(Pop) Cultures on the Move:

Transnational Identifications and Cultural Exchange Between East and West

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(eds.)

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AND BÄRBEL SCHLIMBACH**

Introduction: (Pop) Cultures on the Move

In writing about cultures on the move in the 1990s, Stephen Greenblatt argued that cultural mobility was "not the expression of random mobility but of exchange" ("Culture" 229). Culture, according to him, "is a particular network of negotiations for the exchange of material goods, ideas, and—through institutions like enslavement, adoption, or marriage—people" ("Culture" 229). It is in these negotiations of exchange that the characteristics, the directions and destiny, but also the problems and conflicts of a particular culture emerge. Cultural exchange permits concepts to be exchanged and shared by different societies. Historically speaking, colonialism and imperialism have probably been the most powerful global designs that have constituted and effected exchange between cultures. In times of globality, the dynamics of transnational cultural exchange and mobility are manifold. As a result, the "enterprise of tracking the restless and often unpredictable movement of texts, ideas, and whole cultures" (Greenblatt, *Mobility* 7) is notoriously difficult.

This book analyzes transnational identifications and different forms of cultural exchange between 'East' and 'West,' that is between Europe and the U.S., and between Russia and the U.S. Conceiving of 'American' culture as complexly situated in the global context, most articles look at popular and mass culture. In analyzing transatlantic processes of cultural transfer and exchange, this book, however, aims at looking in both directions: not only has 'American' popular culture traveled eastward but recent 'American' culture has also absorbed many elements of contemporary 'European' cultures. Import-export: the processes in which images, stereotypes, cultural meanings and pleasures of popular culture cross cultural borders and national boundaries are manifold. (Pop) Cultures on the move always travel both ways on the highway of culture, intersecting at various points so as to form a densely connected global network. Our volume identifies such encounters, making

visible the instances and moments of cultural exchange. Sites of these cultural encounters span literary and cultural texts: novels, music, film, and digital media culture.

As all conference proceedings, this book is the outcome of interactions between members of different cultures. Based on a collaborative project between Saarland University, Germany, and Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Ukraine, the articles are the result of a virtual conference "Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies: Sites and Insights" that took place in January 2016. During this virtual conference, participants did not have to travel to a conference venue, but met in a web space that allowed them to share their presentations with other conference participants. The presenters were English and American Studies scholars from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Austria, and Germany, their disciplines ranging from literature and cultural studies, media studies, gender/queer studies to linguistics. The papers were available for registered participants via the conference website (http://cultural-studies.chdu.edu.ua/) to allow all participants to read all papers before the conference started. During the three days of the conference all participants could ask questions or post comments, and the authors had the opportunity to respond to comments and questions.

The essays included here are selected papers of this virtual conference but they have been revised to fit the topic of this book. Examining how the signifier 'America' functions as an intermediary in the production of transnational identities, the articles investigate the transnational flow of cultural texts, analyzing how, by whom, and to what purposes and effects (pop)cultural practices have been appropriated and transferred to local contexts and how the significance of place, especially the category of the national, has changed in the process. Analyzing various spaces of cultural transmission, the following papers focus on patterns of movement and the flows of culture in order to approximate the question of whether the dialogue with 'America' in the 21st century still plays a vital role in the production of 'European' identities. What specific role does the flexibility and adaptability of the signifier 'American' play in this intermediary function of American culture? This book gauges the potential and the limits of 'American' culture as a third term that can 'other' both national and European traditions (for identification or dis-identification) and can serve to reconstruct and to transgress national cultural identities.

The nine articles which are compiled in this volume are arranged in four sections which highlight different thematic aspects and disciplinary angles. The articles in the first section "What Does 'America' Mean?" analyze how the signifier 'America' and American popular culture in general are influential for European contexts and show how 'American' concepts are not

merely adapted or appropriated but influential for the accommodation within the context of newly emerging European identities. In turn, the articles in the second section "Transcultural Identifications" assess the importance of 'American' culture for 'European' cultural productions as well as mutual influences of cultural productions across the Atlantic. The examples chosen to underline the authors' arguments come from literature and film as well as popular culture. The third section "Cultural Exchanges Between 'America' and 'Europe'" explores the mutual influences of 'American' and 'European' cultural productions with the help of two concrete examples: Western movies and Techno music. Finally, the articles in the fourth section "Cultural Encounters Between 'East' and 'West'" examine two examples of Russian and Ukrainian music productions for their potential to utilize the trope of 'America' as a signifier to overcome national discourses in Russia and the Ukraine in post-Soviet times.

In the opening essay "'I mean … we have good coffee in Italy … why do we need Starbucks?'—'America' in the Construction and Negotiation of European Identities," Marie-Louise Brunner, Stefan Diemer, and Selina Schmidt analyze the significance of 'America' in international conversations via Skype in the *Corpus of Academic Spoken English* compiled at Saarland University, Germany. The authors establish the linguistic and social contexts for negotiations of cultural identities between European students from different countries in an online communication environment using English as a Lingua Franca. The analyzed data suggests that stereotypes and perceived characteristics of 'America' function as a convenient facilitator for the negotiation and construction of 'European' identities. The next article, Astrid M. Fellner's "'We Are Going to Go Gaga Together': Celebrity Culture, Affective Encounters, and 'American' Pop Culture in Germany," focuses on the affective power of Lady Gaga in Germany. Relying on ethnographic analysis, Fellner investigates whether Lady Gaga's music and her videos are perceived as 'American' by her audience. Studying affective encounters, she argues, embroils asking how identities are lived and practiced, pointing to the political work that 'American' popular culture performs when it becomes entangled in affective encounters with consumers in Europe.

In the second section, "Transcultural Identifications," the contributors address in particular the transformations that have marked the process of cultural identifications under the influence of American pop-culture. Tetiana Ostapchuk's essay "Encoding and Decoding 'Imagined Ukraines' in American Movies" analyzes films produced in the U.S.A. since the 1990s in which images of Ukraine and Ukrainians are presented. The essay covers the mechanisms of visual semiotization of Ukrainians, especially with respect to

different dimensions of male and female characters. The contributor also laments a limited number of clichéd characteristics in several representations of 'Imagined Ukraines.' In the following contribution "Transcultural Imaginings: Zachary Karabashliev's *18 % Gray*," Alexandra Glavanakova traces the continuities between Bulgarian and American transcultural dialogue via examination of cultural identities, related especially to processes of marginalization, cultural insularity, social disparity, transcultural confrontations, and the complex experience of acculturation, its success or failure through compromise, negotiation and assimilation. According to Glavanakova, Zachary Karabashliev uses the U.S. as a setting, a trope, and an allegory to reflect on the contemporary process of transcultural migration, dislocation, and expatriation in a post-communist, post 9/11-world. Oleksandr Pronkevych's article, which closes the second section, examines "What Makes Don Quixote an American Hero." Pronkevych explores the quixotic myth in mass culture and commercial communication of the U.S.A. as convincing illustrations for successful cultural exchange in contemporary globalized discourses. The author concludes that, on the one hand, Don Quixote, the most known representative of 'Spanishness' in the English-speaking world, has become an American hero while, on the other hand, 'American' identity itself is interpreted in terms of the quixotic myth.

The two essays in the section "Cultural Exchanges Between 'America' and 'Europe'" offer cross- and interdisciplinary analyses with reference to two concrete examples of discourses from the field of popular culture. Thus, Bärbel Schlimbach in her essay "'Once Upon a Time in the West': Cross-Cultural Appropriations of Western Films" investigates the mutual influences between European and American Western films. She claims that the Western is often seen as 'the' typical American film genre dealing with the settling of the West and the creation of an American identity, while the fascination for Westerns and the West was never limited to the United States. Schlimbach's paper takes a closer look at the fruitful cross-cultural appropriations of the genre. Sebastian Weier's contribution "*Becoming Detroit*: Techno Music And The German Post-Nation Narrative" discusses the erasure of American and specifically African-American presences in German Techno historiography within the context of the formation of a post-national German discourse after the *Wende* (viz. German reunification).

