On the contrary, it indicates that he views his system as correct, and that because it is correct, he must conduct his philosophizing as a constructivist, which entails viewing his own system as a human construct.

The idea that human cognitive ability is limited is not at all new. Much more interesting is Blaga's explanation of these limits and his hypothesis about their source and purpose. According to Blaga, both the ability of human cognition and the limits imposed upon this ability are results of the "grace" extended to creation and the care exercised over creation by the Great Anonymous. The purpose of these measures is the protection, preservation, and promotion of creation. Individual cognition is permitted within very specific limits: when knowledge is of a type that is "positive-adequate" it is strictly limited with regard to its extent. When knowledge is of a type that is in principle unlimited, it is strictly censored in regard to its accuracy.[41] Blaga's term for this limitation is "transcendent censorship." This censorship fulfills the purpose of the Great Anonymous of spurring human creativity, providing an outlet to this inner human yearning, and at the same time preserving the order of the cosmos. Blaga poignantly suggests that these limits imposed upon cognition both shape cognition and facilitate its fruitfulness.[42]

In Blaga's metaphysics there are two important measures employed by the source of the cosmos in preservation of cosmic equilibrium. One of these has already been discussed: transcendent censorship. The other is differentiated creation, the main subject of

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[41] This is discussed at length in *Cenzura transcendentă* and more briefly on 529ff of *Cunoaşterea luciferică*.

[42] Blaga, *Cenzura transcendentă*, 461: "Although water fights against the riverbanks, without the banks the river would no longer be a river."

his book "Divine Differentials".[43] Blaga hypothesizes that the human epistemological predicament is an intentional result of the way that the creator (The Great Anonymous) formed the world. The creator formed (and forms) the world through the emanation of what Blaga calls "differentials." These are the fundamental matter of the universe, the combination of which creates all that we know.[44] The Great Anonymous regulates the types of differentials that are emanated and how the differentials combine in order to assure that they do not jeopardize the well being of creation.[45] Since the continued supreme governance of the Great Anonymous is essential to the well being of the cosmos, part of this regulating involves the limiting of all aspects of creation so that no rival to the Great Anonymous may arise. For this reason human cognition is regulated and limited. This is Blaga's metaphysical explanation of the limits of human cognition, a creative and illuminating, even if not highly scientific, theory.

A Similar Positive Element in Blaga's Epistemology

The negative element in Pragmatism is counterbalanced by an equally important positive element: the pragmatic criterion of truthfulness. Blaga's epistemological modesty is also counterbalanced by a significant and well-developed theory of the criteria of truthfulness. Like James, Blaga's theory retains correspondence in his definition of truth[46] and coherence as a criterion of truthfulness.[47] He observes that internal criteria of

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[43] Blaga, *Diferenţialele divine*.

[44] Blaga states that the substance of the differentials is not an empirical substance. The differentials are more basic than quanta, which are complex energy entities and are composed of differentials. All material, psychical, and spiritual entities are composed of differentials. Blaga, *Diferenţialele divine*, 95-96.

[45] Blaga, *Diferenţialele divine*, 77.

[46] Blaga, *Cunoaşterea luciferică*, 381.

[47] Blaga, *Cunoaşterea luciferică*, 381.

verification are limited to showing that a theory cannot be verified: coherence never serves as a positive mode of verification. Therefore it seems that Blaga views coherence as a necessary but not sufficient criterion of truthfulness. Correspondence, on the other hand, seems to be viewed by Blaga as a sufficient but not necessary criterion of truth. If a statement can be shown to correspond to what it is describing, it stands as verified, but the inability to show that this relation pertains does not falsify a statement.

A difficulty with correspondence as a criterion of truth is how the relationship of correspondence is verified. Blaga is definitely concerned that statements have the correct relationship to "external" reality, but he is aware that verifying this relationship is problematic,[48] and consists of a tentative evaluation based upon the success or failure of the statement when put into application. Thus while Blaga may have a correspondence theory of truth, he clearly disavows correspondence as a criterion of verification.[49]

In discussing his own theory of truth, Blaga writes, "The external criterion consists in a relation of the theory to plan A

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[48] See especially Blaga, *Geneza metaforei şi sensul culturii* (Bucureşti: Fundaţia pentru Literatură şi Artă "Regele Carol II", 1937), 417, "There certainly exists a nominal definition of truth, understood as the equation between an idea and reality. But this ideal definition is equivalent to a simple postulate, for the realization of which no certainty is given to us, nor any criteria of judgement nor possibility of a test."

[49] Also on page, 409 of *Cunoaşterea luciferică* he writes, "Let us presuppose that in truth there exists a 'reality in itself'… The single thing which can be affirmed about knowledge in relation to a reality in itself is that we cannot know whether knowledge is able to contain reality in itself, nor whether it is not." While Blaga admits some importance to a correspondence between propositions and that which they are attempting to describe, his advocating of the theory of transcendent censorship proves that he does not believe that a proposition can ultimately correspond to reality (whatever that would entail). This is made clear in *Cenzura transcendentă* 506, where he describes cognition as a "catching hold of" an object, and says that such an act is only incompletely possible.

effectively realized."[50] The phrase "effectively realized" hints at his solution to the problem of criteria of truthfulness and the verification of correspondence: there is a distinctly pragmatic aspect to Blaga's view of verification. His criterion for judging correspondence is pragmatic, as is seen in his statement, "Verifiability consists, as was proved, in the 'actualization' of the *empirical potential* of a theory. This signifies something completely different than the correspondence of the theory to a 'reality in itself.'"[51] Blaga seems to be aware of the circularity of proposing correspondence as both the definition of truth and the criterion of truthfulness. He appears to avoid this by proposing that the criterion according to which a proposition should be accepted as corresponding to reality and therefore as true is how effective the proposition is when put into practice. This is remarkably like the criterion of truthfulness advocated by American Pragmatists.

That a pragmatic criterion is in fact what Blaga advocates can be seen from his own practice. Blaga does not philosophize like Socrates, proceeding dialectically, nor like Descartes, attempting to build a philosophical system upon some infallible first premise(s). Blaga philosophizes by suggesting new theories and then showing their fruitfulness. It is this fruitfulness, in Blaga's eyes, that vindicates many of his most significant proposals. When in his epistemology Blaga proposes the theory of "plus cognition" and then argues for the truth of his theory by reference to its success in explaining the intellectual process employed in numerous scientific advances, he is utilizing a pragmatic criterion of truthfulness.[52] When in his metaphysics Blaga proposes that the cosmos and its teleology are best explained by a system that posits the existence of an intelligent creator as the source of the universe, and then

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[50] *Cunoaşterea luciferică*, 381.

[51] *Cunoaşterea luciferică*, 409. The italicization of *empirical potential* and the quotes around "reality in itself" are Blaga's.

[52] Blaga, *Cunoaşterea luciferică*, 357, 358, 366, 374, 418.

supports this hypothesis by showing its rich and extensive explanatory power, his argument utilizes the pragmatic theory of verification.[53]

This same approach to verification is seen in Blaga's philosophy of science. In one passage, commenting on the nature of scientific progress, he writes, "With what right does he (Einstein) transform a 'paradoxical finding' into a 'principle'? With one single right. With the right that is given to him by the theoretical fruits which this change of accent has been able to bear."[54] There may be times when science proceeds via the gradual accumulation and analysis of data, and when one scientific theory overturns a previously accepted one by means of this process. However, it is very often the case that scientific data is open to more than one very plausible interpretation. In the latter case, a criterion other than correspondence is needed to determine which theory is most valid. In such a situation a scientific theory is not accepted as true because it corresponds to reality and rival theories do not: that would be question-begging. In this situation a theory is accepted as true because it is seen that it works.[55]

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[53] Blaga, *Cenzura transcendentă*, 450, "Forced to choose between incomplete justifications, we can make a concession to the critic, namely that of viewing the proposition of the Great Anonymous as a simple point of view. The value of this point of view will be measured through the results which it has the gift to bring."

[54] Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi creaţie* , in vol. 10 of *Opere* (Bucureşti: Fundaţia Regală, 1946), 162.

[55] This is admittedly an oversimplification of the pragmatic criterion. There are complications: theories can work without being true, and there are other important factors that influence the acceptance of a scientific theory. This oversimplification, for purposes of succinctness, is mine, not Blaga's. Blaga is aware that pragmatic validation is not inerrant, and argues that pragmatic successes are sometimes achieved using erroneous premises, see *Fiinţa istorică*, 465.

Conclusion

It may seem rather far-fetched to argue that Blaga, a very Continental philosopher whose works contain few references to American Pragmatism, is himself a Pragmatist. It may seem that such a project is the folly of an American philosopher who wants to impose his own tradition onto another's work. Nonetheless, I think that this article shows that a strong argument for the Pragmatism of Blaga's epistemology can be made.

The two essential features of American Pragmatism are its repudiation of epistemological strategies that aim at apodictic certainty and its proposal of a pragmatic criterion of truthfulness. Any philosopher who does not share these two features is not a Pragmatist. Likewise, any philosopher who does embrace them can be regarded, at least in his or her epistemology, as a Pragmatist. Blaga rejects the goal of apodictic certainty on a number of grounds. He also advocates a pragmatic criterion of truthfulness. Therefore Blaga is (can be considered) a Pragmatist.

Pragmatism is currently experiencing a revival in America. New arguments have been formulated in its support, and its proponents include many of America's leading philosophers. That Blaga embraced a similar philosophy more than half a century ago reflects his insight as a philosopher. Perhaps his works contain other insights that would be useful to contemporary philosophy as well.

OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *KINDRED* AND
THE BOOK IN COMMON PROJECT

Debra Journet
University of Louisville

Abstract

This paper describes how members of an American English Department read Octavia Butler's *Kindred* as a Book in Common Project. In particular, it describes the responses of a variety of readers in several venues, including classes, reading groups, and department-wide discussions. Among the most significant issues for most readers were the difficult interactions of race and gender in the history of American slavery, as well as the complicated relations most contemporary Americans have to that history. The novel also demonstrated the value of broadening definitions of American literature and including diverse voices in the American canon.

In the spring of 2005, the English Department of the University of Louisville embarked on what we called a "Book in Common project." That is, we agreed as department to select a book that could be assigned in various undergraduate literature classes—so that students and faculty across the institution would have a shared reading experience. Other universities, towns, and even whole states have taken on similar projects--asking students or citizens to read and gather together to discuss and reflect on a common text. Our hope, like theirs, was that reading the same book would promote conversations among faculty and students and would contribute toward building an intellectual community. But we had an added goal in that we are particularly interested in promoting cultural diversity within our curriculum and in finding ways to

foster productive conversations among students from a range of backgrounds. So we wanted to choose as our first book a novel written by an African American that focused on issues of race and identity in American life. Since Octavia Butler, an African American woman novelist, was already scheduled to be on campus that spring—she was delivering a plenary address at a conference we hold devoted to Twentieth Century Literature—we chose her novel *Kindred*. Butler, the author of many other novels, most of which are science fiction, has won several prizes, including the very prestigious Macarthur Award. *Kindred*, one of her earlier works, published in 1979, is a book that's been popular since its publication and is provocative and accessible to a wide range of readers.

   Kindred is a kind of time-travel novel, narrated by a black woman named Dana who, as the novel begins, is celebrating her 26th birthday in California. The year is 1976. Most of the novel, though, describes various visits Dana makes, back in time, to a plantation in Maryland in the antebellum south. The first visit is in 1815, and the last in 1830. In each of these visits, which become longer and more treacherous as the novel proceeds, Dana is somehow summoned back to save the life of Rufus, the son of the plantation owner. In one episode she saves him from drowning, in others from a fire or a fall or a fight. In her first visit, Rufus is a small child about six years old, and by the time of her last visit, he is a grown man who has inherited the plantation on which his family lives. Rufus is also, Dana eventually learns, her own great-grandfather, having fathered a child with a slave woman named Alice. Rufus and Alice's child is, Dana knows from a family bible, her own grandmother.   The primary moral dilemma the novel poses is whether Dana should continue to rescue Rufus. If she rescues Rufus, he will stay alive and thus grow old enough to become a father. If Dana does not rescue Rufus, however, it is not clear what that will mean for Dana's own history and that of her ancestors. So does she contribute to the system of slavery in order

to ensure her own eventual survival? Or does she fight against slavery and refuse to participate in it whatever the consequences?

When the Fulbright Commission and Alexandra Mitrea invited me to come back to Romania, and when I learned that the topic of this year's "East-West Cultural Passage" conference was literature of the American south, I decided to talk about the experiences of reading *Kindred* as a Book in Common project, and accordingly I took part in as many conversation about *Kindred* as I could. During the course of the semester, I visited an undergraduate class that had incorporated *Kindred* into the syllabus; I went to two brown-bag lunch discussions, where students and faculty gathered to talk about *Kindred*--one discussion focusing on representations of literacy in the novel, the other on perspectives on gender.   I also discussed *Kindred* in an informal women's book club to which I belong; and I heard Octavia Butler speak at the Twentieth Century Literature Conference held at my institution.

The undergraduate class I visited was an upper-division course mainly for English majors made up of about ten women and two men. One of the women and one of the men were African American; the others were white. Three students--a white woman, a white man, and an African American woman--were older, between 35 and 50; the other students were all about 19 or 20 years old. The class spent several sessions talking about *Kindred*, and discussion ranged over many topics, but I want here to talk briefly just about one snippet of what I observed in one class session, to give a sense of the kind of responses the novel engendered.

In the part of the discussion I'm about to describe, the class was considering the complex relation of race and gender as they play out in the novel. In particular, the class was sharply divided in their response to Dana's white husband, Kevin, who is also inadvertently pulled back to Rufus's world on one of Dana's visits. At one point, the class turned its attention to a key passage in which Dana and Kevin are observing a group of black children "playing" at being slaves. The passage is narrated by Dana:

We saw a group of slave children gathered around a tree stump. These were the children of the field hands, children too young to be of much use in the fields themselves. Two of them were standing on the wide flat stump while others stood around watching.

"What are they doing?" I asked.

"Playing some game, probably," Kevin shrugged. (...)

"Now here a likely wench," called the boy on the stump. He gestured toward the girl who stood slightly behind him. "She cook and wash and iron. Come here, gal. Let the folks see you." He drew the girl up beside him. "She young and strong," he continued. "She worth plenty money. Two hundred dollars. Who bid two hundred dollars?"

The little girl turned to frown at him. "I'm worth more than two hundred dollars, Sammy!" she protested. "You sold Martha for five hundred dollars."

"You shut your mouth," said the boy. "You ain't supposed to say nothing. When Marse Tom bought Mama and me, we didn't say nothing."

I turned and walked away from the arguing children, feeling tired and disgusted. I wasn't even aware that Kevin was following me until he spoke.

"That's the game I thought they were playing," he said. "I've seen them at it before. They play at field work too."

I shook my head. "My God, why can't we go home? This place is diseased."

He took my hand. "The kids are just imitating what they've seen adults doing," he said. "They don't understand..."

"They don't have to understand. Even the games they play are preparing them for their future—and that future will come whether they understand it or not."

"No doubt."

I turned to glare at him and he looked back calmly. It was a what-do-you-want-me-to-do-about-it kind of look. I didn't say anything because, of course, there was nothing he could do about it.

I shook my head, rubbed my hand across my brow. "Even knowing what's going to happen doesn't help," I said. "I know some of those kids will live to see freedom—after they've slaved away their best years. But by the time freedom comes to them, it will be too late. Maybe it's already too late."

"Dana, you're reading too much into a kids' game."

"And you're reading too little into it. Anyway... anyway, it's not their game." (99-100).

In response to this episode, the class as a whole agreed that Kevin didn't "get it." They also agreed with Dana that the episode of "playing" slave was more complex than simply a game and thought the novel was effective in dramatizing how the slave children, like the white child Rufus, were a product of the institution and the ideology of slavery. All the novel's characters, they felt, were being "trained" or enculturated to accept slavery and to live within it. But they disagreed about why Kevin did not see what to them appeared to be so obvious.

