

“Fictional Travels” During the Civil War
in J. W. De Forest’s
Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty

ANCA L. IANCU
University of Louisville

ABSTRACT

The essay examines De Forest’s novel as a travel narrative and explores the literal and figurative “travels” taken by some of the characters (Miss Ravenel, Doctor Ravenel, Mrs. Larue, Colburne, and Carter) as they navigate the physical/geographical, social, and political spaces of the North and the South during the Civil War. The essay further analyzes the cultural work that the interspersed travel fragments in the novel may have done at the beginning of the post-war era (1867). Special emphasis is placed on the ways in which De Forest’s novel confirms, denies, and/or adjusts certain North/South stereotypes in tone with the reconciliatory romance story of the novel.

KEYWORDS: American intra-national travel writing, American Civil War, North and South, romance of reconciliation, soldiers as tourists, military travels, American national identity

A Lacanian Reading from Faulkner

BY ANA-KARINA SCHNEIDER
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

*La mort du Père enlèvera à la littérature beaucoup de ses plaisirs.
S'il n'y a plus de Père, à quoi bon raconter des histoires?*
(Roland Barthes)

ABSTRACT

The most frequently recurrent question in our post-theoretical age has regarded the relevance of critical theory to the understanding of a specific culture and national identity as reconstructed in fiction. In my attempt to answer this question I propose two working premises. The first is that theory is essentially a draughtsman's grid, a way of looking at things to see their texture, their consistency, to discover their smoothness as well as their flaws, and to trace these features back to their origins in the structure of the culture that both informed and accommodated that work. My second hypothesis regards psychoanalytic theory: the representation of individual identity in the process of being produced involves the concerted action of subtle forces that include the contractual nature of language and the social function of narration, along with an invisible network of mechanisms which create and define need, desire and fulfilment. I intend to demonstrate the validity of these two propositions by analysing one sentence from chapter 6 of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, and interrogate the information that such an analysis yields about Southern culture. Notoriously resistant to theoretical simplifications, Faulkner's text proposes its own view of ego-formation in relation to both language and narratives, reversing the facile patterns of the Father-Logos-society allegory in favour of a cumulation of levels of authority and signification that eventually fails to produce conformity and integration. The purpose of this reading is to show the text at work in a manner that reevaluates the freshness and ingeniousness of the Faulknerian *oeuvre* outside of set interpretive blueprints but without dismissing the remarkable recuperative work achieved by the poststructuralist cross-fertilisation of cultural investigative disciplines.

KEYWORDS: William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, Jacques Lacan, psychoanalysis, ego, identity, narrative, Logos, literary theory.

The Vanishing Eden: The Politics of Recovering in Tanure Ojaide's *Great Boys: An African Childhood*

OGAGA OKUYADE
Warri, Delta State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

In the recent past, the crisis in Nigeria's Niger-Delta has attracted massive international attention. The issue of oil exploration and exploitation in the area continues to come under the spotlight especially because of the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in November, 1995. Local and international media continue to capture the violent tensions in the area. However, the violence is hardly conceptualised. The thesis of my paper regards the issue of the relevance of Tanure Ojaide's autobiography as a strategy for recapturing the subsistence abundance of a once sylvan environment of the Niger-Delta, especially his Urhobo homeland, before the mindless oil exploration and exploitation in the area. Through the autobiographical mode, Ojaide demonstrates that through the years of oil exploration and exploitation, the Deltascape has morphed through economic cultures, and adjusted itself to socio-economic evolution, man's consumerism and his galloping greed. Ojaide's private diary records and recreates particulars that may stir the imagination of the reader with places and ambiances that retain a very special atmosphere, not always easy to describe. To give the paper its desired theoretical mooring, I therefore rank-shift Ojaide's position in the text, from the cardinal to the ordinal. The ecology of his birthplace becomes cardinal. Through this reading strategy, I intend to bring to the foreground the fact that the subject of Ojaide's autobiography is not Ojaide but the ecology. The autobiographical mode offers him the creative tool to dialectically question the plight of the Niger Delta people with regards to oil exploration in the area and to recreate a vanishing ideal – the edenic rurality and virginal purity of his nativity.