The two articles in the fourth and concluding section, "Cultural Exchanges Between 'East' and 'West,'" approach their objects of investigation via perspectives from postcolonialism and gender studies. Iuliana Matasova's essay "Voicing the 'Inappropriate:' Creative Strategies in American and Ukrainian Female Singer-Songwriters" investigates the reasons for and the

results of the transgression performed by some Ukrainian singer-songwriters—whereas their starting point may be the 'American' mainstream of popular music; they later draw inspiration from those American singer-songwriters who have struggled to legitimize resistance within the popular culture industry. Special attention is paid to the practices and politics of female/ postcolonial corporeality, and the comparative angle of Matasova's study accentuates that both American and Ukrainian singer-songwriters are involved in 'border thinking.' The complex cultural patterns of the imaginary landscape in gendered national representations at the time of the former Soviet Union's dissolution are explored in the essay "'American Boy, American Joy'—Gendered National Imaginations between Russia and the United States" by M. Katharina Wiedlack. Her essay focuses especially on the construction of the U.S. as male heterosexual and potent nation in contrast to a feminine and (promiscuous) (post-)Soviet Russia by analyzing some popular songs by the 1990s Russian female pop band Kombinaciya.

this volume in their series. Volume 8 is the product of yet another fruitful university research exchange, constituting a testimony to the importance of transnational collaboration.

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Section 1 "What Does 'America' Mean?"

**MARIE-LOUISE BRUNNER, STEFAN DIEMER,
AND SELINA SCHMIDT**

"I mean … we have good coffee in Italy … why do we need Starbucks?"—'America' in the Construction and Negotiation of European Identities

1. Introduction

The signifier 'America' plays a key, but ambivalent role in contemporary discourse among young Europeans. American culture, as well as its positive and negative influences, is ubiquitous in today's globalized Europe. The complex interplay of 'America' and European identity has been commented on e.g. by Neumann and, in more detail, by Morley and Robins, who state that European identities constitute themselves only through the imagined and observed differences from and social boundaries towards America rather than perceived common features.

We look at the significance of 'America' and American culture in international conversations via Skype as documented in CASE, the Corpus of Academic Spoken English (CASE forthcoming) compiled at Trier University of Applied Sciences and Saarland University, Germany. Our paper establishes the linguistic and social context of the negotiation of cultural heritage and identity between young European students using English as a Lingua Franca. The conversation partners from eight European countries discuss a wide range of academic and cultural issues, and frequently use American culture as a point of reference to contrastively position and negotiate their own individual identities and to delineate common, transcultural European identities.

2. Identity Negotiation, Cultural Identities, and the Signifier 'America'

Following the anti-essentialist approach to cultural identity, identity can be seen as socially negotiated and constructed. It is a role we play, based on social expectations, which is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated according to context. As Hall puts it, "[t]he subject assumes different identities at

different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'" ("Cultural Identity" 277). This means that the identities a person performs at a given time can change within the concrete setting based on situational and societal needs. Identity is thus discursively constructed.

In the concrete discursive context, both personal and group identities play a role in identity creation and negotiation. According to Edwards, identity "comes about through the particular combinations and weightings of [...] broadly shared elements," which means that individual identity is "drawn from a common social pool" (2). This "groupness," as Edwards calls it, does not negate personal identities but instead provides speakers with identities on several different levels depending on group memberships. These are frequently referenced in the intercultural Skype talks we analyze, as individuals usually position themselves with regard to various local, regional, national, and transnational identities.

In addition, the complex interplay between conversation partners also has to be taken into account regarding the negotiation of their respective performed identities. As Swann and Bosson remark, "[p]eople's situated identities reflect not only their own behavioural, cognitive and affective contributions to the identity negotiation process, but also the contributions (e.g., feedback, verbal and nonverbal reactions) made by their partner, as well as the constraints imposed by the situation" (460), which means that the contributions of the conversation partner also influence a speaker's identities, in addition to his or her own identity-making processes and the concrete situational context.

Cultural identity is "discursively constructed through language" (Baker 375), which means that culture and language are intrinsically interconnected. Hall points out that "meaning is produced within language, in and through various representational systems" ("Work of Representation" 28). Culture, in turn, is, as DuGay et al. observe, "inextricably connected with the role of meanings in society. [...] Partly, we give things meaning by the way we represent them, and the principal means of representation in culture is language" (13). This means that language produces meaning, and since culture is inseparably connected to these meanings, language is, in a way, constitutive of culture and by extension cultural identities. As Barker points out, "[c]ultures are not static entities but are constituted by changing practices and meanings which operate at different social levels. Any given national culture is understood and acted upon by different social groups [...] [which] may perceive it in divergent ways" ("Ethnicity" 197). This variation in the understanding of culture can be expressed through language features such as lexical choice, semantic framing, syntactic foregrounding, or pragmatic contextualization.

In the context of cultural identities, the signifier 'America,' and the positioning of CASE participants towards it, is of particular interest for the current analysis. In a previous study on the relation between European and American identities, Neumann examines the global, local and political dimensions of a possible European identity with regard to the exclusion or inclusion of individual cultural identities. He points out that identity is essentially relational and emphasizes that the plurality of interacting European identities necessitates an external template or alternative identity through which these identities can jointly constitute themselves in opposition to the external 'Other.' Likewise, Barker observes that "[s]ignifiers generate meaning not in relation to fixed objects but in relation to other signifiers [...]. [M]eaning is generated through relations of difference" ("Subjectivity and Identity" 173), so that the concept of European identities becomes meaningful only in opposition to another identity (or other identities). Morley and Robins observe such an opposition in global media and the way in which American influences form global electronic landscapes. They argue that the European perception of American power through the media, depicting America as a perceived threat to European identities, prompts the creation of a cultural boundary between America, on the one hand, and European identities, on the other hand (Morley and Robbins 43-69). This perceived boundary contributes to the discursive construction of 'America' as the 'Other' and is thus implicitly constitutive of European identities (cf. Morley and Robins 43-69). This is supported by Edwards, who argues that "[w]hat is essential for the continuation of a sense of groupness is the continuation of a sense of distinctiveness that allows perceptual boundaries to be maintained" (9, following Barth), which means that the mere mental concept of a boundary between two perceived groups is enough to maintain these groups, no matter how diverse they may be respectively.

3. Data: CASE—The Corpus of Academic Spoken English

CASE (forthcoming) is the Corpus of Academic Spoken English in an international environment, currently being compiled at Trier University of Applied Sciences, Saarland University, as well as several partner institutions. The corpus focuses on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which "orients to achieving mutual comprehension" between speakers of different language and cultural backgrounds (Mauranen 7). This means that successful communication is the key objective, whereas the imitation of native speaker varieties does not play a central role (Hülmbauer 50-51; Jenkins 45). Nowadays, ELF

is the "preferred option for cross-cultural communication" (Seidlhofer, *Concept of International English* 9), with English as the language of choice in (on- and offline) communication between non-native students and researchers. Seidlhofer argues that it should thus obtain "a central place in description alongside English as a native language" ("Closing a Conceptual Gap" 133).