A particularly salient part of the discussion focused on whether Kevin misses the significance of this episode mainly because he's a male or mainly because he's white. One woman, a 35-year-old African American, asserted that the differences between Dana and Kevin were the product of race: "She's a part of it," she said. "He's an observer." But another student, an older white man, argued that it was not so simple. There was also, he suggested "a cultural history of gender that accounts for their differences." The discussion became passionate, even personal. "Would you have gotten it?" the man asked at one point. "Yes," another older, white woman responded. "Wouldn't any woman who is a mother feel compassion if she saw black children being pushed into slavery?" This exchange, which I have abbreviated, was, I think, a key moment in the class because it was here that the students began to consider *Kindred* not just as a time travel book or a postmodern

revision of the slave narrative but instead began to grapple with what seems to me to be one of the book's central challenges.

Kindred is an exciting, even daring book not just because it revisits slavery, but because it does so from the perspective of contemporary experience. In particular, the book challenges readers to consider the degree to which their own positions are, like those of the white master Rufus and the black slave Alice, culturally constructed. When I was in Romania in 2002, and taught Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to a group of 4th year students at Lucian Blaga University, I was struck by how shocked and appalled the students were at the details of the slave experiences that Morrison describes.[1] Indeed, the institution of slavery evoked much more horror and incredulity in the students than did the act of infanticide which is the novel's central event. The question of "how could people treat other people that way?" came up far more often than the question of "how could Sethe murder her own child?" The students' revulsion at the acts of slavery is, of course, a product of Morrison's artistry as a novelist, an artistry that is considerably greater than Butler's. But powerful as *Beloved* is, it engages the reader differently than does *Kindred*. In reading *Beloved*, we as readers are allowed to inhabit a privileged space from the present, looking back on history. We are thus not personally complicit in the institutions which the novel critiques. And this, I think, was the response of the Romanian students I taught, as it has been of most American students with whom I have discussed *Beloved*. Slavery was a horrendous and corrupt institution, and we still live with its consequences in America. But slavery itself is in the past. This is not the case, however, in *Kindred*, which is not just a narrative of past events told from the perspective of either that time or now. Rather, the book pulls the contemporary person directly into the past and forces her to ask the question: "Would I (not an historical

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[1] I describe this experience in "The Ethics of Reading: *Beloved* in Romania."

person, but the person I am today), would I have acted any differently?

Butler's answer, in the case of Dana and Kevin, is ambivalent. Though they retain their sense of outrage at the conditions of slavery and continue to condemn it with words and actions, they are both, nonetheless, slowly pulled into it. During the course of events described in *Kindred*, Kevin and Dana, like the slave children they observe, also become slowly "trained," to accept slavery. By the end of the book, Dana is helping Rufus keep the plantation's accounts and is even involved at one point in facilitating the relation between Rufus and Alice. Dana's justification for her actions is that all would suffer an even worse fate without her actions: slaves would be sold from the plantation; Alice would be further abused. And such explanations do make a kind of logical sense. But the issue is more ethically and morally complicated than Dana seems to realize. The novel pushes us to understand that while we do speak from a morally superior position—though bitter racism continues to exist in America, we do not, after all, still own slaves—that position is the product of time. It was created for us, not by our own actions or by our own innate goodness, but by history.

This complicated question about the relation of individuals to history also came up in one of the informal lunch-time discussions the English Department sponsored for faculty and students to come together and talk about *Kindred*. In this discussion, the topic for consideration was representations of literacy in the novel. Both Dana and Kevin are authors; Kevin has written several novels, and when *Kindred* opens Dana has just published her first short story. And at first, Dana and Kevin believe that their ability to read and write will help them make sense of their experiences. After she returns from her first visit to Rufus's world, Dana checks out books about slavery from the library. But as she soon realizes, these books tell her very little about the actual life of slavery. "Everything I read in books is useless," she complains at one point.

On the other hand, her ability to steal moments to read while on the plantation also, she says, "keeps me sane."

The books Dana reads on the plantation include *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*.   All are "travelogues," in which the protagonist journeys to far-away locales that are represented, in eurocentrist terms, as the exotic "other." In 1976, contemporary fictional texts would have, similarly, provided little help for Dana in understanding slavery from the perspective of the slave. The only modern novel about slavery she references is *Gone with the Wind*, a work that notoriously romanticizes the experience of slave life. Similarly non-fictional, historical books do not offer much guidance: her library reading provides few answers about the day-to-day reality of plantation life. Indeed, many of the details of the life she experiences here surprise her; slavery is both easier, less overtly tyrannical, and harder, more arbitrary and painful, than either she or Kevin expected.

This complicated issue of how and what one learns about history came to a focus for this group in a discussion about why Dana does not write a "pass" for herself, a document that would indicate to others that her "owners" had allowed her to leave the plantation. Armed with this pass, Dana would be able to walk to Pennsylvania, a free state. Literacy thus seems to promise Dana a chance at freedom that she doesn't take. Why not?

"She doesn't write the pass," one person said, "because she was there for a reason; she had to ensure her own future, to keep her own family together." More generally, another suggested, "she doesn't write a pass because she doesn't want one; she wants the same experiences the other slaves had." Or perhaps, a third offered, she doesn't write the pass because "she doesn't know what it looked like," history books not providing her with any models. But, as someone else pointed out, "there was probably no standardized form for passes because, at that time, there we no widely-disseminated legal documents." The pass was as "useful," this speaker continued, "as the people inspecting it." So is the pass

a "misuse of writing?" someone asked. "Do you have to write your own pass," that is "write your own story?" But if you do that, another asked, are you "abstracting yourself from history?"

These are complicated questions in the novel, and were perhaps even more so when the book was written in 1979. Three years before *Kindred*, Alex Haley's best-selling novel *Roots* had appeared, in which Haley traces seven American generations of his family, starting with his African ancestor Kunta Kinte; the television series that ran in 1977 was even more phenomenally successful. *Roots* was perhaps the most obvious example of a concerted attempt by many African Americans in the 1970s and 1980s to understand their identity in terms of their African past. Concomitantly, there was a growing sense that historical understanding of slavery was limited by the ways it had focused primarily on the experiences of white masters and mistresses rather than black slaves. *Kindred* seems written partly in response to this new effort to re-think African American identity, and the book's ambivalent relation to other texts may spring from this newly felt need to understand the lived experiences of slavery itself.

This, I think, is part of the clue to Dana's difficult relation to her black and white ancestors. If she saves Rufus, she ensures her own heritage, even at the cost of perpetuating her family's participation in the institution of slavery. But if she writes the pass and takes herself out of her family's history, there will be no family, and even no Dana. Dana's decision to stay and save Rufus is complicated—complicated by her growing feelings for Rufus himself, as well as her desire to protect her family history. It seems to produce in her, as in other historical cases, such as holocaust victims and their families, a kind of survivor's guilt. This guilt is induced not just because the survivor has not herself experienced the tragic fate of her family or ancestors; it is also because without that history, of slavery or genocide, the American generation of Dana, or Octavia Butler, or Toni Morrison would not be. We live, as Americans today, because our ancestors were implicated, as

blacks or whites, within the institution of slavery. That the book is set in 1976, the year of the bicentennial, is not, I think, an accident.

The relation of its readers to the history *Kindred* narrates was the main focus of discussion in the third reading experience I want to share. I belong to what in the US, is called a book club—a group of people who meet regularly to discuss selected books. In my case, my book club is a group of women, some of whom have been meeting together for over 20 years, once a month, to talk about books. This is a group of very experienced readers--some academics, others not--who read mainly fiction written by women and who tend to discuss the books in relation to their own lives. And in our discussion of *Kindred*, we did keep coming back to the question of what we would have done, had we lived in the nineteenth century. Would we have resisted slavery? After all, many people did. Or would we have acquiesced to the dominant system, as was the case for many more? We all hoped that we would act virtuously, though some of us, including me, feared that the "we" who we are in the twenty-first century was not necessarily the "we" we would have been in the nineteenth.

I later heard Octavia Butler speak, and in her presentation, she mentioned *Kindred* had begun in the 1960s on a bus trip she had taken around the United States. The book, she told us, was influenced by her own mother and the women of her family; by her desire to understand her own history; and by the life stories she read in preparation for writing the book, such as those of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. These narratives of slave life were crucial, indeed indispensable, in allowing later generations to understand even a small part of the complex reality of what it meant to be a slave.

One of Dana's most notable achievements when she returns to the plantation south is to come to recognize individual slaves as people rather than literary or sociological types. Thinking about a woman she has met who would be called a "'mammy in some other household," Dana realizes that "she was the kind of woman who

would be held in contempt during the militant nineteen sixties. The house-nigger, the handkerchief-head, the female Uncle Tom [was instead a] frightened, powerless woman who had already lost all she could stand to lose, and who knew as little about the freedom of the North as she knew about the hereafter" (145).

In the novel *The White Hotel*, D. M. Thomas narrates through sexual fantasy, dream, psychoanalysis, and history, the conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings of a woman named Lisa who is modeled on one of Freud's famous case histories. At the end of the novel, Lisa dies in the holocaust of Babi Yar in World War II, and Thomas's narrative voice draws back to argue movingly that

> the soul of man is a far country, which cannot be approached or explored. Most of the dead [at Babi Yar] were poor and illiterate. But every single one of them had dreamed dreams, seen visions and had amazing experiences, even the babes in arms (perhaps especially the babes in arms). Though most of them had never lived outside the Podol slum, their lives and histories were as rich and complex as Lisa Erdman-Berenstein's. If a Sigmund Freud had been listening and taking notes from the time of Adam, he would still not have fully explored even a single group, even a single person. (250).

Faulkner makes a similar acknowledgment about the richness of the self when, at the end of *The Sound and the Fury*, he goes into Dilsey and dramatizes her inner life. But as beautiful and valuable as Faulkner's imaginative recreation of Dilsey is, it is finally Faulkner's story we hear, not that of Dilsey herself. Indeed, as Faulkner clearly understood, Dilsey is the only one of the four major characters who, because of history, is not able to narrate her own life. In the slave narratives Dana finds, though, slaves tell their own stories. Such stories are obviously encoded through the conventions and assumptions of the dominant culture operative in the lives of their writers. Nevertheless, they are self-representations.

Slave narratives such as those Dana reads or Butler revisits are what Mary Louise Pratt has called "autoethnographies":

> If ethnographic texts are those in which the European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct <u>in response to</u> or in dialogue with those texts... They involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding" (531).

Pratt calls these kinds of dialogic, oppositional, and even parodic self-representations the "arts of the contact zones."

When I was an undergraduate in the 1960s, literature of the American south meant almost exclusively Mark Twain and William Faulkner, as well perhaps as Thomas Wolfe or Robert Penn Warren. But now, southern American literature, as taught in most US universities also includes writers such as Charles Chesnutt and Mary Chestnut, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neal Hurston and Dorothy Allison. The challenges of diversity in the American curriculum are to investigate some of the ways in which multiple voices come into contact in American literary traditions. It is also to help us understand how cultural constructs--such as race, gender, class, or even sexual preference--are not just the exotic "other" to the autonomous (generally white male), essential "I." But this is something that is usually easier to acknowledge in theory than in practice.

How then do we come to such realizations? In the plot machinery of *Kindred*, Dana is able to cross time and hence realize directly that slavery was experienced by individual, real, and complicated people. But how do we do that in real life? The answer, I think, for many of us is to read—particularly to read imaginative fiction. But I also think part of the answer is to share

that reading and to test it against the responses of others. The Book in Common Project was an opportunity for people in my department--of different ages, races, histories and backgrounds--to make meaning out of and within a novel. It was for many of us a wonderful experience, and one we invite others to try as well.[2]

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[2] The Book in Common Project was co-sponsored at the University of Louisville by the English Department and by the Commonwealth Center for the Study of Humanities and Society, which generously donated copies of *Kindred* to English majors at the University of Louisville and to the English Department of Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, Romania.   I would like to thank Dr. Tom Byers, Director of the Commonwealth Center for his support; the students and faculty at the University of Louisville, whose discussions of *Kindred* I was able to observe and participate in; the Romanian Fulbright Commission for enabling me, through a Senior Specialist position, to return to Romania in Spring 2005; and Dr. Alexandra Mitrea of Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu for her help in making my visit and this paper possible, and for her on-going friendship and collegiality.

FAULKNER AND THE ETHICS
OF IDEOLOGICAL READINGS

Ana-Karina Schneider
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

Abstract

The article prods issues such as: the current increasing empowerment of cultural studies as the driving force in literary criticism; the pertinence of scholarly ethics in relation to their impact on critical responses; the relevance of modernist writing to the ethos of a later age; the timeliness of a neo-humanistic recuperation of high art. Awareness of these aspects may help reformulate the principles of literary criticism and reconsider critical attitudes in the twenty-first century. As the example of André Bleikasten, Ihab Hassan, Harold Bloom, or Donald Kartiganer suggests, the main battles between ideology and aesthetics will be fought on critical rather than theoretical ground, and, more specifically, in exegesis focusing on those writers, like William Faulkner, whose status as canonic cannot be easily dismissed. In this context, it becomes imperative to embrace a certain concept of ethics as a form of resistance to the blind angles created by ideology – and, by extension, by theory.

In a history-making book on history and narrative entitled *Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon raises the crucial question, "Whose history gets told?" The answer to her question hails back to Marx's suspicion that the events of the past as we come to know them are never quite "brute": they reach us through the mediation of the dominant class, who make them available, through an act of ideological interpretation, in the form of what we regard as

historical fact, the historical data provided by history books. Awareness of the artificiality of all 'grand narratives' has been the hallmark of late 20th-century thinking about the nature of 'reality' as the dialectics of 'facts' and 'knowledge.' It has also incited literary critics to a reconsideration, from the vantage point of ethics, of key concepts such as history, myth, and ideology in their imbricated relationship to literature. This effort has shaped to immeasurable extents the exegesis devoted to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha saga, giving rise to a veritable constructive critical dissensus, to use Sacvan Bercovitch's phrase (107). In what follows I attempt to sketch some of the main lines of argumentation that have kept Faulkner's prose work at the centre of the most seminal critical debates in recent years, at the intersection of ethics and ideology, of humanist and historicist readings.

In her 1976 Faulkner monograph, Myra Jehlen wrote: "It is clear that absolute objectivity is no more available than its antithesis. One way to view creative thinking, therefore, is as vision keyed by a principle of interpretation. When it addresses itself to how people live in groups, this organizing principle amounts to an ideological syntax" (15-16). Jehlen's remark regarding the extinction of absolutes is symptomatic of the postmodern mood of radical critique and scepticism, suggesting the current multiplicity of valid interpretive perspectives. In a broader sense, this is the very meaning of ideologies: coherent world-views, opposed but not mutually exclusive, which impose certain "principles of interpretation" on the assessments and judgements which can be made within the confines of their respective discursive practices. Jehlen's is a stand which privileges objectivity, but insists that objectivity itself is inevitably ideologically informed. Ideology here has a more specific acceptation which involves political and social constrictions – "a programmatic narrow-mindedness," as Sacvan Bercovitch puts it. It is ideology as "a closed and exclusive system of ideas, usually developed in opposition to alternative

explanations, and militantly committed to partiality, in the double sense of the term, as bias (or special interest) and as fragmentation" (106).[1] Ideology in both these senses can be found at work in creative and critical thinking alike, but it is usually strategically deployed in criticism. In liberal, and even some factions of leftist, thought, creative writing at its best is regarded as a form of social critique, even while it is inevitably shaped by the culture in which it is produced. The contribution of the late 20th century has been to uncover the paradox that even critique is possible only within the discursive limits made available by the dominant ideology.[2]

Thus, when neither objectivity (because of bias) nor subjectivity (because of the fragmentation of the reading community, as well as of the reading subject) can be invoked any longer as defensible perspectives, ideological "principles of interpretation" are brought into the discussion to prevent methodological relativism from running rampant – as well as to preempt accusations of arbitrariness. That is, after all, the role of theory as described by Hayden White: "to provide justification of a stance vis-à-vis the materials being dealt with that can render it plausible. Indeed, the function of theory is to justify a notion of plausibility itself" (in Davis 1986: 157). With such high stakes, professional ethics and self-reflexivity become most pertinent issues in connection with criticism and theory with a social-political agenda.

Jehlen's programmatic injunction mentioned above aptly prescribes the critical protocol undertaken by contemporary Marxist

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[1] The definition of ideology in Communist countries differs significantly from the ones mentioned above. Thus, in Eastern Europe, "'ideology' is (or was) a set of beliefs and practices consciously promulgated by the state," J. Hillis Miller explains (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 254).