KEYWORDS: Deltascape, Ecology, Environment, Autobiography, Ecobiography, Uyo, Oil Exploration and Exploitation, Oil spillage, Forest, Biodiversity

Truman Capote's "Transition Stories"

DAN-ȘERBAN SAVA
Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu

ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at focusing on a not very large group of stories of a more confidential and nostalgic nature, stories that shed light on either the secret world of private love or that of one's childhood. As they are rather difficult to label or classify within the overall picture of Truman Capote's fiction, we venture to call them "transition stories."

KEYWORDS: transition stories, nocturnal vs. diurnal, experimental cycle, dark stories, complementarity, homodiegetic actorial narrator, vicious circle

Experiencing the Limits of Faith -
Shusaku Endo's Fiction: From the Silence of the East to the Silence of God

RODICA GRIGORE
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

ABSTRACT

This essay discusses several faith-related issues, especially how people experience the limit(s) of their consciousness and of the world they live in. It is mainly concerned with showing how these issues are expressed in modern literature, most specifically in modern Japanese literature. Our demonstration stresses upon Shusaku Endo's work, taking into consideration his unusual personal experience within Christianity. The author himself often spoke of Christianity as an ill-fitted suit for his Japanese frame. In this respect, we may state that what Endo inherited rightly was his vision of the world – a sacramental worldview that sees human action within the grand narrative of God's redeeming activity in the world. After all, what Shusaku Endo rebuffed European Catholicism for was not the idea of Catholicism "per se", but several particular modes of thought and cultural assumptions about strength and weakness.

KEYWORDS: faith, Catholicism, limit, death, tragic, modern Japanese literature, Christianity, multiculturalism, religion, sacrifice

The Deceit of Progress and Evolution,
the Misery of Modern Science and the False Escapology of 19th Century Positivism: An Outlook on
the Cultural Background Which Prompted William Golding's Work

ANA-BLANCA CIOCOI-POP
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

ABSTRACT

The present case study focuses on William Golding's cultural, social and political environment of creation. Special attention will be allotted to the destructive legacy of 19th century positivism (especially Comtian discourse), which inevitably prompted a skeptical response on part of Golding and his contemporaries. Our aim is to prove that the destructive illusion of stability and predictability offered by 19th century scientific discoveries (which ultimately led to the development of positivism as a new weltanschauung) prompted 20th century depressive and iconoclastic culture, this being the only logical response to a century which had done away with all former value systems replacing them with an empirically analyzable void.

KEYWORDS: positivism, William Golding, deceit, evolution, progress, literature, science

The Discourse of the African-American Other in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

BY ALEXANDRA MITREA
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

ABSTRACT

The paper aims at pointing to the mechanisms by which African-Americans articulate their discourse in response to the discourse of the Whites. In close connection to this issue, the paper focuses on the construction of identity, highlighting the strategies by which the self emerges at the intersection with the other. It also investigates the way in which one's individual history shapes one's identity, as well as the way in which histories and stories become part of one's identity.

KEYWORDS: identity, alterity, discourse, representation, memory, dismemberment, the body, inscription, history

The Penitentiary City: Visions of Bucharest in Postwar
Anglo-American Fiction

TEODOR CREANGĂ
Freelance

ABSTRACT

The present article aims at illustrating mentalities at work in a number of fictional productions of postwar Anglo-American literature. The choice of Bucharest in this respect comes not only from the necessity to narrow down the topic, but also from a deep interest in Balkan identity in general and Romanian identity in particular. The article investigates a series of fictional representations of Bucharest, emphasizing how fictional cityscapes tend to reflect their visitors' mindscapes, how the image of the city is framed similarly by different writers and how the latter translate Romanian realities into their own cultural terms, often culturally prejudicing the description of the city by representing it from the other pole of their culture.

KEYWORDS: imagology; fictional representations; cultural identity; the *other*; Romanian locus; Bucharestian society; decadence; postwar fiction.