CASE focuses on the language used by advanced non-native speakers in a private and informal, but academic context. Conversations and recordings are conducted via Skype, making CASE the first extensive Skype corpus to be compiled to date, offering valuable insights into how the medium affects academic spoken ELF discourse. As of August 2017, CASE consists of about 250 hours of Skype conversations between students of English from different European universities. The first round was recorded between October 2012 and November 2013 between students at Saarland University, Germany, Sofia University, Bulgaria, Bologna University (Forlì Campus), Italy, and the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Further rounds of talks were conducted in 2015 and 2016, with additional partners at Helsinki University and Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland, Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden, Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, and a native speaker component at Birmingham City University, UK. Further talks are scheduled for 2017/18. Conversations are identified by a combination of topic (first number), place of recording, and participant ID (SBxx = Saarbrücken participant number xx; SFyy = Sofia participant number yy). Abbreviations used in the examples are: FL (Forlì, Italy), HE (Helsinki, Finland), SB (Saarbrücken, Germany), SF (Sofia, Bulgaria), ST (Santiago de Compostela, Spain). For further information, please refer to www.umwelt-campus.de/case. We have added emphases (in **bold**) to highlight relevant features in the examples.[1]

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[1]   For detailed transcription conventions, see <www.umwelt-campus.de/case-conventions>. Some of the most frequent features: Untimed pauses are marked by .. (below .5 seconds) and ... (between .5 and 1.0 seconds); pauses over 1 second are timed, i.e. (1.5) for a pause of 1.5 seconds. Salient inhalations are denoted by '.h', exhalations by 'h.' An alveolar suction click (in literary dialogue usually 'tsk') is marked by '.t'. Capitals show heavy stress or indicate that speech is louder than the surrounding discourse, also within words, e.g. stressed syllables. Punctuation at the end of lines marks intonation, not syntactic structure. Colons mark lengthening of the preceding sound, €€€ marks echo.

4. Analysis

Based on corpus examples, this section illustrates the various uses of the signifier 'America' in CASE and comments on the identity features and negotiation processes which can be observed in the data.

In our corpus data, the signifier 'America' appears in many realizations. A frequent occurrence is in personal stories, other participants use it e.g. in contrastive examples from culture and society, such as the discussion of regional food items in relation to American fast food. Several participants also discuss encounters with the English language and its global variations in this context. Based on a qualitative analysis, we distinguish the following four functions of 'America' in the context of identity creation and negotiation in our data:

I.   America as Role Model,
II.   America as Global Danger in a Cultural and Political Context,
III.   American English and its Role in Education and International Communication,
IV.   America as a Negative Counterexample.

The following analysis uses several examples for each of the four categories to illustrate how they contribute to creating the participants' own identities in relation to the signifier 'America.' While these categories are distinct and discriminable, it should be pointed out that they are not mutually exclusive, and that many situations may involve more than one of the categories listed here.

I. America as Role Model:

This category encompasses the reference, narration and discussion of positive encounters with 'America' and also includes positive descriptions of American culture, identity, and language features.

> Example (1) (CASE 07SB50FL34)
> FL43:   a:nd ... then just .. I don't know **.. maybe,**
>   .. **I will move to the States ... because I'd really like that**,
> SB50:   [mhm],
> FL43:   **[I'd] really like to move to the States,**
>   (1.0) ca:use (1.0) yeah you **Italy is kind of screw up** I mean,
>   .. fifteen years,
>   .. nobody is gonna have,

    … anything to eat anymore because we're like- we're like falling
    apart.

  Example (2) (CASE 08SB05SF05)
  SB05: but in Germany you-
      in Germany have to choose a second subject.
      so .h I was thinking about uh the second subject for a long time,
      and I couldn't really decide what to do,
      a:nd then **I started to: be interested in .. the US**,
      because my grand-cousin is living_in New York,
  SF05: mhm.
  SB05: and I visited_him for the first time **and I was really AMAZED by
      the city,**
      was .. **really great to be there** and then I started to travel to .
      to America several times,
      a:nd **I became more and more interested in**,
      .. yeah **in the culture and in the language as well**,
      and then I dec- and_I decided to,
  SF05: .. [yeah].
  SB05: [study] English so,

Examples (1) and (2) show a positive reference to America. In example (1) the Italian student distances him/herself from the political situation in Italy by stating that s/he would prefer moving to the U.S. since Italy "is kind of screw up." This positive positioning towards the signifier 'America' is relatively rare in our data and often does not seem to lead to alignment between interlocutors in the conversational context. The German student in this example just provides a noncommittal feedback signal ("mhm"), for instance. Similarly, in example (2), the German student explains his/her motivation for studying English and relates it to the very positive experience s/he has had in the U.S. while the Bulgarian participant just responds with "yeah." In these examples, the signifier 'America' contributes to establishing speakers' individual identities by relating personal experiences and motivations.

II. America as Global Danger in a Cultural and Political Context:

In our data, 'America' is sometimes also explicitly mentioned as a danger for various aspects of participants' own identities, such as material culture (food), immaterial culture (traditions), economy, or lifestyle.

Example (3) (CASE 07SB50FL34)

FL43: ... oh hey.
    .. tell me one thing.
    do you have **Starbucks** in Germany?

SB50: uh yeah we do .. u:hm,
    .. not- not for pretty long but,
    .. uh .. last couple years .. uh,
    they came out and now they're spreading more and more everywhere,
    like it used to be in the States you know,

FL43: [ah ok],

SB50: [there were] **one Starbucks in one mall** and,
    .. and **now the mall is full of Starbucks** and .. uh,
    that's pretty much the same here,
    .. they they they're **they're getting more and more** .. yeah,
    in [your's too]?

FL43: [ah ok].
    (1.5) ah ... actually,
    .. they're gonna ope:n,
    .. I don't .. know,
    .. either one or two Starbucks like .. next year in Italy but,
    .. **I cannot really see the point of it**,
    .. I mean .. **we have .. good coffee in Italy**,
    .. **why do we need Starbucks?**

SB50: yeah,

FL43: hm- a- and it's and it's expensive.
    Starbucks is SO FREAKING expensive I,
    .. I don't know .. and **I'm sure people will go to Starbucks**,
    because,

SB50: .. [**because it's Starbucks**],

FL43: [havin' .. a Starbucks],

.   yeah you know I- I went to Starbucks and you're cool,

SB50: yeah,

FL43: I had good coffee well it's normal but,
    .. a:h it's li- **I cannot really see the point of it**.
    … I mean,

SB50: .. yeah yeah.

FL43: .. I mean .. do you want **Pizza HUT in Italy**?
    well .. **we have the BEST pizza in the world .. we cannot**,

SB50:   mhm.
           [...]
SB50:   if you know the taste of .. uhm,
           of Italian pizza and,
           .. uhm house made Italian pizza,
           .. **you don't wanna eat** a .. uhm uhm,
           a shitty American pizza in Pizza Hut .. I mean,

Example (3) illustrates complex identity negotiations in a discussion regarding the role the U.S. company Starbucks plays in Italy and Germany. At the beginning, the Italian student establishes the presence of Starbucks in both countries as a common feature before then adopting a critical viewpoint and criticizing the spread of the chain, which is perceived and represented as a common threat ("they're spreading everywhere") to both conversation partners. SB50 signals his/her alignment with this view, commenting on the increased distribution of the company ("they're getting more and more"). FL50 then depicts his/her own threatened cultural identity (and his/her pride in it) by observing ".. I mean.. we have .. good coffee in Italy .. why do we need Starbucks?" This critical view is followed by the somewhat resigned statement "you know I- I went to Starbucks and you're cool" indicating the power and allure of the American cultural influence. This sequence ends with an expansion of the criticism to another U.S. food chain, Pizza Hut. The Italian interlocutor first establishes cultural superiority with regard to the American company—"well .. we have the BEST pizza in the world"—and then finishes with opposing the Italian stereotype and the American intruder: "if you know the taste of [...] uhm house made Italian pizza, .. you don't wanna eat [...] a shitty American pizza in Pizza Hut."