[2] See, for instance, Donald M. Kartiganer's questions in the Introduction to *Faulkner and Ideology*, echoing Foucault and Bakhtin (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: xii).

critics: the first step in interpreting a literary work is to decipher the author's ideological persuasion or, alternatively, the text's. The danger with such an approach is that, if the ideology of the writer/text does not coincide with that of the critic, the latter might either misread the syntax or summarily dismiss the work as unrealistic, prejudiced, reactionary, and altogether of no literary worth.

At the opposite pole, there were those, especially in Communist Eastern Europe, who started from the assumption of the primacy of literary value and enhanced the writer's political stand in order to be able to promote plain good literature, which would not have bypassed the state censure if it had not been offered as potentially revolutionary critique of capitalism. The greatest risk such criticism ran was the very restrictive interpretive grid it imposed on uninformed readings of those books. Yet the critics' convictions and intentions were generous and comprehensive: while their political agenda was ostensibly Marxist of the Stalinist persuasion, they embraced values that were reminiscent of and informed by both the earlier Liberal Humanism and the current formalist readings of literature. The ambivalence of historical readings of literature stems from the belief that literary studies can add significantly to the understanding of history as a system of causality (in Walter Benjamin's words, left-wing ideology politicise art). They also claim the advantage of liberating criticism from traditional standards of canonicity and convention, in favour of criteria of 'relevance.'[3]

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[3] At the 1982 *Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha* conference, dedicated to *International Perspectives*, the two Russian participants, Alexandre Vashchenko and Sergei Chakovsy, speak about the impact, on both critics and fiction writers, of the translation into Russian of Faulkner's major books in the 1970s. The aspects they approach are primarily formal innovation and experimentation, humanism (by which they probably meant Faulkner's alleged sympathy for the poor and the soldiers), his

Radical critique and redefinition of the grand narratives of Truth, History, Morality, and Canonicity, alongside the crossing of disciplinary boundaries are the two most important consequences of the return to history in literary and cultural studies. The implications of this fundamental scepticism of knowledge are manifold, but we shall, for the purposes of the present undertaking, focus specifically on the resulting dichotomy of methodological vs. gnoseological relativism. The latter is generally regarded as a defensible position in the context of postmodernism, which is by definition "a new and problematical phase in which a good many hitherto well-established values, methods and beliefs are henceforth open to question," in literary theory as well as history, physical sciences, etc. (Norris in Knellwolf & Norris 411). On the one hand, the current rhetoric of disguise, latent content, and the suspicion of the failure of previous critics to completely lay bare the devices has brought about the demystification of hindsight; on the other, relativity theory, the uncertainty principle, the complementarity hypothesis, the awareness of the metaphorical bearing on scientific language, all indicate that our maps of reality reflect our relative position or experimental methods rather than deliver some absolute truth or show the road to progress.

Myra Jehlen identified Faulkner's chief anxiety as the possibility of arriving at truth: "If…he uses the techniques of subjectivity and multiple perception, it is because he senses that in our time knowing has become increasingly problematic; but knowledge for him has not.… The problem for Faulkner is not that the world is only as we perceive it but that we may not be able to perceive it as it is" (2). In the late twentieth century, this certainty is no longer available to most of Faulkner's critics: they are marked

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regionalism and his stature as a national writer. The two critics' rhetoric resonates remarkably well with that of their Romanian counterparts (in Fowler & Abadie).

by the suspicion that the only truth that is knowable is a provisional one, strongly dependent on their own perspective and interpretive apparatus. It is not the hope to arrive at truth but the knowledge that arrival is always already deferred that keeps critics working on Faulkner half a century after his *magnum opus* was committed to their custody. The dialogue between Faulkner and his later-day critics is, then, conditioned by the evolution of paradigmatic dominants, to use McHale's term. Thus, the modernist Faulkner was concerned with epistemological (cognitive) questions of the type, "How do I know the world?" whereas his postmodern exegetes are tormented by ontological (post-cognitive) questions such as "What is a world?" (see McHale 9-11).

Methodological relativism, on the other hand, more actively involves the issue of ethics in the context of criticism. In a very powerful statement on ideological readings of Faulkner's novels, André Bleikasten pointed out the dangers of adopting an ideological stand without simultaneously taking responsibility for the methodology that goes with its application to literary criticism. As he points out at the beginning of his conference presentation, Bleikasten had been skeptical of the fate of ideological commitment in American criticism since its very inception in the late nineteen seventies and early eighties, but had welcomed its emergence as a new means of revealing crucial aspects of literature. All the same, he had been wary of what he perceived as "the ravages of ideological criticism" (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 4) as perpetrated under the influence of the Sartrean imperative of "engagement."

Bleikasten refers to ideology in the broader sense of coherent narratives about the world, and includes psychoanalytical and textual criticism alongside historicist approaches. His injunction is against the indiscriminate use of "imported lexical kits (from Lacancan to Derridada)" (5) and of the rhetoric of referral and deferral, unmasking and demystification, historicising, ideologising

and politicising, all to the same irrelevant end of inscribing Faulkner in the same traditions, making the same statements about his commitments and convictions, sticking the same labels to his works. Bleikasten cautions against thickly strewing one's interpretation with "all these by now slightly shopworn names," bolstering one's argument with "copious quotations from their works, and the same ritual invocation of authorities, the same compulsive name-dropping, the same citational intemperance" (5). Such readings, he reproves, suffer from the lack of close attention to the text and from their *a priori* commitment to "class, race, and gender, the new holy trinity of American critics" (7).[4] They do not reveal anything valuable about the works under scrutiny, but rather aimlessly rehearse a cluster of social commitments with the sole result of exposing the critic's prejudices rather than Faulkner's.

In the same harshly critical spirit, Bleikasten also offers a synopsis of ideologically oriented Faulkner criticism to date:

> There was a time when Faulkner was taken to task for being a misogynist, a racist, an arch-conservative Southerner, or was even suspected of being a crypto-fascist. Then, after the Nobel Prize, came the time when he was celebrated as a Christian traditionalist and a liberal humanist. Now we have moved into a third phase, a spectacular reversal of the first and second: Faulkner, we are told, was neither a conservative nor a liberal; he was (at least "potentially" and perhaps *malgre lui*) a radical, a champion of the wretched of the earth, a protofeminist, a scourge of racism, or even an anarchist apostle of rebellion against all forms of authority. (15)

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[4] In the same volume, J. Hillis Miller calls them, with similar apprehension, the "Three Fates of contemporary cultural studies" (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 262).

Bleikasten perceives this new turn in criticism as not only reductive and irrelevant, but also dangerous, in that it results in fixing Faulkner's work "around a set of stable, reassuring signifiers, and thus foreclose[s] critical debate – the ideological gesture par excellence" (ibid.).

Thus ideology, rather than liberating the literary work from the fetters of formal scrutiny and the demand for formal experimentation and revolution, confines it to the province of political propaganda. This anxiety over the ideological appurtenance of a certain work is ontologically unjustified: great literature, Bleikasten argues, is always a critique of the ideology that shaped it, without however being itself ideological (16). Moreover, he claims, the imposition of such interpretive grids is not warranted by the nature of the modernism to which Faulkner belongs but is caused by a deficient understanding of that trend due to the fact that, rather than investigating modernism itself, recent critics rely on earlier incomplete accounts of it (11-12). Similarly, biased and broad indictments of American and Western capitalism are equally ineffective and gratuitous. What such attempts do attain through their insistence on ideological situatedness and chronotopical belonging, is a return of the referent and of referentiality (until recently regarded with arch scepticism) with a vengeance. This doubtful achievement – although locality had had a well-determined role in the early understanding of Faulkner's specificity and the symbolic relevance of the human tragedy he envisioned – runs against the grain of later suspicion of mimetism and absolute truths.

I dwell at length on Bleikasten's critique of "the new ideologues" not only because it represents an exemplar of Hamilton's "historicis[ing] the historicisers" (in Norris & Knellwolf 17) – or more generally ideologising the ideologisers – but also because he raises some useful points about the ethics of applying wholesale interpretive apparatuses to literature. Thus, he shows, not

only are recent exegetical undertakings fraught with the perils of gratuitous repetition and irrelevance, but they also run the risk of defeating their own purposes. On the one hand, they may end up performing the reductive and confining work of the ideology they had set out to critique; on the other, they sometimes fail to keep up with the epistemological developments that had set them in motion originally. Furthermore, this self-defeating enterprise is pursued at the expense of critical originality, professional thoroughness, and intellectual discovery.

Bleikasten concludes his presentation with a moving statement of faith in which he points up what may be reasonably expected from novels. Fiction, he insists, does not offer viable alternative visions of reality: "[b]lueprints for the future have never been the novelist's business" (18). Faulkner is a relevant instance of what the novelist *can* achieve:

> Faulkner's finest novels are his fiercest, and they all refuse to serve ideological certitudes. They believe neither in possible arrangements nor in necessary overturnings, promote neither myths of restoration nor utopias of progress. Interrupting all communal discourse, inscribing themselves in the exposed space of its interruption, they keep reminding us that most communities are built on murderous lies, that history is seldom more than sound and fury, that to be *in* the world is not to be *of* the world, and all they deeply, cruelly, tenderly care about are the singular conditions and singular becomings of singular beings, which only a novelist's voice – the attentive and vulnerable voice of unbelonging – can relay and convey. (18-19)

Bleikasten's insistence on the universal truths taught by novels is reminiscent of Liberal Humanism, and his anti-militant politics run counter Hayden White's utopianism. The role of novels, on this view, is to insert themselves in the rifts between *epistemès*, where it is possible once more to think, free from the communal discourse,

and then relay the truth arrived at back to the masses. Literature thus effects epistemological change indirectly, without consciously intending to do so, and especially without prescribing it, but simply as a function of its ontological critique of the world. Moreover, as another critic points out, a historicist reading of Faulkner in context confirms that even had this principle not been inherent in modernist conceptions of art, "it was the tragic fact of Faulkner's…world that historical consciousness and refusal to participate in the skein of injustice did not of itself lead to or suggest a way of translating moral gesture into political action" (Richard H. King in Bloom 200). In other words, Faulkner's mindset was in such large measure informed by the mentality and ethos of the South and by the modernist ideal of the intellectual independence of art as to render him incapable of political involvement.

Bleikasten's indictment of ideologically-conditioned readings of Faulkner is not singular. Harold Bloom and Cleanth Brooks are by now legendary instances of the critic who rejects ideology as a perspectival grid. Without going to similar vitriolic extremes, J. Hillis Miller and Louis D. Rubin, Jr., too, proffer cautionary advice in their contributions to the conference volume of 1992. At the same time, they all contribute to the constant re-mapping of the territory of Faulkner criticism. Bleikasten, for instance, rather than summarily dismissing all recent Faulkner criticism with an agenda, offers a comprehensive list of critics who have had a major contribution to the understanding of Faulkner's work precisely by bringing to it a fresh understanding of the workings of ideology, while preserving their primary interest in the literary text. Among them he enumerates Thadious Davis, John T. Irwin, Myra Jehlen, Richard H. King, John T. Matthews, Carolyn Porter, James A. Snead, Eric Sundquist. This catalogue is at the core of a similar one compiled by Donald Kartiganer in a review of the four-volume *William Faulkner: Critical Assessments* (ed. by Henry Claridge, 1999), a collection which conspicuously omits all these and several

other important Faulkner exegetes (2000/2001). The two lists not only validate each other, but give a useful indication of the most significant directions in which criticism is moving at present. They also predicate a broad sense of ideology that includes any theoretically-based exegesis, be it historicist, psychoanalytical or textual.

In the field of ideological-cum-historical readings, Maxwell Geismar (*Writers in Crisis: The American Novel, 1925-1940*, 1947), one of Faulkner's most powerful detractors, set an early pattern of interpretation by stating that the novelist was a man driven by "twin Furies: the Female and the Negro," personal symbols of evil drawn out of a severe "cultural psychosis" (qtd. in Thadious Davis 16). In *Faulkner's Negro,* Thadious Davis cites this as a classical instance of the "hysterical and misleading writing on the race issue in [Faulkner's] fiction" (16). In her analysis she emphasises the novelist's exclusive commitment to his art, and her own to revealing "how a knowledge of his 'Negro' leads to an enriched understanding of the works themselves and the creative process behind them" (4). Davis draws attention to the distance in time and mentalities between Faulkner and herself, and in her book provides a vibrant historical backdrop for the novelist's treatment of the "Negro."

Some ten years later, in a conference paper on the Compson Appendix, her focus was still unchanged: by reappropriating and reshaping the fate of his characters in total disregard of the master myth of unalterable history, Faulkner was mainly asserting his own "place in a literary continuum that had flowed without him, or perhaps bypassed him in Mississippi" (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 243), "legitimat[ing] and valoriz[ing] himself as creator, as author" (242). As her subtitle suggests, he was "[w]riting [h]istory from the [m]argins" (238), but it was ultimately the history of literature that was his main priority. In the Davis/Geismar debate we see at work a cross-temporal dialogue between critics who focus

on similar thematic aspects of Faulkner's saga, but for whom the method to a certain extent dictates the outcome of the analysis.

Given Faulkner's Southern origins and obsessions, Geismar's reading circumscribes the province of neo-Marxist investigation rather accurately. The *Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha* conference of 1992 was dedicated to such readings from the outside in, and André Bleikasten cut a rather singular figure by resisting this trend. However, there are other voices in the conference volume who plead for a level-headed appraisal of what Faulkner can be made to demonstrate or be held responsible for. Richard H. King, for instance, openly admits that "the Faulkner critics on the contemporary, more theoretically inclined Left, among whom I count myself, have understandably wanted to claim Faulkner for their camp as a radical critic of racism and of the individualistic ethos so central to the development of capitalism.… But if we are going to be 'historical,' then there are complications to be noted" (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 39). Easy generalisations about the South's slavery as a metonym for American capitalism, or about Faulkner as a straightforward denigrator of that system, are not only contentious but also sadly simplifying, whereas an open acknowledgement of the intricacy of economic relations in America and of Faulkner's essential ambivalence towards social and racial issues creates a far more interesting picture.

Three years later, at the same annual Faulkner conference, John T. Matthews draws a pertinent picture of the dual context in which the novelist produced his work. On the one hand, the modernist aesthetics called for an attenuated representation of social reality and a sharper individualisation of the bourgeois subject. On the other, the rise of a specifically proletarian fiction was imposing a fresh outlook on realism and the ethics and function of literature (in Kartiganer & Abadie 1997: 168). Matthews concludes: "Though Faulkner's politics would never qualify him for inclusion among the proletarians, I contend that his textual politics equally disqualify

him for ready enlistment among the 'bourgeois experimentalist[s]' [sic.]. For all his pursuit of genteel prosperity, few writers have shown greater loathing for their own kind than Faulkner does in his fiction" (178). The novelist's twin investigations of "the economic practices of the self-made agrarian capitalism" and of the epistemology at its foundation, Matthews shows, assign his effort to discover the South's fatal flaw to "a sphere occupied by writers to his left" (184), although they do not automatically make Faulkner a leftist.[5]

As early as 1951 Irving Howe, in *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, wrote: "Though he has given us a wider range and taken a deeper sounding of Negro character than any other American writer, Faulkner has not yet presented in his novels an articulate Negro who speaks for his people. No one has the right to demand that he do so, but it is a legitimate problem in literary criticism to ask why he has not" (in Brodhead 59). This is a revealing compendium of twentieth-century criticism committed to the unravelling of the social, racial and political threads in Faulkner's work. Those issues may be totally outside the writer's "range of personal experience" (ibid.), and they may be utterly irrelevant to his auctorial design, but the critic has the right and even the duty to inquire why the novelist has not confronted the kind of situation and character who would rebel against and overthrow his world. Faulkner's silence on these issues is particularly puzzling to Howe in the context of the writer's having taken "a painful journey of self-education, beginning with an almost uncritical acceptance of the more benevolent Southern notions and ending with a brooding sympathy and humane respect for the Negroes" (61).

This shift in focus from why the writer has done certain things to why he has not done others is an ethical question typical of late

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[5] Romanian criticism before 1990 is replete with similar critical protocols whereby Faulkner is shown to have affinities with proletarian fiction.

twentieth-century criticism. It was legitimised by psychoanalytical investigations of unconscious motives and repression, placed in context by structuralist notions of the appurtenance of the text to a larger system, and revalorised by deconstructive/poststructuralist techniques of anachronistic recontextualisation. It is pursued with the most rewarding results in the field of historicist criticism, where both history and the philosophy thereof can be summoned up to justify any alternative choice.