This view is taken up later in the conversation by the German conversation partner (see example (4)), who mirrors the negative positioning of American culture and identity and takes up the critical stance of the Italian participant. The spread of American global companies is portrayed as being a threat to the interlocutors' respective cultural identities. SB50 expresses grave criticism in what s/he perceives to be a typical U.S. business feature, the stereotypical cut-throat image of billion-dollar-company managers, a viewpoint to which the Italian conversation partner enthusiastically agrees. These attitudes are frequently expressed in our data in the context of the discussion of current events.

Example (4) (CASE 07SB50FL34)
SB50:   you know and it's spreading and spreading and spreading,

and uhm (1.8) which is uhm,

SOMEtimes a really- a really bad uhm .. business?

because in in the States for example,

.. lots of these companies you know they,

… they just they just they just,

.. well now I can say it they just fuck with their clients,

you know they just they [just screw them].

FL43:   [yeah yeah yeah yeah].

Example (5) (CASE 07SB54ST04)

ST04:   but **we prefer .. the three holy ki:ngs**,

SB54:   .. interesting. [((ehh))]

ST04:   [yeah] this one is more for here for Spain.

Santa Claus is more like well,

this is something American ((laughing)) or something like that.

SB54:   yeah.

ST04:   and well-,

right now uh **tradition I think is changing because of**,

well more- ... parents consider that,

.t if they give the: .t the the pre- the presents to the childrens.

[...]

(1.1) [so] **the tradition is changing because of that**.

SB54:   [mhm]?

ST04:   **.. but .. we prefer the three holy ki:ngs and not Santa Claus**,

In example (5), the cultural icon of Santa Claus is critically discussed. The American idea of Santa Claus is portrayed as intruding and replacing the Spanish tradition of presents being brought not by Santa on Christmas Day but by the Three Wise Men (Los Reyes Magos) on 6 January (Epiphany). The Spanish conversation partner expresses his/her disapproval of the American influence on Spanish cultural traditions, which are perceived as a danger to his/her own cultural identity.

III. American English and its Role in Education and International Communication:

This category comprises references to the particular variety of English spoken in the U.S. and its dominant role in international communication, as well the positioning of the conversation partners towards its use, e.g. in an educational context.

Example (6) (CASE 03SB30FL28)

SB30:   ... no- I have to admit,
          .. I'm a bit jealous because **I like British accents** and I just,
          ... you know pr- pronounce some .. words British,
          B[U:T],
FL28:   [yeah],
SB30:   I (cannot speak [fluently in accent]),
          €€€
FL28:   **[so you are] ... you are talking .. uh American English** or?
SB30:   **yeah .. well I- ... didn't have much of a cho:ice,**
          I was exposed to American English ... since I was like,
          u- .. twelve years o:ld,
          because I've always [been] like,
FL28:   [yeah],
SB30:   watching .. lots of TV series in English,
          at some point it just,
          >I don't know<,
          came naturally to me:. ((chuckles))

In example (6) the German conversation partner explains how his/her accent was involuntarily formed after the American standard. Although the description is for the most part neutral, there is also criticism in his/her mentioning of the lack of a choice in the matter due to the global influence of U.S. television shows.

Example (7) (CASE 04SB69ST05)

SB69:   if we should teach,
          .. **only British English**?
          … **or .. if .. the American English is .. is ALso .. oKA:Y to**
          teach.
          .h uhm … yeah because .. **most people say,**
          oh no the American English,
          .. **it- it sounds awkward,**
          [...]
          .. even the parents .. of the kids,
          they wanted to teach them .. the **proper British English** (1.0) uh,
ST05:   and why do- .. why do you think is uh,
          to because of the prestige of British English?
          I don't know?
SB69:   (1.4) uh yeah I- … I think so,

.. that it's … they say oh yeah,

that's ... more .. prestigious than the American is just so,

.. like .. ((rar rar rar)), {imitating the rhotic sound of American English}

.. it … doesn't sound,

(1.4) that good as the British English.

… but I [don't] know,

ST05:   [mhm].

SB69:   .. I think uhm (1.1) **there's no better .. English variety than another**.

Example (7) illustrates a positive view of American English, with the German participant stressing that the American variety should also be learned in school, as "there's no better .. English variety than another." Both interlocutors agree that British English is often considered to be more prestigious than American English by parents in their respective countries but that this differentiation should not be perpetuated in the school context as both varieties are equally suitable. Trying to explain why parents might perceive the British accent as being more prestigious, SB69 imitates the American accent as being "just so, .. like .. ((rar rar rar))." This could be interpreted as an instance of code-switching (here to a particular variety of English, i.e. American English, rather than another language), contributing to the creation of American cultural identity in the conversational context, based on the particular language spoken by the members of this cultural community (cf. Auer).

IV. America as a Negative Counterexample:

In the context of this last category, participants position themselves either individually or jointly towards the 'Other,' expressing, for example, notions of unfamiliarity, bemusement, or superiority with respect to American customs, culture, and identity features.

Example (8) (CASE 07SB28FL36)

SB28:   and,

but I think that's a really nice tradition,

like always eating together,

and eating like,

fresh?

cause for example **I went to America**,

            for six months,
            for an internship,
            and I really really missed fresh food.
SB28:   mhm. {nods}

FL36:   mhm. {nods}
SB28:   like you.
            they have it?
            but it's super expensive,
            and it's so much easier to just,
            buy some fast food or,
            yeah prepared food,

While example (8) starts as a positive description of food culture and tradition as part of Italian and German cultural identity, it is contrasted by the American context, which is presented as lacking an essential ingredient of European culinary culture, "fresh food," which is presented as a key negative experience for the German interlocutor ("I really really missed fresh food"). The Italian student aligns with this ("mhm") and visually reinforces the alignment ("{nods}"), creating the shared negative cliché of an 'America' that does not provide any fresh produce unless it is "super expensive," in which case "it's so much easier to just, buy some fast food or, yeah prepared food."

            Example (9) (CASE 07SB101HE27)
            SB101:   uhm .. so you never had the cliché of sauerkraut or something?
                        do you know sauerkraut?
            HE27:   no:. ((hehe))
                        what's that?
            SB101:   **if you talk to Americans the only thing they know about**
                        Germany is that there is a lot of beer pretzels and sauerkraut,
                        ((hehe))
                        uhm it's kind of what is it called it's uhm,
                        .. I can look it up, ((hehe))
                        uh okay it's just I can just find sauerkraut it's uhm,
                        .. uhm .. do you know what cabbage is?
            HE27:   yes?
            SB101:   and it is in really really small pieces,
            HE27:   a:h.

Example (9) illustrates how 'America' is constructed as a negative example of an outside view, with SB101 commenting on German food clichés in America. 'America' is construed as being ignorant about the reality and

diversity of German culture ("if you talk to Americans the only thing they know about Germany is that there is a lot of beer, pretzels and sauerkraut"). The borrowings from German (*pretzels, sauerkraut*) seem to reinforce both the stereotype of the limited American knowledge of German food (as it is restricted to borrowed and Americanized items rather than original German ones) and the speaker's own German cultural identity respectively, as the American negative example is followed by SB101 explaining the food item in question (*sauerkraut*) to the Finnish conversation partner. This seems to indicate that *sauerkraut* is, in fact, a cultural cliché that s/he accepts as part of his/her cultural identity.

> Example (10) (CASE 03SB30FL28)
> FL28: .. but li- .. mh HERE uhm the most uhm experienced I-
>   that I have go:t is like,
>   "oh HEY you're from Belgium so you must speak French RIght"
>   ((chuckling))?
>   .. it's that ALL the ti:me.
>   and I'm NO:,
>   I'm .. I speak DUTCH.
>   .. we also have a Dutch part ((laughing)),
>   but .t yeah.
> SB30: well I GUESS,
>   €€€
>   **when I went to America**,
>   **most time people .. wouldn't even kno:w where Belgium is**.
>   **€€€**
>   **on the world map**.
> FL28: ... yeah indeed.

In example (10), the conversation partner from Forlì (who is a Belgian exchange student) recounts the difficulties in explaining his/her cultural identity to others (being from the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), as there seems to be a general confusion among foreigners regarding his/her native language ("'oh HEY you're from Belgium so you must speak French RIght?'"), with many people not being aware of the fact that Dutch is the second official language besides French. This might create a little distance between interlocutors as the Belgian student essentially claims that many foreigners do not know about the Belgian language situation. However, the German conversation partner then re-aligns their identities by adding a story that shows that in the American context the country would not be known at all, thus again

presenting 'America' as a negative counterexample, illustrating that Americans do not have the same understanding of Europe as members of European cultures do.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Skype conversations in CASE provide a good example of how different identities can shift (and be foregrounded) in a conversational setting. 'America,' even though it is often used as a unified stereotype, is nevertheless represented in different ways. In general, Americanness is constituted in relation to various aspects of the speakers' own identities, such as regional culture, attitude towards globalization, or perception of the political and cultural role of the U.S. The present study indicates that the signifier 'America' is discussed and reflected on by the conversation partners in the context of their own identity negotiation, which combines aspects of individual, regional, national and transcultural identities.

We distinguish various functions of 'America.' It can appear as role model in the context of positive encounters by the conversation partners (examples 1-2), or as a global danger due to its globalizing role and socio-economic influence (examples 3-5). Participants also comment on the global linguistic impact of American English (examples 6-7). A characteristic and frequent feature in our data is the perception of America as a negative counterexample which serves as a contrast and a means of constructing boundaries (examples 8-10). It can be argued that all four categories contribute to establishing the signifier 'America' as the 'Other' that is cited in opposition to an, in this context, often commonly constructed transcultural perspective between interlocutors. All seem to create a boundary between the European and the American context, be it as a positive example, a danger or threat, with regard to American English in the global context, or as a negative counterexample.

European identity, or rather identities, can arguably be seen as a product of hybridization, resulting in a shared set of identities. However, as Barker, following Pieterse, suggests, this hybridization does "not represent the erasure of boundaries [which means] [...] that we need to be sensitive both to cultural *difference* and to forms of identification that involve recognition of *similarity*" ("Ethnicity" 202, emphasis in the original). Essentially, this means that European identity/ies is/are, by definition, culturally very diverse. However, the perceived boundary that is created through the mention of the signifier 'America' helps to create a setting in which separate identities of conversation partners are intertwined with each other, creating a common identity

in opposition to the perceived 'Other' that is America. This creation of ad-hoc European identity/ies is in line with Neumann's, Morley's and Robins,' and Edwards' observations on the creation of European identities, as mentioned above, even though the marker "European" might be essentially empty and without any common features. In this context, the so-called "out-group homogeneity effect" as observed by Edwards (25) may explain the phenomenon that the Europeans in our data see themselves as individuals (so that there is either only a very fuzzy or no distinct 'European' common identity but rather very diverse identit*ies*) while at the same time perceiving 'America' as a homogenous stereotype (which can easily be seen in opposition to a common European identity).

To sum up, the present article illustrates identity creation and negotiation processes in CASE that feature the signifier 'America.' While it appears in many realizations, 'America' in CASE has both positive and negative associations, with neutral use being relatively rare. Our data suggests that external signifiers like 'America' are often used as a representation of the 'Other.' Participants position and negotiate individual identities and even create ephemeral transcultural identities in opposition to this perceived 'Other,' which may even lead to the ad-hoc creation of European identities in certain contexts. Our data demonstrates how identity is negotiated in the interplay between the participants' respective cultures, contributing to the understanding of communication across cultures in general.

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ASTRID M. FELLNER

"We Are Going to Go Gaga Together": Celebrity Culture, Affective Encounters, and 'American' Pop Culture in Germany

According to a global poll conducted by the social network *Badoo* in 2011, the coolest nationality was American.[1] The poll suggested that the coolest leader was Barack Obama, the coolest rapper Jay-Z, the "coolest techie" Steve Jobs, and the coolest singer Lady Gaga; the coolest icon is Apple.[2] "America's victory in the *Badoo* poll," it says on this website, "is a fitting tribute to the nation that has given the world more icons of cool than anyone."[3] Without any doubt, American popular and mass culture has often been mediated on local, regional and national level through the knowledge work of 'coolness' as an affective force.[4] 'Coolness,' in turn, is often connected to celebrities who play an important role in the ways in which images of 'America' are circulated around the world.

In this paper, I want to focus on the affective power of Lady Gaga in Europe, investigating how the phenomenon of Lady Gaga has crossed cultural borders, becoming a transnational, global celebrity. In particular, I intend to investigate whether Lady Gaga, her music, and her videos are perceived as 'American' by her audience in Germany.

In my cultural studies classes at Saarland University, I rely on popular culture to make students explore concepts of culture with the aim of analyzing the significance or insignificance of the national ascription 'American' when applied to popular culture samples. My interest in the 'Americanness' of popular culture is part of a larger project which investigates the flows, cultural dynamics, and significance of 'American culture' in different countries.

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[1]   <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/world-votes-americans-coolest-nationality-glob al-poll-129369803.html.>. 18 Aug. 2017.

[2]   <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/world-votes-americans-coolest-nationality-glob al-poll-129369803.html>. 18 Aug. 2017.

[3]   <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/world-votes-americans-coolest-nationality-glob al-poll-129369803.html>. 18 Aug. 2017.

[4]   For more information on the connections between the cultural descriptor of 'Cool' and notions of 'Americanness,' see my co-edited volume *Is It 'Cause It's Cool: Affective Encounters with American Culture*.

As concerns about 'America' are frequently linked to the ongoing debate about the effects of popular culture, the concept of 'Americanization' suggests itself as a particularly productive site at which the increasing importance of affect associated with popular culture can be articulated to national and transnational identity formations. What interests me is how 'American' popular culture functions as a form of lingua franca in Europe. One of the questions posed in my research is whether the signifier 'America' works as an intermediary in the production of transnational civic European cultures.

Here I am using Lady Gaga as a case study for the development of a methodological framework that will combine textual and ethnographic methodologies in the analysis of popular culture, asking the question of what factors there are on the affective level that make certain stars and celebrities 'American' to European audiences. Lady Gaga lends herself well for my analysis because her music and her performances have become subject of academic attention, and I also use her music performances in my cultural studies and gender studies classes. In March 2010, the online journal *Gaga Stigmata* was created, Jack Halberstam published *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* in 2012, in 2014 the edited collection *Lady Gaga and Popular Music: Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture* was published, and 'Lady Gaga Studies' has become a separate research interest on academia.edu. The scholarly interest in her work focuses primarily on Lady Gaga's gender and sexual politics. What Halberstam has identified as crucial in the Lady Gaga phenomenon is her ability to act as an example of a new kind of feminism, which relies on "punk aesthetics, anarchic feminism, and the practice of going gaga" (xiii). "We are going to go gaga together," Jack Halberstam said to an American audience,[5] and he also called upon my students "to go gaga" when he gave a talk in Saarbrücken in 2011.