CONCLUSIONS

I have dedicated a great portion of my discussion of ideologically-committed Faulkner criticism to André Bleikasten's state-of-criticism speech which opens the *Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha* conference volume of 1992. It seems fit that I should conclude by citing Louis D. Rubin, Jr., who contributed the last article to the same volume, not only because to a large extent he voices concerns that are akin to Bleikasten's, but he also proposes a solution. His appraisal of Faulkner criticism with an ideological agenda echoes the same deep conviction that it is precisely the subtle borderline between fiction and reality that makes the study of literature more precious to reality, just as it makes the study of both the material and the ideatic worlds more relevant to literature. Literary critics, he posits, are scholars of literature first and their main duty is to the perennial written text. Ideology can and should be used to order and enhance our understanding of the literary work, but it must never be allowed to oversimplify or reduce it to piecemeal evidence of its own tenets.

The cause Rubin defends here, and which is to a large extent also the point of the present paper, is essentially that of literature. Just as in *Absalom, Absalom!* the protagonist insists that he does not hate the South, although evidence seems to indicate that he does not love it unconditionally either, so the critic is placed in a position where s/he must keep the right balance between critique and

appreciation, between his/her own traumatic encounter with the Faulknerian text and the ethics of their calling. It is not ideological reading *per se* that Rubin or Bleikasten indict, but the sort of reading that loses sight of the text and takes off into the rehearsal of a certain type of class-oriented critique of society at large. Inasmuch as it is "literary" or even "cultural," Marxist and historicist criticism must justify their allegiance by dealing cogently and dispassionately with literature within a specific cultural context.

Ideological readings, past and present, are useful to the same extent to which they are also inevitable in the twentieth century. At the same time, they are resisted not only by lay readers and old-guard performers of criticism, but by theory itself, since theory, as Paul de Man has pointed out, is by definition "the resistance to theory, that is to say resistance to the clear seeing and correct reading that would unmask ideological aberrations" (J. Hillis Miller explains in Kartiganer & Abadie 1995: 257). In other words, ideological readings are resisted by ideology itself, since they are a critique that grows in the crevices of thought and feeds on the meagre supply of ideas made available by ideology itself to justify its policing politics. Nonetheless, given the vast territory – intellectual and moral – covered by ideology, it has become unavoidable for any critic to address the historicist-ideological orientation in Faulkner criticism. Not only do all contemporary theories claim historicist credentials, but they in fact exist, according to this view, due to ideology itself. To speak (or write) is to recognise that language is social, that it has meaning and it functions precisely because it has been used and naturalised by others before us and imprinted by them; that words have a history of their own, which they cannot relinquish, but carry with them in every "new" formulation, in every new literary work. To speak is to admit that we are in ideology.

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FAULKNER, THE PREVERBAL
AND "THAT SPOTTED CORRUPTION OF FRANTIC
AND UNCATCHABLE HORSES,"
IN *SPOTTED HORSES*

Margaret A. Harrell
Freelance

ABSTRACT: In *Spotted Horses*, I identified a topic that became the focal theme in *Marking Time with Faulkner: A Study of the Symbolic Importance of the Mark and of Related Actions*. This Master's thesis at Columbia University (supervised by the poet/critic/professor John Unterecker) was published as a book by Saeculum University Press, Sibiu in 1999. In this 2005 paper I return to the origins, to discover what inspired me to select the style of *Spotted Horses* as a vehicle for looking at how Faulkner used preverbal symbolic action and every sort of technique (extended simile, metaphor, hyperbole, oxymoron, personification) to, quite unobtrusively, convey emotional undercurrent without developing it through the psychology of the character per se. I looked at how this action-driven novella laid bare the technique. It reveals a philosophy of relationship between every level of life, including nature, leading ultimately to his philosophy of man's prevailing, including the possibility of marking time. Underlying the relationships are dynamic motion and nonmoving energy waiting to be tapped into (in other words, $E = mc^2$).[1]

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[1] In $E = mc^2$ energy is either active or latent. But information acts the same way. It may be directly communicated in explicit terms or implied, locked into the structure, passed even from writer to reader, who then receives not

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life,
> by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred
> years later when a stranger looks at it,
> it moves since it is life.
> —Faulkner, "Interview with Jean Stein
> vanden Heuvel" (253)

In the case of *Spotted Horses* the preverbal is central in the storytelling itself. It is also a component in what I call "symbolic actions."

I quite well remember how apparently accidental the topic selection was, how inspired, on the other hand. I had an excellent advisor John Unterecker, who was working at the time on his award-winning critical biography, *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane*. He also authored *A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats* and corresponded with Lawrence Durrell, Marianne Moore, Crane's family, etc. At that time, in fact, Columbia University had the best literature department in the country. So Professor Unterecker asked each of us, about fourteen in total, for our topic, and I almost blurted out "Spots in Faulkner, such as in *Spotted Horses*." I think I was partly referring to the *inscape*, "dappled things"[2] quality, the

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so much the information as the ability to construct it. That is, to create information out of the raw material the writer provided. This latter is the communication of the raw materials of something other than information—of consciousness.

[2] The line in Hopkins' poem is "Glory be to God for dappled things— / For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow, For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim; [...] All things counter, original, spare, strange." See, for instance, physicist, chaos theorist F. David Peat, writing on the subject of the nonlinear in "Cosmos and Inscape," <http://www.fdavidpeat.com/bibliography/essays/german.htm>:

> The word, *inscape*, itself comes from the English poet and priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins whose poetry probed the inner-dwelling-ness of nature. To engage the world as *inscape* therefore brings us close to

heavily particularized descriptions as of the "restive clump" of horses: "Calico-coated, small-bodied, with delicate legs and pink faces in which their mismatched eyes rolled wild and subdued, they huddled, gaudy motionless and alert, wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves" (*Spotted Horses* 4). In another immediate example, the Texan stranger "vanished... into a kaleidoscopic maelstrom of long teeth and wild eyes and slashing feet, from which presently the horses began to burst one by one like partridges flushing." The horse is "slammed" to earth twice before the "clump," freed from being shackled together with barbed wire, "whipped and whirled about the lot like dizzy fish in a bowl" (8). Far from being sprinkled sparsely, these comparisons gallop into each other, just missing becoming mixed metaphors, the clip is so fast. But I did not go into such lavishness of simile that morning, thinking surely Unterecker would dispute the choice—because I myself wasn't convinced. Yet he eagerly leaped at the topic.

I had grasped the incipient idea that no matter on what level, *all* contact (even the mere act of breathing, or sitting still, for that matter), produced a mark. Naturally, we know this, but Faulkner took it much further, honing into it, making it ultra-significant, however apparently simple. Encounters, significantly, produced visual effects. It was the essence of existing side by side. Those

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what I mean by *cosmology* in its widest sense—in the sense of the existential immediacy of the cosmos as it presents itself to us, and our participation within it.

To see the world as inscape is to acknowledge that each of our experiences is limitless, authentic and unconditioned. To come into contact with nature, enter into a relationship, read a poem, watch a play, or contemplate a work of art is to open ourselves into an unlimited world of experience and a multiplicity of levels of meaning. Inscape calls upon us to seek and to respond to the authentic voice that lies within all things. It asks us to realize that all attempts at description, and all levels of existence are, of their very nature, provisional and contingent.

effects were often stated in analogies and personifications. In the eventual Master's thesis, later book, about the entire corpus of Faulkner's works, I wrote:

> I have studied Faulkner's books through—unlikely as it seems—such recurring actions as moving, burning, squatting, eating, vomiting, spitting, smelling, washing, and ultimately marking. Rather than using it decoratively, Faulkner made imagery and descriptive passages an intimate part of his writing; moreover, the identical patterns reappear. Faulkner stretches any important word to form an undercurrent of suggestion, keeping the word in the reader's mind even when it is temporarily out of sight. "Foot," for example (motion/marking), runs the gamut, from "heel" of bread and "heeling" someone to "shoe-horning" someone into a plane, to "footlog," "footloose," "foot-packed" and the quick-changing "footgear" that denotes successive invaders of the wilderness. Associated with "stamping," the "invader's iron heel," the character Stamper, and "stamping" faces with identical marks, it shifts, finally, into "footnote," showing how life is a process of constant motion—in which enough steps taken in the right direction leave "milestones" or a "deathless footnote" in the chronicle of man. Yet Faulkner by no means stops with foot.

Faulkner indeed said he believed in Bergsonian time[3], though the emphasis here is space. In fact, in the lightning speed of *Spotted Horses*, this level promoted a sense of instant transformation. By

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[3] Applied to space-time, this gave a geographical potential for things to be transported into other things, ostensibly as metaphor, simile, personification, but also like quantum tunneling of particles across barriers. "In my opinion time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist," he said, in agreeing with Bergson about the fluidity of time (Kimbrough 70). However, this shaping includes space, as Faulkner's descriptions give nature human attributes (or empathies) and vice-versa, a stylistic *as if* act of communicating that goes beyond what a reader is normally familiar with. In this, Faulkner is quite masterful.

extension, motion, marking everything, was a consequence of interconnectedness, interactivity. From the very first sentence, the apparent "tatters torn at random from large billboards [the horses seen from a distance]… attached to the rear of the wagon" are "inherent with … [both] separate and collective motion" (3). Life was a product of these encounters, however tangential, barely worth mentioning, if it were not Faulkner at the observation wheel, if it were not Faulkner who would make us feel that this was the way life worked. Now, this was a simple observation at the time, fed by the fact it had so many illustrations that I, with my critic's hat, could note. But what I did not then bring in was how it also fitted the modern quantum philosophy in particle physics, whereby we can say that all options are open (probable or possible) till one gets chosen through the local collapse (or "reduction") of the wave function—that is, through an encounter, a selectivity, be it observed even merely emotionally or actively experienced. That single *local* event, that *describable* situation, is turned into a fact, an event, if some observer has put awareness on it, and the wave of global possibilities is consequently, on the instant, reduced to the then consequential facts of life. Therefore, interaction is behind the movement from wave of total interwovenness—total possibility— to the after-the-fact focused state of *what* "*happened.*"

What happens or *is about to happen* will produce a mark. Faulkner's characters may tap into any energetic point on the action spectrum. This can be seen to relate to Faulkner's Einsteinian description of energy as something a writer can intentionally capture, as with a lasso ("Interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel"). This is similar to the relationship between potential and kinetic energy:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves since it is life. Since man is

mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave
something behind him that is immortal since it will always move.
(253).

He can then place it on the page, locked into stillness keyed to his
language, that the reader can reactivate, if done just right. Such an
intent in writing is remarkable, the more one thinks about it.

Moving past the subject of marking in its unstated importance,
and in its expression in symbolic actions, for the moment, one finds
another preverbal component in the way Faulkner sometimes
received his ideas from the merest, most fragmentary glimpse
suggesting a larger context. Asked where he got a central idea for
Go Down, Moses, Faulkner answered: "I was down to the station
last week and a coffin came in off the train" ("Interview with Dan
Brennan" 48).

<div align="center">*</div>

But for the purposes of this paper and its brevity, regarding implicit,
nonverbalized information, let us examine the *style* of *Spotted
Horses*. In this action-driven plot, everything is completely
externalized. We are told, in the extreme case of Flem Snopes, that
he "dont even tell himself what he is up to. Not if he was laying in
bed with himself in an empty house in the dark of the moon" (14).
There is typically no "on the inside." In the most clear exception we
read suddenly, out of the blue, as if the author forgot to erase it:
"That is, he [the Texan] *began to have the feeling* that each face had
stopped looking at him the second before his gaze reached it" (20,
italics added). Since except for this, no one lets us know any feeling
whatsoever in the first person, this "inside view" is striking.
Typically, we might learn about the flatness of Mrs. Armstid's
voice; from this an interpretation is inferred (it was "as though the
tale mattered nothing," 67-68). But what this focus away from the
inner life does is that it lets the emotional landscape spread out

everywhere. The action and shapeshifting descriptions of the natural scene are as if everything is expressing the emotions indirectly. That is, when something happens to one person, the effect might "magically" appear in the landscape. Often, it is that alone that gives evidence of deep cause or effect (profound change). We have to piece together, which is simple, that the landscape changed to reflect something that happened to the nonpsychologically treated characters. There is a dislocation effect.

The sense of atmosphere envelops or jumps out at the reader. A man (identified as "one") holds a "spray of peach bloom" in his teeth (49). For several pages he becomes "the man with the peach spray" (51, 53, etc.) as in an epithet in Homer (cf., "fleet-footed Achilles," "wily Odysseus"). In an extreme contrast between delicacy and violence, "it bore four blossoms like miniature ballet skirts of pink tulle" (49). In the later expanded book *The Hamlet*, Faulkner returns to this odd note, this peach spray, in the use of a dowser, searching for gold or silver that is not there on the land. But in *Spotted Horses*, it is only an odd fragrance, hanging without support in the air. It can also be juxtaposed, in contra-distinction, to the splintered match stick serving as a pick for the teeth of the flint-eyed Texan (19-20, etc.)

This "marking" made by all interactions is exemplified in the horse chase. We see the moon blanching the dust, the men treading it; the night itself is "touched" by sound, murmurous and tremulous with bursting leaves and buds and "constant with the thin and urgent cries and galloping hooves" (45). By evening there will enter "that otherworldly quality of moonlight" (37) or, to the horses, its "brilliant treachery" (38). The earlier "dizzy fish" will become "phantom fish" (39). In the background the "pearled and mazy yawn" (46) of the moon is reminiscent of the "black yawn of the barn door" (40), which had led the horses to "an instant of static horror," becoming "a gaudy vomit of long wild faces and splotched chests" (40); the image of being trapped in indifferent surroundings

will be stated in an implied comparison; the "hollow, thunderous sound" as they hit the barn wall is of a collapsed mine shaft (16). It conveys the sensation of freedom being trapped in the most desperate way. Paradoxically expressive, the moonlit pear tree is a "mazed and silver immobility like exploding snow" (20). As the men peer into the barn earlier (described as a hallway, a tunnel [16]) what they see are "ponies"; these ponies were moments before "banjo-faced jack rabbits"; they emerge "like flushed quail" (23), reminiscent of the odd, jarring but wonderful opening paragraph, the "considerable string of obviously alive objects" (3) soon revealed to be horses, which become, in another wildly unlikely visual association, "larger than rabbits and gaudy as parrots" (4). Soon they will begin to "fade" and be repeatedly described as "phantom"-like (39). Joining in, the inanimate melodeon in the hallway, struck by the escaped horse, produced a note, "resonant and grave, of deep and sober astonishment" (41), as if suddenly attuned to the situation, as if conscious and feeling, sentient. Through all of this we intuit the emotions, finding them in whatever location or form they appear.

To watch one metaphor metamorphosize, we can follow the Texan putting a ginger snap into his hand; in a symbolic action "it shut slowly upon the cake until a fine powder of snuff-colored dust began to rain from his fingers" (34). The ginger snaps prominently reappear and evolve (cf., into cheese and crackers, and candy); when the little Snopes boy steals candy we get one of the most gripping descriptions of greed in terms of eating, that the Snopes represent. The constantly eaten gingersnaps of the Texan echo in the 5-cent sweets Flem Snopes gives to Mrs. Armstid, which are ironically 100 times less than the promised $5.00 refund, offering an early taste of court. The unspoken tensions of sharp contrasts adds an air of almost surrealness, like the smell of locust blossoms around the outdoor trial, a sense of out-of-placeness.

But there are innumerable, constant "signs" of encounter on a pervasive scale below the surface, imprinting life's *effects* onto the faces and bodies of the protagonists, turning them into things they could never be, inhuman things, but also stitching them into nature, embroiled together—nature spreading a landscape over and around them that corresponded to the emotional atmosphere over their situations. Though not made explicit, the unstated, underlying idea, the cause of the associations, was that everything, all the time, is changing, because of moving, *because of encountering*. And encounters at all levels leave marks. We cannot escape being a part of something, running into something. Even the books will run into readers; the stopped scenes, characters, ideas, on their pages, will—Faulkner predicts and aims for—start up again, the stimulus to their potential regathering momentum.