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[5]   See Primeau n. pag.

Is Lady Gaga an 'American' Phenomenon?

When asked about their opinions about Lady Gaga, most of my students at Saarland University said that they thought that Lady Gaga was "crazy, extravagant, provocative, and unusual."[6] Of the 182 people—mostly students—asked, 95 said they did not like her style. 25 people said her style was too exaggerated, 13 people said it was too artificial, 13 people said it was too provocative, and the rest said her outfits were too crude and tasteless.

Graph 1: "Do you like Lady Gaga's style?"

But even though many of my students said they did not care about Lady Gaga, they, of course, certainly all knew her. Is Lady Gaga a typical 'American' phenomenon? For most students, Lady Gaga clearly is American; she is an icon of 'American culture,' constituting a powerful symbol of 'American' pop culture. At the same time, she is seen as a global phenomenon. 'Global' and 'American,' it seems go together well: clearly Lady Gaga is part of a globally mediated American popular culture.

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[6]   For my research on the popularity of Lady Gaga in Germany, I turned to the help of my students at Saarland University. The survey was developed and conducted by Eva Battista during the summer term 2012. All quotes from students in this article are taken from this informal survey.

Graph 2: "Do you think Lada Gaga is a typical American phenomenon?"

Graph 3: "Do you think Lada Gaga is a global phenomenon?"

How can we account for the fact that Lady Gaga has become a contested symbol of 'Americanness' in Germany? When it comes to the affective response of Germans towards Lady Gaga, the reactions are often negative.

Some people may find her exciting, innovative, and provocative but many also find her annoying. Most of the students interviewed in Saarbrücken did not even find her particularly cool.

Graph 4: "Do you think Lada Gaga is cool?"

Nonetheless, I want to argue that the "laws of cool" (cf. Liu) that determine aesthetic value for the young generation govern her global appearance. 'America,' as the *Badoo* poll has shown, is often associated with the affective signifier 'cool.' This concept, as Alan Liu has put it, suggests "*information designed to resist information*" (179, emphasis in the original), which accounts for the fact that 'cool' is surrounded by an "ethos of the unknown" (Liu 179). But, and that is the question I want to raise here, is Lady Gaga seen as an icon of a cool, glitzy, superficial celeb culture that is perceived of as distinctly 'American'? And is celebrity culture perceived as something 'American,' which is important to her German fans?

In an article on Paris Hilton in Austria, I have argued that the notions of celebrity culture and 'American' are deeply entangled. Undoubtedly, stardom and the cultural politics of celebrity work differently in the U.S. and Europe. A 2008 article in *The New York Times* entitled "Berliners Get a Crash Course in Glittery Celebrity Culture," for example, argues that "Germany has long been funny about its relationship to local stardom and to the very notion of celebrity" (Kimmelman n. pag.). Citing Paris Hilton as an example of American celebrity culture, the article suggests that Germany has a marketing

problem concerning celebrities as German culture supposedly focuses on modesty. When Barack Obama visited Berlin in 2008, he "was heralded on the cover of *Der Spiegel* in 'American Idol' script with the headline 'Germany Meets the Superstar'" (Kimmelman n. pag.). "Next door to Germany," the author of this article continues, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president "lives in a palace with his new wife, a fashion model turned pop singer" (Kimmelman n. pag.). Chancellor Angela Merkel, by contrast, lives in a modest house. The article then quotes an editor for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* who says: "it's true there is a general embarrassment among Germans about being famous for being famous. Unless you are a world-class star, you must be intellectual and appear normal; otherwise you're considered trash" (Kimmelman n. pag.). While this article views celebrity culture as an inherently 'American' phenomenon which is somehow at odds with German culture, I take a more differentiated view, arguing that U.S. celebrities are "connected to the signifier 'American' in multiple ways, which include notions of celebrity culture and stardom that are themselves connected with the production and circulation of meaning—including the star industry, text, and society" (Fellner, "Paris Hilton" 240).

Celebrity and 'Americanness'

Celebrity, as many critics have shown, is a complicated cultural construct. According to Marwick und Boyd, celebrity is "an organic and ever-changing performative practice rather than a set of intrinsic personal characteristics or external labels" (140). This practice "involves ongoing maintenance of a fan base, performed intimacy, authenticity and access, and construction of a consumable persona" (Fellner, "Paris Hilton" 140). As is well-known, Lady Gaga has one of the highest number of followers, or fans, on *Facebook*, at over 60 million, one oft he highest number of followers on Twitter, at over 68 million, and she skillfully and successfully has used social media to mobilize her fans. As is clear from various accounts of fan engagement, the relation of a fan with their favorite object is primarily based on affective identifications. Through social media platforms celebrities can communicate seemingly directly with their audiences through what can be called 'performed intimacy' (Marwick and Boyd 140). Tweets which provide detail insights into the private lives of celebrities contribute to the circulation and creation of celebrity. Speaking of film stars, Richard Dyer has persuasively argued that they "matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people" (17). Lady

Gaga's performances matter to enough people in Germany so that her fans storm to her concerts. Her outrageousness, her over-the-topness, even her queerness were commented upon by my students; interestingly though, they were cited both as negative as well as positive criteria.

As I want to suggest, the 'Americanness' of Lady Gaga can neither be located in her performative practices themselves nor in the concept of celebrity culture itself. On the one hand, like any other identity category, 'Americanness' is performatively constructed, produced in the act of presentation. It is then rather an effect of the diverse ways in which this popular culture icon is 'read' by people, which, in turn, is contingent on a variety of factors and contexts. Whether Lady Gaga is an 'American' phenomenon is connected to the audiences and their affective responses. To be clear, the signifier 'America' is also not necessarily tied to the geographic place—the United States—but rather to imaginary affective relations which are constructed through appropriations and performances of signs and symbols that are associated with 'America.'[1] On the other hand, as a global celebrity, Lady Gaga enacts 'American' culture abroad: playing with images and stereotypes of American culture, she relies on performance, on an embodied process which is caught in the intricate tensions between repetition and difference, originality and reenactment.

Clearly, affect plays an important role when the question of the emotive power of Lady Gaga is connected to the discussion of 'Americanness.' Apparently, it is precisely these affective links between place and culture that have become problematic for many Europeans since the late 1980s. Especially the effects of globalization, the ever-increasing flow of cultural and economic products and processes and, not least of all, of people crossing borders, have contributed to the deterritorialization of American products and texts, so that people consume products as part of a global culture that does not reference the U.S. The ambivalent reactions towards Lady Gaga are connected to the diverse, multi-layered processes of Americanization which Fehrenbach and Poiger describe as "the transfer of goods and symbols from the United States to other countries and focus on how societies abroad have taken up and, in the process, transformed these influences" (xiv). Americanization, they argue, is useful not as a description but as an analytical tool for the analysis of American culture abroad, as the cultural transfer offers "alternative modes of identification" which have "been crucial in the shaping of new identities" (xv). For many young people the signifier 'America'

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[1]   According to Richard Brautigan, 'America' is "often only a place in the mind" (116). See also Fellner, et. al. *Cool* 20.

continues to function as a discourse that performs cultural work that is simultaneously highly personal and political: albeit in changing ways, it continues to enable them to construct their German and European identities through perceived differences, both real and imaginary, between the local, regional and national, and 'global' levels of their own lived cultures. The mediation of 'American' cultural practices in Lady Gaga's performances may, for instance, help fans create transnational identifications such as those based on gender (e.g. 'post-feminist' femininities), which have provided cross-national threads for European self-identification. As the *Badoo* poll shows, Lady Gaga lays bare the multiply connected emotive responses that evolve when the different meanings of 'America' and popular culture become entangled in the web of global consumer capitalism.

Going Gaga in Germany

While Gaga feminism and Halberstam's work on Lady Gaga are certainly widely known in German academia, particularly with Gender Studies and Queer Theory scholars, my students, I believe, are reluctant to talk about her in class for fear of not talking about a subject worthy of academic discourse. (American) popular culture is still often perceived as inferior to 'high' culture. Many cultural critics in Germany still flirt with the Frankfurt school notion of the "culture industry," which views American mass culture as an escapist entertainment culture that leads to standardization and "erases the true task of culture, namely, to function as a counterforce to the alienating forces of modernity" (Fluck 19). The "culture industry," as Adorno has argued, not only "intentionally integrates its consumers from above," but also "forces together the spheres of high and low art, separated for thousands of years" (12). In Europe, as Jaap Kooijman has explained, popular culture is often seen as "the 'lowbrow' culture of the common people" that stands in sharp "opposition to the 'highbrow' culture of the elites" (11).

Clearly, Lady Gaga's carefully fabricated and well-marketed performances produce affective responses in the audience who feel drawn to her and become fans of her. As in many other countries, the American pop star Lady Gaga has a large cult following (endearingly named "Little Monsters") in Germany. Ironically, however, it seems to me that not many people want to admit that they are Lady Gaga fans probably precisely because Lady Gaga is considered an 'art figure,' a *Kunstfigur* of pop, that is an artificial creation. And notions of artificiality and inauthenticity, which are associated with America, are still at odds with dominating definitions of culture in Germany.

It is precisely this problem of authenticity that was addressed in a TV appearance of Lady Gaga in Germany. In June 2011, Lady Gaga joined the finale of the popular show "Germany's Next Top Model" in Cologne. As is well known, this show is hosted by Germany's export product to the U.S. come back to Germany: ex-top model Heidi Klum—a celebrity phenomenon on her own, worthwhile being studied within the frame of Americanization of German TV culture. Performing on a runway littered with money, Lady Gaga played a medley of hits from her then new album *Born This Way*, including the first verse of her song "Scheiße" with its opening faux-German lines and finishing off with "On the Edge of Glory." In Gaga-like fashion she wore eccentric outfits, changing from a transparent white dress to a black leather outfit and stiletto boots. Famous for defying societal expectations, including norms of beauty, Lady Gaga exposed her strong personality and ironically drove home her point that everybody was beautiful in their way. "We are all born superstars" is the message of her song (Lady Gaga, "Born this Way"). On the catwalk, there were three guillotines with the labels 'Sex,' 'Money,' and 'Vanity.' At the end of the song "On the Edge of Glory," Lady Gaga metaphorically beheaded herself, flinging her green wig into the air. "I kill for fashion," Gaga then cried out.[2] Heidi Klum, according to an article in *Spiegel Online*, was not prepared for this ironic ending and quite obviously looked shocked. As this article has it, in her subversive performance, Lady Gaga ironically exposes German popular culture as totally fake. Turning stereotypes on their heads, Gaga here seems to hold up a mirror to German TV audiences, reflecting a fractured picture of the image of 'America' made in Europe. As *Spiegel Online* wrote: "Lady Gaga, the art figure of pop, seemed a lot more normal and more authentic than anything else that the three jurors—Heidi Klum, Thomas Rath and Thomas Hayo—and the three finalists […] had hitherto said or done" (Zinser n. pag., my translation).

Lady Gaga's performance relies heavily on affect: she wants to shock the audience. Affect mostly works unconsciously but her appearance does not produce the same effect in the U.S. as it does in Germany. Sex, violence, and power—the ingredients that make up Lady Gaga's performances—are perceived of differently in different countries. This cultural difference becomes visible in a post on a website called *Popdust*: The post here reads in the following way:

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[2]   Lady Gaga's performance on "Germany's Next Top Model" can be seen on the website of ProSieben at <https://www.prosieben.at/tv/germanys-next-topmodel/video/staffel-6/lady-gaga-beim-finale-clip>. 25 Aug. 2017.

Gaga once again defies basics laws of safety during her appearance on *Germany's Next Top Model*. (It always makes us laugh that German television shows actually resemble Sprockets.)[3] Things were normal enough to start, as Gaga catered to the hometown crowd by opening with her Deutsch-loving "Schisse," [sic] followed by a piano take on "Born This Way." (We wonder what they thought of her German accent?) But Gaga could never pass up an opportunity to be outrageous, particularly on European television (no rules!), so to top penis shoes and nipple tape, "The Edge of Glory" saw her dancing through rows of guillotines labeled "fashion," "sex" and "vanity," as shirtless male dancers threw stray bills around the stage. ("Government Hooker," indeed.) Gaga gets a little too close to these death machines for our liking, although we suppose that's that "edge" she keeps singing about? Regardless, Frau Klum, and likely Marie Antoinette, approve. (n. pag.)

As becomes clear in this statement, the author of this post thinks that Lady Gaga's acts are especially outrageous on European television. Conversely, my students think that Lady Gaga's craziness is something that American fans find cool because the U.S. is a country where everything is possible. Gaga delivers a fair share of craziness and meets German expectations; at the same time, she plays back American stereotypes of Germany by imitating a German accent à la *Saturday Night Live*. Affective encounters with Lady Gaga, as both my survey and some reactions to the show on the internet have shown, are peppered with national stereotypes, and it is on this level of images and preconceived ideas where we can locate the 'Americanness' of a pop phenomenon like Lady Gaga.

Conclusion

In his work on affect and images, Brian Massumi states that there "seems to be a growing feeling within media, literary, and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information- and image-based late capitalist culture, in which so-called master narratives are perceived to have foundered" (27). Making sense of affective encounters has to take into account the indeterminacy of meaning of pop cultural performances. While Lady Gaga is a global phenomenon, she is also perceived as a distinctively American phenomenon. An important part of Lady Gaga's performance involves the styli-

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[3]   Sprockets is a famous *Saturday Night Live* spook of Germans that poked fun at German culture in the 1980s. It especially played with the German stereotypes of seriousness, efficiency, and precision.

zation of herself into an artificial creation. Lady Gaga ironically and sub-versively plays with notions of artificiality, defying heteronormative norms and challenging hegemonic notions of authenticity. She also knows how to make her body available as a site of affective investment. As Elizabeth Wissinger has stated, celebrities have to use their bodies "to produce images as content to feed the endless demand for images for use in circulating af-fective energy in an affect economy" (233). In this affect economy, "a pri-mary goal of production is to stimulate attention and motivate interest by whatever means are possible, to produce affect in a volatile or turbulent situa-tion" (Wissinger 238).

When talking about a phenomenon like Lady Gaga, we have to consider the level of affectivity that determines the responses of her audience. The "stimulation of affective energy" (Wissinger 241) that Lady Gaga produces in her German audience is clearly related to her being considered an 'American' celebrity. "Going gaga," however, unleashes an affective energy that charac-terizes fandom on a global level.