Likewise accented was the exaggerated, subjective *angle* from which the "watchers"/actors saw. The doors they walked through, or the horses did, might become a hole, a tunnel, or a yawn, or an orifice, something that distorted literal viewing but achieved that compression/expansion of subjective time and space. This does not mean that there is no protest, no mention of "shrieking women," no shouting, no "flat, toneless and hopeless voice" (66). There is. But it does not match the power and scale of what is either unspoken or misrepresented, inferred by Ratliff (63), when he tells Bookwright why he is not returning the $5.00.

In short, there is something more here, something visible in the absence of the other foci. That is this vast backdrop of nature that serves sometimes as the ink for the pen of life, providing comparisons that speak purely through simile, metaphor, personification, of what the situation is—what the emotions are, therefore, bound to be, because represented not by articulate emotional statement of human beings but by nature's osmotic and symbolical substitute appearance, either outside or over them. Sometimes *Spotted Horses* is categorized as humor, farce, "action

reporting." The consciousness is left to the reader. For the very action orientation (minus psychology) made the simile world stand out in stark relief.

I am speaking here in terms of the Unspoken in Faulkner, the intuitable, the unconscious—what he leaves to the reader, that vast range of words to add to the text, words he never said. For in the novella, as contrasted with the later novel *The Hamlet* in which the novella becomes embedded, there is not one statement of psychology, barely one iota of descriptive consciousness, just the reader's receipt of the raw details of action. However, to help us, there is the full body of imagery, the paintings of those canvases, the miniature scenes, and the stimulus-response behavioral descriptions in the plot. This is perfectly in accord with Faulkner's professed intention of arresting motion, fixing it (statically, organized with content), for the reader to press the button of "Begin." This tactic has something to do with energy—the fact that if you refuse to hold one obviously energized aspect of a whole, that becomes unconscious. You therefore offer the other participant the opportunity—in this case, the necessity—of taking that role over. That is, in this case, you force the other participant (here, the reader) to make the judgments, because you hand over the package, the story, with the energy that is not in words, but is, in the implications, the loud omissions, left as energy—for their transformation. This is because the words are marked with unspoken but obvious implied reflections, inflections, waiting to be reflected upon. It is a rather obscure idea that is hard to convey— that energy, when it "moves again," will somehow relate to the intent, the action, the statement it had before it was stopped, that something about it will remember how to move. This statement, I will later relate to Hemingway's comment on it. It says something about momentum picking up where it left off.

As mentioned above, an angle through which I am approaching this paper is in trying to discover what I myself thought decades

ago, when singling out this novella. I ask why it triggered and epitomized the entry motif into a larger Faulknerian theme, earmarked in the title *Marking Time with Faulkner: A Study of the Symbolic Importance of the Mark and of Related Actions*. I discovered, in rereading, the sense of marking everywhere as a substitute for psychology. Marks become transformation, an index of the psychology that explains it, a chronicle of metamorphosis, describing the shifts not only in the scenes but in every minute object, where imaginary landscape change indicates change psychologically as well as physically, that changes spiritually also, that might be said to expand or shrink its consciousness—all without our being told this. But it is a detail that helps us understand the effectiveness of Faulkner's style in this story. This very habit, that of creating a sequence of imagistic development, also helps explain how he was typically able to "go into" an entire story through an accidental fragment, which led, like the crumbs in a fairytale which mark the way home, to the larger whole, perhaps entirely reinvented.

There is, that is, insufficient spoken reaction to demonstrate human conscience on display, except that the very human author has laid this on a table for our scrutiny. It is ourselves that hold the implicit consciousness, the implicit statements, like talk show panelists after a reporter has given us the details. Faulkner calls his aim a bald-faced, nonjudgmental presentation of "Man in his dilemma—facing his environment" (Stein 277). And that he himself is not to judge.

So the author is in cahoots with us, albeit with no written contract of participation. The reader's own co-creative faculties are part of the prospectus. It is in Hemingway's principle of omission: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of

the iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water.   The writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing" (*Death in the Afternoon* 192).

In his own way, Faulkner has demonstrated something similar to the Hemingway technique mentioned above. Faulkner says he freezes the motion, letting it come alive again in the reader's scrutiny, inside the reader's mind, inside life.   He speaks of "a dramatic instant of the furious motion of being alive," at the University of Virginia: "You catch this fluidity which is human life and you focus a light on it and you stop it long enough for people to be able to see it" (Undergraduate Course in Writing, 1958, p. 239). Yet that isn't all. In depending on both kinetic and latent aspects, this is very close to $E = mc^2$. But it also relates to what Hemingway said: he omitted words, keeping them in *his own mind*, for the reader to find in *his or her* mind, transported there by the fact that the author knew them but intentionally kept them "underwater."

He doesn't say "this is right and this is wrong," "this is black and this is white." He depicts it, compares, contrasts definitively in metaphor and simile, and you interpret, you decide. Mrs. Littlejohn in the background washes clothes, Mr. Armstid appears washed out (about to be victimized); the scene, by nightfall is *drenched* in moonlight, the pear tree "drowned silver" (37) before the men make their failed attempt to catch the horses while still in the barn. Does all this connect? You, the reader, decide what the undercurrent is doing there, what it is conveying, which is the meaning, the connections. From the first paragraph, in the unlikely description of a motley collection of circus advertisements, which might also be the tail of a kite in the air, but in fact are horses wearing necklaces of barbed wire, it is the descriptions that show the psychology, the emotional feelings and reactions, inside the action-driven plot. It is at times almost as if nature itself is having a stream of consciousness display or backdrop of what the displaced emotions are or what the sightless and unaware, mostly silent, characters

would see if they were to open their eyes. All during the first two-thirds they are either in the auction area or chasing the escaped horses. Only in the last section do they return to the familiarity of the country store, where they again pick up their knives, knives being a very different piece of equipment than the empty-handed investment position of before. Then the gingersnap carton prominent along with the pistol in the hip pocket of the Texan, Buck Hipps, who is selling the horses (or rabbits or drowned fish or victims of a collapsed mine, or whatever other depiction they are currently viewed inside, by the author, because the characters see none of it), is replaced by the sack of cheese segment or of candy, which in the hands of Mrs. Armstid replaces the $5.00 investment of her hard-earned money that her husband paid, to buy a horse. The $5.00, which she never got back, is symbolized in great reduction as Flem Snopes hands her a 5-cent sack of sweets.

I think that my right brain was mesmerized by the dazzling movement, the momentary transformations, which carried not literal reality but consciousness, suggesting meaning. What had just happened? No character is the "witness." But nature is, or movement is, that seeps into the atmosphere and surrounding background. It carries the significance and feeling inside its "as if" suggestiveness. As the moon fills the landscape, creating the impression of drowned fish, the daytime liveliness and spirited fight of the horses is pervaded by the sense of drowning; the image enters, then takes over quickly.

The actual shift of location sounds odd notes, such as the echo of the "man with the peach spray" in the atmosphere of the concluding court scene; there, locus petals "snow" and fragrantly waft. The Justice falls lightly asleep and sounds the ending note of dismissal, "I cant stand no more!" The fact that no one internalizes reenforces the action plot, the completeness of this lack of reflection (for seeing nothing, how can the characters think back?); this in turn permits the impact of the fact that there is so much

extreme description and jittery comparison, such as of horses to goldfish, rabbits, tigers, mules and even a kite. Yet from the very first words, the relationship is scaled to include both individual and collective, in the same breath.

One reason I think this style works is that it parallels the way Faulkner himself discovered some story motifs—through a visual detail in its relic of an erased plot, a lifetime, a heart's emotion. So if he presents these implied wholes, showing only, as he himself discovered them, the external pieces, the jigsaw shapeshifting parts, then we will certainly fill in the omission crying to be represented. From this point on, that long, continuous march of humanity, processing everything with the destiny of *prevailing*, was passed actively into the public's hands. And it was not only mankind that would prevail, it was nature—that partner in life, in crime, in hope, the two entwined, each marking the other through the chain of the various repercussions of each single act, each incident, each relic, hint, mark, through which as in peeling an onion, we could find the central statement, perhaps the flashback memory. This indeed was very Faulknerian, to make a mark, to be remembered for it, *alive in it*.

In *The Non-Local Universe: The New Physics and Matters of the Mind* by Robert Nadeau and Menas Kafatos, the authors look at the implications of "nonlocality." I. M. Oderberg (2000) cites their conclusion that physical reality is basically an undivided whole: "Since human consciousness is a property of this whole, they argue that 'it is not unreasonable to conclude, in philosophical terms at least, that the universe is conscious'" (197-8). The book description on the Amazon.com site mentions "breathtaking implications of non-locality," by which the authors argue that

> since every particle in the universe has been 'entangled' with other particles . . . physical reality on the most basic level is an undivided wholeness. . . . And they also make a convincing case

that human consciousness can now be viewed as emergent from and seamlessly connected with the entire cosmos.

To return to the "Interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel" (1956), when asked, "Could you explain more what you mean by motion in relation to the artist?" Faulkner spelled it out so eloquently we are forever indebted for the question:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move. This is the artist's way of scribbling "Kilroy was here" on the wall of the final and irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass. (252)
>
> The fact that I have moved my characters around in time successfully, at least in my own estimation, proves to me my own theory that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as *was*—only *is*. (255).

Faulkner thinks here of time as something one can move around inside (or move around) through the sole condition of being present in it, or having characters who are. That presence congeals, compresses, or constellates "time," "arrests" it, fixes it. In the case of the author, he is the "observer." That observer, the one arresting motion, stops time, passing on something in it. This brings to mind the Eastern mystical unity consciousness, called in Buddhism the Ground of Being. The Ground is timeless Source, ourselves manifesting its potentials. I wrote on such a topic in 2004, describing each human being as creating a personal "piece of Earth" (Harrell, 2004)—that is, in *becoming*, in his or her energy and creations, that "piece of Earth."

Faulkner's description of continuous *presence* implies that our immortality is further defined in the individual and cumulative effect of developing more of the qualities and quantities of wisdom, truth, love, humor, irony, through the vast variety of one thing encountering another, striking against it, creating through it, mirroring, contradicting, juxtaposing, smashing, multiplying. This in turn offers the whole of humanity its tools for prevailing over any critical agenda, task, emergency, or alarming possibility while digging up unexpected options found in what Faulkner called his (implicitly, each person's) "little postage stamp"-sized quota of space-time. He finds this "gold mine" in his "native soil," a tiny location one could plumb with incredible precision and inexhaustibility if, as he did, "sublimating the actual into the apocryphal," the esoteric meanings, the implications—what was unobserved by others, found in experience and the Imagination. The "postage" image, implying communication, transformed into actuality, and one "stamped" the locale into a point of view that could be returned to, by another. He goes on to say, "I like to think of the world I created as being a kind of keystone in the universe; that, as small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away, the universe itself would collapse" (Stein, *op. cit.* 255).

<div align="center">*</div>

In closing, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to my publications in Romania, since 1995, when I first signed with Professor Didi-Ionel Cenuşer. Among those to thank, in addition to Professor Cenuşer, I was tremendously helped and welcomed by Mircea Ivănescu, Ion Mircea, Professor Eugene Van Itterbeeck, and Mihai Ursachi.

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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS
OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *SANCTUARY*

Anca Mureşan
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

Abstract

William Faulkner is known for his style which is not always very easy: his sentences are long and over-elaborated, sometimes he withholds decisive details, he resorts to the stream-of-consciousness technique, he mentions people or events that the reader will not learn about until much later. All these narrative peculiarities make Faulkner a difficult author to read and translate. The paper intends to analyze and highlight some of the problems faced by a translator in his attempt to translate William Faulkner into Romanian. Ways of translating are suggested, offering potential explanations for the choices that have been made.

William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* has held for quite a long time an ambiguous place in the writer's career. Despite the author's poor opinion of his own novel – which has too often been perceived as the outcome of "a cheap idea because it was deliberately conceived to make money" (<Introduction> to *Sanctuary* written by Faulkner himself in the 1932 Modern Literary edition), the book has managed to attract a great number of critics, who have underlined the originality and the achievement of Faulkner's narrative technique.

One of the narrative techniques which have drawn critics' attention and which is extensively used by the writer in *Sanctuary* is that of the stream-of-consciousness. This technique records the characters' multifarious thoughts and feelings without regard to

logical arguments or narrative sequence. By using such a device, Faulkner attempts to reflect all the forces, internal and external, that can influence the psychology of his characters at a single moment. He often told his stories using multiple narratives, each with their own interests and biases, allowing us to piece together the "true" circumstances of the story.

Among those who praised the novel's literary qualities is John T. Matthews. He underlines the idea that the ellipsis affects the rhetorical, psychological, thematic and narrative structures of *Sanctuary*. For example, Temple's rape never appears unveiled in the text but it is alluded to, in recurring metonymies or metaphors. The same holds true for Horace's Oedipus complex. These metaphors and metonymies make sense only through the filter of interpretation or imaginary reconstruction. Thus, the reader of *Sanctuary* is forced into a reconstructive process. Furthermore, he often avoids, on purpose, to inform us about decisive facts such as, for example, the scene of the rape. Side by side with these two devices, one can notice the existence in almost all of Faulkner's writings of a colloquial style that can be noticed in lively dialogues, *Sanctuary*, for example, being full of excellent dialogues sharply individualized.

One thing that can be easily noticed while reading the book is the use of two different styles. While one page displays a direct, straightforward style, similar to that of Hemingway's, the next is full of metaphors and similes. Added to these narratives peculiarities are the purely stylistic ones: the extensive use of epithets: "his flank, twisting and pinching cigarettes" (182), "her eyes blankly, right and left looking, cool, predatory and discreet" (198) and the excessive length of sentences with many subordinate clauses which overwhelm the reader.

William Faulkner has acquired a reputation as a difficult author to read and translate. Indeed, for an untrained eye, his work can be really demanding. To create a certain atmosphere, a certain mood,

Faulkner let some of his complex sentences run on one or more than a page, he juggled time and symbols; experienced with multiple narrators or interrupted the unfolding of events with stream-of-consciousness soliloquies.

A perfect example of the complexity of his style is the following fragment – an excerpt from chapter XVIII:

> They reached Memphis in midafternoon. At the foot of the bluff below Main Street Popeye turned into a narrow street of smoke-grimed frame houses with tiers of wooden galleries, set a little back in grassless plots, with now and then a forlorn and hardy tree of some shabby species – gaunt, lopbranched magnolias, a stunted elm or a locust in grayish, cadaverous bloom – interspersed by rear ends of garages... (277)

> Au ajuns în Memphis după amiază. La poalele râpei în dreptul Străzii Principale, Popeye intră pe o stradă îngustă mărginită de case înnegrite de fum, cu şiruri de balcoane de lemn, case retrase de la stradă dar fără peluze în faţă ci doar ici colo cu câte un copac singuratic dar rezistent deşi de specie inferioară – câte o magnolie plăpândă şi golaşă, un ulm pipernicit, un salcâm cu flori cenuşii cadaverice – şi din loc în loc câte un garaj cu partea din spate spre stradă.

I have chosen this particular fragment due to the complexity of the imagery, the specific and highly charged images which can pose serious problems to a translator from a semantical, stylistical and grammatical point of view.

From the three dimensions of time, Faulkner dwells obsessively upon the past. Not only does the present not exist, it can never be known either. The reader never sees it. We never know or see what happens while it is in the process of happening but only when it is past. This can be seen in the opening line of the fragment: *"They reached Memphis in midafternoon"* – *"Au ajuns în Memphis la*

amiază". The first verb of the fragment <u>reached</u> stresses this idea. If in English, the presence of a subject is compulsory, this does not hold true with the Romanian sentence. That is why, the presence of the pronoun "ei" (as the logical subject) is not necessary since the inflection of the verb indicates the person the action refers to. Another word worth mentioning is the adverb of time <u>midafternoon</u>. A word by word translation would be "în mijlocul după-amiezii". In Romanian such an utterance would seem redundant, since afternoon already means "după-amiaza", "mijlocul zilei", and that is why the translation of the preposition "mid" only leads to unwelcome emphasis. Faulkner uses this preposition for only to point out the exact time of the action, be it morning – midmorning or as in this case – midafternoon.

Now that the temporal plane was briefly drawn, the author turns his attention to the descriptive one. Going on with his narration, Faulkner establishes several place co-ordinates. Thus, the adverbial modifier of place that follows, <u>at the foot</u> – <u>la poalele</u> is employed as a means of stressing the visual sensation. Just as the preposition <u>mid</u> narrows down the temporal dimension, the adverb <u>at the foot</u> restricts the visual one. The image that the reader is left with is that of a closed space, a limited view. It stresses the inferior limit of the plane. To further emphasize this idea, I have chosen to translate the word <u>bluff</u> by <u>râpă</u> and not by <u>creastă</u> which, according to Andrei Bantaş in his *Dicţionar Englez – Român* would be its basic meaning; on the one hand because <u>râpă</u> has a negative connotation which better suits the tone of the fragment and on the other hand, because the word <u>creastă</u>, meaning the upper part of a hill, mountain, cannot be determined by such adverbs as <u>la poalele</u>.

Next we come across another adverbial modifier, <u>below</u>, which together with <u>at the foot of the bluff</u>, accomplishes a certain gradation. Faulkner starts from a more general space, to narrow it down to a certain location, that of the Main Street. According to Andrei Bantaş, <u>below</u> means "dedesubt", a Romanian equivalent

being thus <u>dedesubtul Străzii Principale</u>. However, one cannot translate it as such since <u>dedesubt</u> means a location somewhere under the Main Street. Subsequently, one needs a semantic artifice to allow the Romanian reader to visualize the scene. The place reference being so important to the writer, it seems natural to choose a much more precise adverbial modifier, such as <u>în dreptul</u>, the preposition <u>în</u> stressing the visual image.

The second verb of the fragment, <u>turned into</u> also deserves special attention, first because of the tense and then because of its meaning. Of the Romanian tenses which can render the Past Tense, I have chosen the so-called Perfect Simplu <u>intră</u>. Unlike Imperfect or Perfect Compus that can also be Romanian equivalents for the English Past Tense, the use of Perfect Simplu seems much more appropriate to this context. While Imperfect gives the action length, forcing upon the text a certain dynamism and increasing its presence in our consciousness, Perfect Simplu and Perfect Compus describe an action viewed as momentary. However, there is a slight difference between them. If Perfect Compus shows an action completed in the past with no connection to the present moment, Perfect Simplu describes an event that happened in a more recent past which leaves room for the unfolding of other events to come. The necessity of maintaining the tone of the fragment led to the translation of the verb <u>turned into</u> not by <u>o coti</u> which would seem the obvious variant, but by <u>intră</u>. The reason why I have found it suitable for this context is the connotation of the verb. <u>A intra</u> means to enter a limited, an enclosed space. Further on, the idea of a secluded space is euphemistically expressed by the author through two words bearing negative connotations: <u>narrow</u> and <u>frame</u>, both emphasizing the ephemeral human condition. The Romanian equivalents <u>îngustă</u> and <u>mărginită</u> bear the same connotations, denying any sense of future.

The wealth of this single symbolic scene is due to the basic polarity and the thematic confrontation of good and evil, the author

making sure that each and every word gets its deserved attention. He offers a dark vision of life, a gloomy atmosphere through rather strange but yet very effective word choices or through words that carry the most adequate semantic load.

A characteristic of Faulkner's style is his predilection for the extensive use of dark colors. The next adjective for example, smoke-grimed, has the following literal translation: murdare de fum. However, I have not found it suitable for this context for two reasons: on the one hand, this Romanian equivalent is rather strong and direct as compared to the original and on the other hand, it loses its original meaning. To be truthful to Faulkner's style, one has to make some analogies so as to find the most appropriate translation: given the color of the smoke, the translation înnegrite de fum offers that special connotation the author is looking for. Further on, one can notice the existence in the Romanian version of the repetition of the word case. This segment is part of a long and rather elaborate sentence. In order to make it as comprehensive as possible without interfering too much with the original construction – since Faulkner is well-known for his long and elaborate sentences – I have taken the liberty of repeating the logical subject case retrase de la stradă.

Going a little further in the economy of the fragment, we came across the adjective grassless in set a little back in grassless plots. Due to the fact that an exact translation – fără iarbă – would not have conveyed the same meaning, the adjective needs further analysis. There is not enough information for a Romanian reader to understand what the author is trying to describe. In order to find the right equivalent, one should also take into account the adverbial modifier set a little back – retrase de la stradă. It is a common characteristic of American houses to have a lawn, being thus withdrawn from the street. Knowing that, I have decided to give the following translation: retrase de la stradă dar fără peluze. The image that the author creates with the help of the adjective grassless is that

of a desolated, colorless town. The description lacks vivid colors, we have only smoke-grimed houses, grayish, cadaverous bloom. Green is the color of life and the lack of it further emphasizes the loss of any sense of future, the absence of hope.

　　When reading this fragment, one sees that Faulkner has a great faith in words; he exploits at maximum the word that has the capacity to express more than one idea. As we have already mentioned, a fundamental feature of Faulkner's language resides undoubtedly in the abundance of epithets. All these adjectives: forlorn, hardy, shabby, gaunt, lopbranched, cadaverous etc. are carefully chosen to render the idea of good vs. evil, beautiful vs. ugly, hope vs. despair. Faulkner resorts to rather unusual choices of words: forlorn and hardy tree – copac singuratic dar rezistent; gaunt, lopbranched magnolias – magnolii plăpânde şi golaşe; a stunted elm – un ulm pipernicit; a locust in grayish, cadaverous bloom – un salcâm cu flori cenuşii cadaverice. Faulkner obsessively insists throughout the novel, upon some key words or images, that of the tree being one of them. Trees are universal symbols of stability and the central pillars of Life which ensure a connection between humans and the Divine. Trees symbolize life, growth, reaching down in the ground and up to the sky in the same time. In Faulkner's case, however, trees fail to function as "a cosmic axis". Being a low species, stunted, they no longer unite the three great cosmic planes: the underground, the earth and the sky. By not reaching the sky, they break the connection with the Divinity, being thus condemned to live under the influence of the profane. Furthermore, they no longer suggest life due to the absence of flowers. Testimony to this is the peculiar epithet associated to magnolias, gaunt. According to Andrei Bantaş, one of the meanings of the adjective is "sterp", that is not capable of bearing children. However, this is not a proper translation since the Romanian word "sterp" cannot be attributed to a plant. Therefore, I have resorted to another equivalent for the word gaunt – plăpând. This is not a

wholly appropriate translation because the English word has a negative connotation, while, plăpând is mainly used in Romanian with a slightly positive connotation. The choice plăpând is much more appropriate, giving not only the similar connotation of the verb but also the type of tree it refers to.

By resorting to such adjectives, Faulkner deprives nature of its basic role. Trees are no longer capable of completing the circle of life, of regenerating. It seems that the whole nature is but a mirror image of the main characters. The physical and psychical mutilation of the heroes spreads into nature. Faulkner takes this fight between instinct and reason, the fight for survival to another level: nature itself is striving for survival and the perfect example is the image of a forlorn and hardy tree – copac singuratic dar rezistent. The connotations of the Romanian adjectives are not that strong and direct as compared to the original, but still capable of rendering the same idea.

That nature becomes a reflection of the heroes' characters is further reinforced by the presence of the elm. According to Celtic symbolism, the elm represents the dark side of the psyche and its association to the adjective stunted – pipernicit is more than eloquent. Nature, as much as the characters, is doomed to oblivion, is unable to grow, to fulfill its fate. The climax of this description is the image of the locust in grayish, cadaverous bloom. The adjective cadaverous qualifies the noun in the highest degree. This epithet associated to the word bloom has a special connotation. In his well-known style, Faulkner introduces us into the realm of death, further emphasizing the absence of any future. With regard to the translation of the adjective, the obvious variant would be palide. However, the Romanian word is not strong enough for what the author probably had in his mind. Therefore, I have chosen to translate it as cadaverice because this meaning refers not only to the color but also to the smell of the decomposing flowers.

The next line takes us back to the description of the street – interspersed by rear ends of garages, şi din loc în loc câte un garaj cu partea din spate spre stradă. As we can see, in the Romanian translation the paragraph is introduced by the narrative "şi" which gives coherence to the sentence. The conjunction is used to add new information and it is much needed due to the length of this single sentence.

One last word I would like to draw attention upon is the adjective interspersed. The Romanian equivalent can be răspândite or presărate. Neither of these terms seems proper because they are too vague, the length of the sentence making it almost impossible for the reader to have an exact idea as to which word the adjective refers to. Thus, we need a more general term to convey the same meaning, this term being the adverbial modifier of place din loc în loc.

The analysis of this fragment makes it clear that Faulkner's work is rather difficult to translate. As I have already pointed out, Faulkner is fond of long sentences which often extend as much as on one or even two pages in length. The author's predilection for particular words, mysterious characterizations, strange events represented by disconnected time sequences and the difficulty to find out what really happens, all these have been perplexing readers of his novels but at the same time, they stand as testimony to his original style.

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THE REINVENTION OF THE SELF
IN PHILIP ROTH'S *AMERICAN PASTORAL*

Alexandra Mitrea
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

Abstract

The paper addresses issues related to cultural identity as they emerge in Philip Roth's 1997 novel, *American Pastoral*. It dwells on the process by which the novel's protagonist, Seymour "Swede" Levov, reinvents himself as a typical American in order to live "unapologetically as an equal among equals", sacrificing in this process an essential component of his identity – his Jewish heritage. This is, however, a fake identity which will not offer him any sustenance when his daughter, Merry, sets out to destroy the American pastoral he had presumably created for himself and his family.

One of the obsessive concerns of Philip Roth's fiction has been the construction of identity in the context of the friction between the marginal Jewish culture to which the characters belong by birth and the dominant American culture to which they aspire. Starting with *Goodbye Columbus* through *Portnoy's Complaint* or *The Human Stain*, up to *The Plot against America* (which actually melted down to a plot against the Jews in America), Roth has recurrently foregrounded instantiations of contested cultural identities, exploring the characters' relation and perception of their ethnic heritage as well as their unconditioned move towards the dominant culture. Like Bernard Malamud or Saul Bellow with whom Roth has been repeatedly grouped, Zuckerman's creator has constantly focused on the self which he viewed as a site of tension between the

Jewish identity genetically determined, and the lure of the American identity, which implied not only acculturation but first and foremost the dream of success.

However, the concept of "Jewish identity", and of identity in general for that matter, is a very problematic one. The question "What is a Jew?" has elicited a slew of answers, quite often contradictory and most of the time ambiguous. Depending on whether critics have embraced an essentialist approach to identity which predicates a clear, authentic set of characteristics deriving from biological or trans-historical sources of authority or, on the contrary, a non-essentialist approach, positing social constructionist mechanisms, the answers to the identity question have ranged widely, and most often have failed to capture the essence of Jewishness. Thus, in his insightful study, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity", critic Daniel Boyarin rightfully identifies two ways in which group identity is constructed. First, it is the product of a common genealogical origin and second it is the result of a common geographical origin. However, the genealogical origin does not automatically imply a certain cultural identity since, as Walter Benn Michaels notes, "all conceptions of cultural ethnicity are dependent on prior and often unacknowledged notions of race." (314) Michaels pertinently argues that non-observance of the practices of a certain culture deprives one of the right to lay claim to that culture in a sense other than "racial".

Michaels also reiterates the questions which frame any attempt at defining identity: "Is one a Jew by birth, by being or by doing?," or to put it differently, "Does one perform certain Jewish practices because he is a Jew or is he a Jew because he does them?" While most critics tend to agree that there is a clear connection between being and doing when defining one's identity, in the case of Jewishness one cannot overlook one practice which can be regarded as a mark of identity: the practice of circumcision. Boyarin correctly argues that "[circumcision] can be a mark that transcends

one's actual practices and (at least remembered) experiences, yet it is a mark that can reassert itself, and often enough does, as a demand (almost a compulsion) to reconnect, relearn, reabsorb, and reinvent the doing of Jewish things" (317).

Roth himself seems to have had problems positioning himself in relation to Jewishness. While discarding it in *Goodbye Columbus* or playing it down in most of his novels, he came to confront it pointblank in his autobiographical novel, *Patrimony*, where, paradoxically enough, we see Roth deciding to bury his father (a non-practicing Jew) not in a suit but in a shroud. In his subsequent novels, Roth returns with a vengeance to his concern with Jewishness and the consequences of discarding it.

Thus, in *American Pastoral*, Roth explores the results of one's decision to place under erasure his Jewish identity in favor of going American. The protagonist of the novel – Seymour Levov, nicknamed "Swede" – wants to "feel at home here, an American not by sheer striving, not by being a Jew who invents a famous vaccine or a Jew on the Supreme Court, not by being the most brilliant or the most eminent or the best, [but] by virtue of his isomorphism to the Wasp world" (89). However, this isomorphism will lead him to catastrophe.

The Swede is introduced to the reader through the mediation of the ever-present Rothian character – Nathan Zuckerman. However, in this novel Zuckerman does not focus on his own life and what it means to be an artist, as he used to do in Roth's previous novels, but chooses instead to invent a narrative which relates the protagonist's fall to the rejection of his Jewish identity.

In introducing the protagonist to the reader, Roth resorts to a very clever gambit: he assigns this role to Zuckerman, but the latter, however, further distances himself from the protagonist by presenting him through the eyes of the community. Roth plays with distances masterfully, exploiting the shift of narrative planes, zooming in and out on the protagonist whose identity becomes in

this way very hard to grasp.   Zuckerman positions himself as a childhood fan of the Swede, whose name is a magical one in the community in which he grew up. This community perceives him as the embodiment of their best hopes: "through the Swede, the neighborhood entered into a fantasy about itself and about the world, the fantasy of sport fans everywhere: almost like Gentiles (as they imagined Gentiles), our families could forget the way things actually work and make an athletic performance the repository of all their hopes" (3-4).

However, a curious note is struck when Zuckerman mentions the Swede's gifts as a sportsman and the way in which the neighborhood takes pride in them, all the more so as Jewish communities are not usually distinguished by their interest in sports. It is already obvious that the Swede though still very young, has already embraced a cultural identity which is different from the Jewish one. He has chosen to go American, to appropriate the values of the Gentiles, and to offer the Jewish community to which he belongs by blood ties the achievements of the Gentiles. At this point of the narrative the Swede becomes a symbol functioning, as critic Gary Johnson correctly claims, on two figurative levels: first he represents "a multitude of abstract positive ideas (hope, strength, innocence, purity) at a time when a particular group needs him to do so." Secondly, he is presented as an allegorical figure who is "the protagonist of several war-related scenarios" in which he emerges as "a figure who represents the potential for American victory and Jewish survival" (239). In a complex study which analyzes the novel from the perspective of allegory as narrative, elaborating on three basic elements in narratology – character, plot and focalization – Gary Johnson points out, in an argumentation which is very convincing that the Swede also represents the potential for overcoming "a kind of Jewish angst" since he is the Jew who can be but not seem Jewish, "the Jew who has achieved a one-ness with America that has consistently proved elusive and

illusory to many other Jews" (239-240). Zuckerman admits to a feeling of shame and self-rejection that the Jewish community experienced and it is precisely this sentiment that the Swede helps disperse: "Conflicting Jewish desires awakened by the sight of him were simultaneously becalmed by him; the contradiction in Jews who want to fit in and want to stand out, who insist they are different and insist they are not different, resolved itself in the triumphant spectacle of [the] Swede." (20)

The Swede emerges as the embodiment of the best hopes of the Jewish community, though what is Jewish in him is quite unclear. Zuckerman legitimately wonders: "Where was the Jew in him?" (20) His answer: "You couldn't find it and yet you knew it was there" points to the self-delusion in which the whole community indulges. If one could not trace it anywhere in his personality, in his approach to life, in his behavior, it follows that he had obviously annihilated it, that he had thrown it away as one dismisses a garment one no longer needs or which no longer fits. If one could not find the Swede's Jewishness, it means it was *not* there. It follows that the community chose to believe a lie, chose to believe that one could be both in and out, both different and not different from the American life they yearned after yet was denied them.

By introducing the Swede to the reader from the perspective of the community, Roth manages to withhold the protagonist's true identity. The novelist achieves an effect of ambiguity which confuses the reader yet mesmerizes him, all the more so as the Swede is delineated in very glamorous terms. Zuckerman goes as far as mentioning a certain "mystique that lived on in the corridors and classrooms of the high school where I had been a student" (15), which distances the protagonist even more from the reader, placing him on a remote level where only the gods seem to live. The Swede seems to transcend the world of ordinary mortals and to have entered a dimension of life which few have access to. That this is so is confirmed by one of Zuckerman's friends who, upon their

meeting the Swede one night in the summer of 1985, noticed that the former had looked at the Swede "as if he had been Zeus" (17).

Roth, however, changes planes and shifts focalization. The perspective of the community is replaced by Zuckerman's own perception of the Swede, which coincides with that of the community, yet somehow differs from it. It differs because it detects some points of rupture in the image that the Swede tries to project. Thus, when Roth zooms in on the Swede – on the occasion of the encounter between Zuckerman and the Swede after the Mets' match in the summer of 1985 already mentioned, when the writer was still very much under the spell of his childhood hero, the reader is offered a different image of the Swede. It is true that that Swede is now in his late sixties but the way in which Zuckerman perceives him now is quite disturbing: "Once again I began to think that he might be mentally unsound, that this smile could perhaps be an indication of derangement. There was no sham in it – and that was the worst in it. The smile wasn't insincere. He wasn't imitating anything. The caricature was it, arrived at spontaneously after a lifetime of working himself deeper into… what? (36)" Zuckerman realizes all of a sudden that the Swede might be the "embodiment of nothing" (39), that "it was as though he had abolished from his world everything that didn't suit him – not only deceit, violence, mockery and ruthlessness but anything remorsely coarse-grained, any threat of contingency, that dreadful harbinger of helplessness" (36).

At this point of the narrative, this is only a supposition which Zuckerman himself discards as hard to believe. Focalization changes again and a new point of view is introduced which further complicates the story, yet helps elucidate it partly. The reader is exposed to the point of view set forth by Jerry, the Swede's brother, who reveals a number of things that offer a link between two highly incongruent images drawn in the first chapter of the novel. What he reveals is, of course, facts – the raw facts that Zuckerman had been

unaware of. The interpretation, however, belongs to Zuckerman who, by putting together the pieces of the puzzle comes to understand not only *what* happened (as is Jerry's case) but *how* things came to take such a turn.

Part of this HOW is related precisely to the reinvention of identity that the Swede undertook. This process started with the Swede's choosing to forsake his Jewish origins, but this is not a smooth process as the Swede would like it to appear. As critic Timothy L. Parrish cogently argues in his excellent article entitled "The End of Identity: Philip Roth's American Pastoral", "beneath Swede's idyllic vision, however, lies the reality of ethnic strife, and it is recognition of this conflict that eventually consumes both Zuckerman's narrative and Swede's perfect life" (89). Parrish perceptively points to how the Swede imagines himself as living in America "the way he lived inside his own skin" (213). He seems to be inhabiting his native land not so much as if he owned America but "invented it." (189)

It is not accidental that his favorite childhood hero was Johnny Appleseed, a thing which is meant to capitalize, as critic Parrish correctly claims, on "the implication that the Swede is as physically American as psychologically American."

> Johnny Appleseed, that's the man for me. Wasn't a Jew, wasn't an Irish Catholic, wasn't a Protestant Christian – nope, Johnny Appleseed was just a happy American. Big. Ruddy. Happy. No brains probably, but didn't need 'em – a great walker was all Johnny Appleseed needed to be. All physical joy. Had a big stride and a bag of seeds and a huge spontaneous affection for the landscape, and everywhere he went, he scattered the seeds. What a story that was. Going everywhere, walking everywhere. The Swede had loved that story all his life. (316)

However, this identification with Johnny Appleseed runs counter to Jewishness, since the Jewish identity implies a certain

rupture with space. According to Tresa Grauer, "Jewish identity is defined as the condition of wandering, alienation and perpetual deferral of identification with space" (277). Contrary to this "deferral of identification with space," the Swede is portrayed as longing to grow roots into the space he is inhabiting, to impregnate the space and become one with it.

Johnny Appleseed becomes a model for the Swede, one of the many models that the Swede had embraced in order to go American. However, these models which the Swede follows blindly, come to empty his existence of any content, so that in the end, the reader realizes the Swede has no genuine self, no authentic core that could legitimate his existence. His whole existence is a simulation, an attempt at saving appearances, at pretending to be something that he is not. One can well apply to the Swede the dissociations made by Jean Baudrillard with regard to simulacra and simulations:

> Simulation is characterized by a *precession of the model*, of all models around the merest fact – the models come first, and their orbital (like the bomb) circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events. Facts no longer have any trajectory of their own, they arise at the intersection of the models; a single fact may even be engendered by all models at once. This anticipation, this precession, this short-circuit, this confusion of the fact with its model (no more divergence of meaning, no more dialectical polarity, no more negative electricity or implosion of poles) is what each time allows, for all the possible interpretation, even the most contradictory – all are true, in the sense that their truth is exchangeable, in the image of the models from which they proceed, in a generalized cycle. (388)

The Swede's truth is the truth of the models that tyrannically control his existence. His entire life is organized by the models he has set for himself, preeminent among them being the American

model. Ordinary facts or major events in his life all go through the filter of the Swede's models and enter the magnetic field of events controlled by the American Dream-magnet. Strangely enough, Mary – the rebel daughter perceives intuitively this fact. Her decision to bomb the post-office can be interpreted from the same perspective opened up by Baudrillard: "The only weapon of power, its only strategy against this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social. Of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis." Mary chooses the discourse of crisis in an effort to oppose her father's complicity with imperialist American practices as well as the fake harmony of her family life. She chooses to inject realness and referentiality in her life, in order to escape the sham she had been reared in. In this way she destroys her father's simulacrum world, making it impossible for him to live the American pastoral he had created for himself by discarding his Jewish heritage and by turning to American models.

The Swede's admission to his father that he should have brought up his daughter a Jew may point to his belated realization that, when reinventing one's identity, one inevitably challenges the identity of those surrounding him and in this clash of identities one can be ultimately destroyed. If not physically destroyed, at least spiritually destroyed and this my be even worse because it may lead to living a "death-in-life."

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SPEAKING OF DEBATING VALUES: A CONSIDERATION OF WAYNE BOOTH'S "RHETORIC OF ASSENT" AS A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING WARRANTABLE BELIEFS IN SOCIAL ARGUMENT

Eric Gilder
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

Abstract

One of the key problems in modernist thought is the false dilemma set up between "facts" and "values," a division that leads to much useless controversy and thus to the discrediting of modernist philosophies as a whole. This essay first details American literary critic Wayne Booth's exacting analysis of the problematic nature of formal "either/or" logic when it is extended beyond its appropriate sphere (thus becoming reductionistic and destructive to sound social arguments). Booth argues that its premiere spokesman, British philosopher Bertrand Russell, best typifies this problematic state of affairs.

The essay then introduces Professor Booth's integrative approach to the modernist dilemma, obtained by the re-discovery of informal Aristotelian logic, as outlined by philosopher Stephen Toulmin and Belgian legal philosopher Ch. Perelman. Booth's main thesis is then elaborated, a thesis that seeks to shift the presumptive ground of social argument from systematic doubt ("why *should I believe* another's arguments?") towards systematic belief ("why *should I not believe* another's arguments?"). This insight is only made possible by an embrace of a more encompassing, less reductive "both/and" logic of reasoning and argumentation.

It is posited by the author that such a credulous approach to social argumentation can aid individuals, social rhetors and policymakers to make more sound decisions in both the private and public realms.

In earlier times, according to literary and rhetorical thinker Wayne Booth, reason did not

> mean simply calculation but rather the whole process of discovering sound first principles and then reasoning from them to sound conclusions. What seems distinctive in our time is the widespread conviction that our choice of first principles is in itself irrational or capricious. (*Now Don't Try to Reason...*, 17-18)

His goal is to remedy this ill-founded, but nonetheless persuasive social conviction; one that he sees as a result of "modern dogmas" made credible by a common belief in a combination of scientific modernism and romantic irrationality or "motivism." In *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, Booth describes his task as not to establish a counter-philosophy to replace these dogmas, but to repair the

> befouled rhetorical climate which prevents our meeting to discover and pursue common interests. What we must find... are grounds for confidence in a multiplicity of ways of knowing.... There are many logics and... each of the domains of the mind (or person) has its own kind of knowing. (99)

Specifically, Booth defines his concept of rhetoric as "the art of discovering warrantable beliefs and improving these beliefs in shared discourse." (*MDRA*, xiii) Booth hopes to remove the artificial dichotomy that has separated rhetoric from rationality since the pre-eminence of scientific positivism from the Enlightenment onwards (cf. Wenzel, 150). In *Modern Dogma*, Booth employs the writing of the premier scientific philosopher of

the 20th century, Bertrand Russell, to demonstrate the shortcomings that scientific positivism possesses when values are argued. In fact, the scientific view that "you cannot reason about values," is just the point that Booth intends to refute. Knowledge or beliefs can be discovered by reasoned discourse, Booth asserts. In this essay, I intend to assess the viability of this "rhetoric of assent" in providing a valid method of reasoning about values, and to analyze the foundation of "good reasons."

Finding a Usable Method for Judging the Validity of Value Statements
In asserting that discourse about values and beliefs can be "reasonable," Booth allies himself with other "new rhetoricians" such as Stephen Toulmin and Ch. Perelman who view rhetoric as epistemic of probable knowledge (Golden, *et al*., 373).[1] The conception of rhetoric held by the "new rhetoricians" (as seen in the works of Perelman and Toulmin) is described by Richard Rieke in this way:

> I will conclude that rhetoric is inextricably involved in the generation of knowledge involved in all ways of knowing. To be more specific, the division of the world into the realm of the absolute and that of the contingent may be rejected totally. All knowledge will be viewed as contingent, and rhetoric, the rationale of the contingent, will be recognized as essential to all knowledge, scientific, humanistic, or whatever. (in Golden, *et al*., 374)

This view is directly contrary to that held by some scientific positivists and all motivists. The view of the hard positivists, who

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[1] Both theorists have been discussed by the author in "Defending Humanistic Textual Criticism from the Perils of Rationalistic Reductionism: A Narrative Extension of the Informal Reasoning Models of Toulmin and Perelman," *East-West Cultural Passage* 2 (2003): 65-80.

believe that the Cartesian model is the only legitimate source of proof, is that rhetoric cannot *create* knowledge, only *transmit* it. This vision of argument parallels that of Plato (and others) who perpetrated what Golden, *et al.*, refer to as "myths" of rhetoric, the major ones being that rhetoric has no subject matter of its own (that it is a "truncated art" separate from logic and inferior to it, and that it deals only with... empty verbalism and bombast," i.e., "appearance rather than reality") (Golden, *et al.*, 2-3). With such an impoverished vision of rhetoric it is indeed impossible to reason about values, because they cannot be concretely proven "true" by formalistic logic alone.

Booth has stated that the formalistic, mathematical philosophy of logic that logical positivists prefer "has saddled us with standards of truth under which no man can live." (*MDRA*, xii). Mathematical models of proof are not appropriate to judge the rationality of everyday decision-making in real life. Ralph Eubanks has suggested that the positivistic doctrine holds that "man at his best is a logical analyst" (196-97). Eubanks concludes that if this is true, there are "no rhetorical issues" worthy of discussion left thereby, and "significant human living" would suffer. The "criterion of falsifiability" (the main tenet of logical positivism) holds that if you cannot prove, beyond doubt, that some assertion is true (or not false) then belief in that assertion is unfounded and irrational. Lance Bennett says that this proof by negation or "negative communication" is troublesome because it "severs the possibility of a two-way or dialectical relationship between language and... social existence" (278). Problems are difficult to solve because they are placed in "pre-existing reality categories" that prevent an accurate perception of reality. Booth agrees with this view, suggesting that in America, critics of "the establishment," employing just this philosophy of negation, find it too easy to be against everything and for nothing (*MDRA*, 193). Often, however, these critics of society promote the philosophy of "motivism" which rejects all attempts at

rationality. Called "irrationalism" by Booth, this philosophy of thought has its roots in Romantic idealism (*MDRA*, 31-40). The "feelings" and "values" of people are ostensibly important in this vision, but there is no corresponding methodology extant to aid in judging the relative worth of these "feelings" and "values." The result is that no reasonable discourse is possible, because all given rationales for decisions are seen as a mere cover for irrational motives or psychological drives. This is as destructive to our culture as is logical positivism, because both philosophies are two ends of the same ideational construct (*MDRA*, 193).

Many people, whether "scientismic" or "motivist," fail to perceive and reasonably discuss the implicit value systems present in both philosophies (which leads them to the same result, i.e., "one cannot reason about values.") Walter Fisher has stated that "rationality is an essential property of rhetorical competence" ("Rationality and the Logic of Good Reasons," 122). Because of this lack of competent rhetoric (according to the definition of "rationality" offered by the "scientismic" or "motivist" person), philosopher John Hardwig argues that the "range of discussion" in society is thereby narrowed, leaving few matters of importance to citizens that can be rationally dealt with by discourse. On both sides of the argument, then, there are factions of arguers that are ignorant because each member believes they "already believe that they have the correct answer to the problem of the good life" (172). The logical positivists believe that formal Cartesianism holds supreme value, and the romantic motivists have become, in reaction to this stern rule of abstract "reason," Booth argues, "misologists" or "haters of [all] reason." (*Now Don't Try to Reason...*, 373). Thus, we have, according to Booth, a "disastrous divorce" of rationality from values (*MDRA*, 85). We need, Booth posits, to "build new rhetorical communities, [that is] we must find a common faith in modes of argument, or every institution we care about will die" (150). We must agree upon usable proofs (warrants) of truth upon

which to create a rhetoric of assent, probing what men believe they *ought* to believe (*MDRA*, xiii).

Toward a Plurality of Warrantable Beliefs

A pathway out of the above-described morass concerning reasoning about values does exist. The "informal logic" model as developed by Toulmin and Perelman, among others, provides that pathway. Basically, Toulmin and Perelman both rediscovered the "practical reasoning" model of Aristotle. Based upon the enthymeme, Aristotle has provided us with a model of argument based upon humanistic probabilities, not mathematical certainties as Plato's model of argument is (Golden, *et al*., 54-72). These enthymemes are constructed upon commonly-held suppositions accepted by the audience, called *topoi*. Included within these *topoi* are value-based logics. Logical proof can, according to Aristotle, be legitimately supported by ethical and emotive proofs. Toulmin has extended this idea of various forms of proof for different subjects by developing argument "fields", each of which has its own criterion of validity (Golden, *et al*., 373-376). In his book, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, Toulmin bridges the is/ought gap by providing a rationale for reasoning about ethics, which is different from, but not 'inferior to', a scientific rationale (cf. Wenzel, 150-59). This model for judging ethical questions ties consensually agreed to "fields" (such as "rights," "duties," the "beautiful," etc.) to proofs and thereby creates valid criteria for the judgment of reasons offered for value-related decisions.

Thus, as Wenzel says, "the is/ought gap is bridged in the common-sensical way that men have bridged it since they began discussing their practical affairs" (150-59). The truth of arguments is thereby judged in relation to the experiences of the group in question, and not by scientific or analytic logic. Booth accepts this view, stating that the rhetoric of assent is based upon us working upon each other, "because we are made in rhetoric" (*MDRA*, 141).

We cannot get "anywhere on any problem unless we agree on some knowledge for which the best proof is that we agree about it" (139). The whole world of reason (including science) operates on this level, according to Booth, because everything we value rests upon the assumption that "we will attend to whatever good reasons are offered [to us] by other men." Ethical and emotive proofs thus become important components in making judgments of the truth of reasons offered by one's fellows in a community, creating (with *logos*) a complete system of proofs (142-45).

Knowing "Good Reasons" from "Bad Reasons"

But what makes "good reasons?" Some people would assert that "everyone can make up his own mind" about values, in that we are rational, in and of ourselves. But Booth's "rhetoric of assent" depends upon a "social test for truth" to prove that what *seem* to be good reasons are, *in fact*, good reasons:

> It is reasonable to grant (one ought to grant) some degree of credence to whatever qualified men and women agree on unless one has specific and stronger reasons to disbelieve. (*MDRA*, 101)

An agreement of "qualified men and women" requires a community of reasonable people to exist. Hardwig even suggests that "we can be rational, but you and I [alone] cannot" (171-185). Without social consensus, he says, "good reasons" often become "good rationalizations." We cannot be objective about our own deep prejudices, thereby presupposing in argument "exactly what we should be questioning." Thereby we can end up with the same fault that a "rhetoric of assent" was created to avert. A "universal audience" is required (and employed) in Booth's rhetorical model (in a fashion similar to Perelman's) in order to guarantee true "good reasons," by allowing for intersubjective proof among qualified auditors (*MDRA*, 110).

"Good reasons" also require a logic to them, however. Fisher has stated that "reasonableness" and "rationality" are not the same thing ("Rationality and the Logic," 122-25). Reasonableness is only a prerequisite for rationality, which is defined by Fisher as adhering to a logic of good reasons, that is, rhetors will

> have employed special knowledge of the issues, both procedural and evaluative, in the given case, they will have informed themselves of relevant data, assessed the arguments that can be made for and against the decision, weighed the values that impinge upon the matter, and decided [thereby] upon the most rational position to uphold. (*Ibid.*)

One could make the case that these requirements are unrealistic. However, what Fisher has described is the decision-making model of legal deliberation. For everyday judgment of good reasons, however, both Booth and a later Fisher (cf. "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm..." 1-19) have offered a "narrative" (or logic of good stories) paradigm, or judging the validity of reasons. In his narrative model, Booth states that "good reasons" possess qualities of: (1.) the conviction of the rhetor; (2.) consensual agreement in community; (3.) coherence; and, (4.) teachability (*MDRA*, 117-121). Bruce Gronbeck has also provided criteria for the judgment of reasons: good reasons can by judged either by their "intuitive" logic (i.e., I "know" something is right), or their "contextual" logic (i.e., a judgment can be either objective, emotive, conventional or intuitive, depending upon the context in which it occurs.) According to Booth, the value of an argumentative claim rest not only upon its adequacy within a situation, but also upon whether the potentialities of the unique situation are realized (*Now Don't Try to Reason…*, 148).

There can be problems in judging "good reasons" in Booth's affirmative rhetoric, however. The major problem can occur when

many "qualified" people are led astray (as they seemly were in Hitler's Germany, or in the recent case of Iraq holding Weapons of Mass Destruction). Booth himself has suggested that "we live in a credulous age and country" (e.g., belief in flying saucers, John Kennedy or Elvis still being alive, McCarthy's allegations of communists being everywhere) (*Now Don't Try to Reason*, 133). How can we "prove" that the reasons offered in support of claims are really good? As a partial answer, Booth replies that we are not bound by systematic assent to believe everything we hear (*MDRA*, 106-08). Again, what we agree to needs to fit our own experience and that of our fellows. Good evidence needs to be offered for assertions, especially when they sound absurd. In relation to the narrative paradigm many false reasons do not "hang together," they do not "dance well." Even so, we suffer from, according to Booth, a "credibility gap... between conclusions and reasons [offered] for [those] conclusions (*Ibid.*). Within a "rhetoric of assent" we can still reject claims that lack solid evidence or have been generally disproved. It is also true that many "wacky" ideas cannot be disproved by systematic doubt, either (*MDRA*, 107-08). Many people, Booth says, chose to disbelieve the reports of Nazi atrocities against the Jews because there was no "direct evidence" of them, only "hearsay." Booth argues that a willingness to believe reports of evil deeds by the Nazis would have been more reasonable than denial, given the well-known assumptions about mankind that the Nazis openly embraced (*MDRA*, 159). "A blind confidence in negation is as credulous, as uncritical, as a blind confidence in affirmation," asserts Booth (*Now Don't Try to Reason...*, 66). Being that an affirmative rhetoric is a *process* of discovering truth, it is important that the "reasons be as good and the conclusions be as solid as the problems and circumstances allow" (*MDRA*, 138). "Good reasons" can also be assured by an application of a "Golden Rule imperative," i.e., "I must act so that the principles of my

conduct are reversible, against myself, universally applicable" (*MDRA*, 149).

Problems of Consensual Agreement in American Society

One *caveat* to the above argument of general assent is the vexing problem of "groupthink."[2] Does social pressure require that everyone must agree to whatever decisions are arrived at in the community? Booth asserts that this is not the case. There is no assumption that everyone will agree on every question. But in that it is assumed by Booth that some values are better-grounded than others, he does believes that people ought to agree on a consensual conclusion, or at least tolerate it as a reasonable view (*MDRA*, 148-49). The "rhetoric of assent" demands toleration among members of the community. As Booth insists:

> Whenever any person or institution violates the inherent values of free human exchange among persons, imposing upon anyone a diminution of his nature as a rhetorical animal, he is shown, in this view, to be wrong—not just inconvenient or unpleasant but wrong. (*MDRA*, 148)

A democratic society employing affirmative rhetoric must allow for free dialogue between people and not a monologue of the powerful. "Groupthink" as a result of charismatic or dictatorial leadership is not likely to occur if the system allows for true dialogue. People

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[2] Defined by Irving Janis "as a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." He further states that, "groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures" (*Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Failures* [Boston: Houghton Miffin, 1982] in Littlejohn, Stephen J., *Theories of Communication*, 6th ed. (Belmont [CA}: Wadsworth, 1999), p. 288.

must be careful not to allow themselves to put too much weight on ethical proof alone when judging the reasons given by leaders for their actions. We must, according to Booth, develop a "logic" of relative weighing among the three proofs (*MDRA*, 157). Juries do just this weighing when deciding legal cases in the US justice system, judging the various proofs offered them by both plaintiffs and defendants.

Booth admits, however, that the American capitalistic society, based as it is on "systematic deception," via advertising, will have to change if a "rhetoric of assent" is to work (*MDRA*, 201). The libertarian ideal (a strong postulate of American political theory) stipulates that people are not accountable for their actions as part of a collectivity, because it denies the political legitimacy of any social body. Given the inevitability of collective actions in modern society (which equally affects other people), to deny the very legitimacy of such communal actions from the beginning promotes, Booth claims, a "viciousness, deception and privatization [in American life] to the point of psychosis" (*Ibid.*). Thus, a new economic order is necessary in our society if an affirmative rhetoric will work in our public life, but Booth cannot think of a good alternative to free-market capitalism. This is the weakest part of Booth's affirmative rhetoric: A revolution would have to occur in the United States, and (importantly), and it would have to lead in the right direction, that is, toward social democracy and not toward authoritarian fascism. Booth himself is pessimistic on this point. "I am afraid that its [a revolution's] most likely direction [would be] towards tyranny—that is, toward a complete abandonment of a rhetoric of assent." There is not much hope here for "a society groping for [a] meaningful affirmation, for intellectually respectable assent" (*MDRA*, 200). Perhaps it would be unrealistic to expect the whole society to change. What use is a rhetoric of assent to us on a personal level, then?

Joseph Wenzel (157) has stated that his debate students, in applying assent rhetoric to argumentation, have partially been "weaned from the dogmas of modernism," and have learned to both recognize "good reasons" and successfully employ them in debates. The study of rhetoric, according to Booth, can have "its clearest triumphs" in such acts of revealing solid warrants for everyday decision-making (*MDRA*, 159). By such methods of critical practice, a "rhetoric of assent" might also expand the "domain of the will," allowing citizens a better chance to reasonably discuss more issues that affect them (MDRA, 95). Despite major obstacles to a society-wide implementation of affirmative rhetoric, it may still be possible to hope, to ask "Why not?"

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"THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR ARCHIVES": USING SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA IN THE STUDY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Stephen J. Cutler
University of Vermont

Shortly after I arrived in Romania in late January, 2004 to begin my stay as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bucharest, I had the privilege of attending the annual meeting of the Romanian Association of American Studies. The set of presentations over the two days was impressive, eclectic, and intellectually stimulating. As someone whose research has not been in the American studies tradition *per se*—someone who might best be described as a social science "quantoid"—I learned a great deal both about the substance of American studies and about its methodologies. And I learned much about how literary analysis, film studies, or examining the works of artists can provide important insights into American society and culture, past and present. In short, my exposure to cultural studies and to the perspectives of the humanities was quite enriching and certainly an auspicious start to my stay in Romania.

If I can be a bit bold and presumptuous, however, what I want to do in this article is to suggest a somewhat different methodological approach to American studies. If taking the pulse of American society and culture might be one way of describing what American Studies is all about, I want to propose another vehicle for accomplishing this, a way that seemed to me to be largely absent from the American studies conference in Bucharest. To paraphrase what a 19th century pioneer might have said about the American

West—"there's gold in them thar hills"—I want to suggest that there's gold in them thar social science data archives. What I want to argue is that the holdings of social science data archives represent a "mother lode," to continue the analogy, for American Studies scholars who wish to take soundings of the culture and structure of the United States—now and in the past.

Later in this article, I will give a few examples to show the types of questions that might be put to these data and to illustrate how easily accessible they are. Let me begin, though, by describing in a general way what is available in social science data archives.

Social Science Data Archives

The holdings of social science data archives are largely made up of data sets generated from survey research. These surveys may have been conducted by the Federal government, by university researchers, or by private organizations. Many of the surveys are based on nationally representative samples of the American population; others may be based on regional or local samples. Some of the surveys, for example those conducted for the United States Census, go back to the nineteenth century. The bulk of the surveys, however, start in the 1940s and 1950s when survey research was just coming into its own and beginning to be used on a widespread basis.

What is important to realize is that while archives may also contain reports of research, their principal *raison d'etre* is to store the actual, raw data from surveys. This allows researchers to examine the data in ways that are most suitable to their own purposes and not have to rely on what someone else might have previously reported. In this regard, using the surveys for what is referred to as "secondary analysis" gives scholars a great degree of flexibility in posing and answering questions that are put to the

data. An additional important and valuable feature of such surveys is that they often include replicated questions, questions that have been asked in exactly the same format over time, thereby allowing for the examination of secular trends.

Social science data archives are generally of three types. First, there are archives of data that have been collected by the Federal government. These would include Census data, as well as many other surveys of the U.S. population—for example those conducted by Bureau of the Census as part of the monthly Current Population Surveys. Second, there are data archives located at major universities. An example of such an archive is the Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. And, third, there are private social science data archives. An example of this would be the Roper center which is located in Connecticut. Some of the archives may be small and specialized; others are very large and contain a wide variety of data sets. ICPSR at the University of Michigan, for instance, literally has thousands of data sets in its archives.

An important development will make archives an even richer resource. Beginning recently, data that have been collected by university and private researchers with funding from the Federal government must include provisions for archiving the information so that the data will be in the public domain and accessible to other researchers for further analysis.

Some Examples

Let me turn now to a few substantive examples of how these resources might be used in American studies. Suppose an American studies scholar was interested in voluntarism and wanted to examine the contemporary accuracy of Toqueville's oft-repeated observation that America is a nation of joiners. Writing in

Democracy in America, Toqueville said: "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions form associations" (198).[1] What impressed him was the large number of voluntary associations in America and the many different ends they served.

Is America a nation of joiners, as Toqueville suggested? To what extent is this voluntaristic spirit still in evidence? With an Internet connection and a few keystrokes, we could quickly come up with an answer to that question. How quickly? Being familiar with the data helps, but it took me less than 5 minutes to find out that just under 29% of the American population 15 years of age and older had done any volunteer work in the previous year. Not a ringing endorsement of Toqueville's assertion that Americans are a nation of joiners, at least in so far as volunteering is concerned.

How did I do this? I used a program called FERRETT, which stands for Federated Electronic Research Review Extraction and Tabulation Tool and which is freely available to anyone who wants to download it for purposes of having access to U.S. Federal government data. I clicked on "Microdata" to give me a listing of which data sets were available, and I selected the volunteer supplement to the September, 2003 Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households and their members, mainly to generate labor force information, but it is also used for special topic surveys such as volunteering. I clicked on the 2003 volunteer supplement which opened a window with a list of the available variables. I then clicked on the variable called "volunteer status," a measure based on the combined answers to the following two questions:

1. Since September 1st of last year [2002], have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?

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[1] de Tocqueville, A. (1956). *Democracy in America* (R. D. Heffner, Ed.). New York: New American Library (Original work published 1835).

2. Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. Since September 1st of last year, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?

I then selected "volunteer status" for my "data shopping basket," clicked on "make a table," dragged the variable to what looks like an EXCEL worksheet, and clicked "GO." In just a few seconds, I learned that a little over 65 million persons out of about 226 million had volunteered in the past year, or about 29%.

Of course, volunteering is only one facet of "joining," and one would certainly want to look not only at the overall rate of volunteering, but also at variation in the propensity to volunteer, which too can be done quickly, easily, and at no cost with this resource. Although this is an example of remote access to and analysis of a source of archived data, I should also note that the complete data set is fully downloadable for anyone who wishes to do more detailed and complex analyses.

On a different topic, suppose one was interested in the evolution of attitudes about gender roles in the United States. More specifically, let's assume a researcher wanted to know whether there has been any appreciable shift over the past 30 years toward attitudes that are more favorable to women working and whether there were gender differences in those trends. To examine this, we might go to an archive, such as ICPSR at the University of Michigan, which has data from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Surveys. There are now 24 of these surveys that have been conducted between 1972 and 2004. Each survey includes a nationally representative sample of the adult population of the U.S., a total of over 45,000 respondents have been interviewed over the 32 year span, and there are over 4,000

variables, with a substantial number of these variables being replicated items that were asked repeatedly over lengthy periods of time.

How have attitudes toward women working changed over the past few decades and are there gender differences in these trends? Here's how I found out and how it would work for anyone—again at no cost. I first went to ICPSR's home page (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/), clicked on the "Special Topics Archives" (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/topical.html), then on the "General Social Survey" (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/topical.html#GSS), and then on the General Social Survey home page (http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/GSS/). From here, one can easily access detailed information about the samples, the variables, and in what years specific questions were asked. This page also gives access to an online data analysis system for use with any of the variables in any of the surveys.

As one example of changes in gender role attitudes, I chose the following question: "Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" (mnemonic: FEWORK). The cross-tabulation analysis was configured to examine changes in "approval" of a married woman earning money in business or industry (FEWORK), over the period in which the questions were asked (YEAR), and looking at men and women separately ("controlling" on SEX). As Figure 1 shows, there has been a steady increase over a 26-year period in the percent of men and women approving of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her. The figure also shows a gender difference in the early part of the 1970s, but one which largely disappeared by the early 1980s. Thus, at least on an attitudinal level, the past few decades in America have witnessed

an increase in favorable attitudes toward women working outside of the home, an increase that mirrors actual changes in the labor force participation of women (See figure 1).

To take another example, let's look at the evolution of civil rights attitudes in the United States and also ask whether trends in the American South have lagged behind those of other regions. For this illustration, I have chosen attitudes about inter-racial marriage, based on the following question: "Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) and whites?" (mnemonic: RACMAR). The same general analytic configuration is used as in the previous example, but this time looking at persons residing in the North and in the South separately ("controlling" on REGION). What these data show (see Figure 2) is a steady decline in the percent of persons who believe that there should be laws against racial inter-marriage. The decline occurs both in the North and in the South, but the rate of the decline over the 30-year period appears to be even greater in the South, such that the difference in attitudes between the North and the South has diminished appreciably (See figure 2).

I could have done the same sort of analysis, or even more sophisticated statistical analyses, for several other indicators measuring gender role attitudes or attitudes about race relations. I also could have looked at the evolution of attitudes about civil liberties, abortion, trust in basic social institutions, alienation, religion, politics, and on and on. At a more structural level, I could have examined social mobility, both intra-generation and inter-generational, to see if America really is a land of opportunity, and for whom. To add to the bounty, many of the questions asked in the General Social Surveys since 1972 were drawn from even earlier surveys. In some instances, then, trend data are available going back to the 1950s, thus giving American studies scholars a window

on changes in attitudes and behaviors extending over nearly a half-century.

Conclusions

How can one locate these data archives? A first way is to go to www.roda.ro, which is the web site for the Romanian Social Data Archives. One of the features of the web site, located under "links," is a listing of social science data archives throughout the world, including many in the United States. Other comprehensive listings may be found at the Social Sciences Virtual Library (http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/socsci/directs.htm), at SocioSite (http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/sociosite/databases.html), at Georgetown University's Social Science Data Archives on the Net (http://gussda.georgetown.edu/linkstoothersites.htm), and at the University of California, San Diego's Data on the Net (http://odwin.ucsd.edu/idata/).

The illustrations I selected earlier are but a few examples of my more general point—an extraordinarily rich resource for gaining an understanding of American society and culture is to be found in the holdings of social science data archives. Clearly, there are limitations in how far such data can take us in furthering our understanding of American society and culture. Some of these limitations inhere in the survey research process itself; some are due to the availability of data and to how far back the data go. Nevertheless, what I hope to have conveyed is that social science data archives represent a potentially valuable and fruitful resource for American studies scholars.