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Section 2 "Transcultural Identifications"

Tetiana Ostapchuk

Encoding and Decoding 'Imagined Ukraines' in American Movies

American visual culture has occupied a dominant global position since the 20th century. It has resulted in massively produced visual images of 'Self' and 'Others,' which have influenced the portrayals of peoples and their perception by the American and global audience. While auto-images are often constructed as positive, hetero-images, images of Others, are schematized and stereotyped. Thus, the spread of American mass culture has been provoking a certain type of cultural exchange: images of Americans are mainly perceived as heroes, savers of the world and protectors of human rights; images of Others, unfavorably valorized, underestimated or even pictured as hostile, are perceived even by the representatives of those groups or nations as the 'true' depiction of their marginal status on the international arena. The paradox occurs when those Others are looking at themselves through the eyes of American mass culture and unconsciously start to associate themselves with the dominant Americans while their own cultures and histories are seen as dissentient. Ukraine as one of the post-Cold War independent states has gone through the process of creating its trans/cultural and trans/national identity. Having spent centuries on the margins of the global political and cultural arenas, Ukraine is still an unknown Other for the West. Its long-lasting subordinated position within numerous empires has caused a huge information deficit. At the same time, this lack of information resulted in creating American projects of 'Imagined Ukraines' that have presented the country for the global community in art, literature, movies, and media. In a digitalized modern era, the American movie industry offers one of the most influential tools in creating the images of Ukraine and Ukrainians as Others in mass consciousness. This article aims to analyze the shifts in the imagological paradigm of how those images have been encoded in American movies since 1990 and how they have been decoded by viewers in Ukraine and by foreign viewers. Thus, the subject lies in the sphere of cinematic imagology, "an important area of research, in that it involves a direct access to the visualized 'images' of Other and the production process of these standardized 'pictures'" (Beller and Leerssen 295).

The way how the Other is perceived and presented is prepositioned by perspective or point of view. The term which was developed in Renaissance painting to indicate a particular attitude or way of considering a matter has become relevant for the study of intercultural representation. As Manfred Beller states, there are five factors which influence a particular point of view: 1) geopolitical proximity or distance; 2) tradition or topicality; 3) historical involvement; 4) cultural, political or economic interest; 5) currency of collective opinions (cf. Beller and Leerssen 396). The researcher also concludes that, "[i]mages are vaguer and more generalized, and on the whole more impervious to the influence of political conflict, over a greater distance, leading eventually to the appreciative vagueness of exoticism" (Beller and Leerssen 396). This statement explains the vague and fragmental representations of Ukraine and Ukrainians in American movies until the 1990s. Before that historical period we cannot trace many Ukrainians in American movies, probably with the exception of Westernized Gogol's characters in the 1962 screen version of *Taras Bulba*, and Russificated Ukrainian Jews in the 1971 musical *Fiddler on the Roof* adapted from stories by Sholom Aleichem.

The key historical event that attracted directors' and screenwriters' eyes to Ukraine was 1991, the year when a new, independent state was proclaimed. But, as it turned out, the new country could not shake off stable associations with its Soviet past overnight. It appeared on the map but not in the mind of people of the world, so its hetero-image started to be constructed predominantly on the ground of exoticism. Joep Leerssen admits that there are two types of exoticism: positive and negative. In the first case, the other culture "is positively valorized and in many cases seen as a preferable alternative to one's domestic culture," and, in the second case, it "is appreciated exclusively in terms of its strangeness; it is reduced to the aspects wherein it differs from the domestic standard. As a result, exoticism will foreground and privilege the saliently different ('exotic') aspects, pin a society down to its local color and its picturesque elements. Exoticism is thus also a modality of Othering, of heightening the Other's strangeness" (Beller and Leerssen 325). I claim that a visualized image of Ukraine and its people has experienced the second type of exotic representation in American movies. It was especially in the mid of the 1990s that the ethnocentric attitude toward Ukraine was a dominant one. This statement is easily illustrated by two movies in which the settings and characters are partly connected with Ukraine.

The first movie is titled *Royce* (1994). It was directed by Rob Holcomb and the leading role was played by James Belushi. The genre of this movie is comedy, action, and thriller. It is a typical mass movie in which stereotypes and clichés are used widely to create an unambiguous identification of the

characters and locations. The synopsis of this movie is simple: Royce is a member of the ultra-secret service Black Hole, working for the U.S. Government on top-secret missions. When the senator responsible for forming Black Hole disbands the organization, Royce's fellow Black Hole members plot revenge on the man responsible for them losing their jobs. Ukraine here is represented as a distant territory where terrorists have stolen a train with nuclear weapons. Clearly the main character tries to find those terrorists and save the whole world from a nuclear disaster. This movie made actually the first attempt to represent a new geopolitical order in Europe after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union. It does not articulate differences between former Soviet republics, and Ukraine is mainly viewed as a Soviet/Russian state. Ukraine is also not on the list of filming locations. It is important how the movie was produced because "production constructs message," as it is stated by Stuart Hall, who also admits that the production process is framed by "institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience" (Hall 509). The evident lack of institutional knowledge about Ukraine and assumptions about an absolute audience ignorance toward the new country let the creators make use of Cold War stereotypes. Clearly, this movie initiates a long lasting tradition of imagining Ukraine in close connection with its Soviet past, the Cold War legacy and Russia. And the second important trait of this imagined Ukraine is a prejudice about its serious security threat to a civilized world. The primary source of such threat was nuclear weapons, the real legacy from Ukraine's Soviet past, but later the threats would become more diverse—the Chernobyl disaster, illegal emigrants, and war refugees.

The following movie was produced in Hong Kong, not in the U.S., but Jackie Chan's appearance is proof of its huge success in the U.S. as well as in Eastern European countries. In this fourth *Police Story* movie *Jackie Chan's First Strike* (1996), Hong Kong 'supercop' inspector Jackie Chan Ka-Kui (Jackie Chan) is hired by the CIA to follow leads of a nuclear smuggling case. He follows a woman named Natasha to Ukraine, when he realizes that she was hiding vital information. Natasha's partner is an unknown man who turns out to be a Chinese American nuclear scientist, suspected of stealing a nuclear warhead. Jackie follows Tsui to a restricted area where CIA agents together with Ukrainian authorities engage in a battle. When Jackie recovers in Russia, he meets Colonel Gregor who explains the situation. Later Jackie is taken to Moscow where he discovers he has been assigned to work with Colonel Gregor to solve a similar case involving nuclear weapons being smuggled out of Ukraine.

It is obvious that this movie continues and broadens the above mentioned tendency to associate Ukraine with nuclear weapons, smuggling and close ties with Russian government and mafia networks. Well-known stereotypes are used widely, e.g. Natasha as a typical name for a Slavic woman, as taken-for-granted formulas help to meet the audience's expectations, to direct viewers' attention to the action, and to economize their mental intensions. In spite of the fact that several episodes were filmed in Ukraine, there are many goofs: spelling mistakes (Сніжні Карати instead of Карпати), strange signs with armed men in mountains, and helicopters ad hoc colored yellow and blue (the colors of a Ukrainian flag).

These two first attempts to represent the new Ukrainian state on screen proves that Ukraine is mostly stereotyped as different, strange, distant from a 'civilized' world, a snowy, cold, paramilitary, and warlike place. Also they show the information deficit about Ukrainian realities and modes of life. In both movies Ukraine is a terrain to hide criminals who are pursued by bold and brave Western policeofficers. In imagological terms, we witness how an auto-image and a hetero-image are created. The first is usually characterized as a positive 'Self' and the second is a strange different unknown 'Other.'

In cinema, images of Others have traditionally been simplified and standardized by visual semiotization in order to make them recognizable. As a result, a list of cliché role models and specific body and face characteristics (hair-cuts, dresses, styles of speaking, etc.) is created and maintained for every national group. The problem here is that "iconic signs are, however, particularly vulnerable to being 'read' as natural because visual codes of perception are very widely distributed and because this type of sign is less arbitrary than a linguistic sign" (Hall 512). This quote explains well why an image of a Ukrainian guy from a popular TV-series *Seinfield* (Season 6, Episode 12 *The Label Maker*, 1995) is still well remembered and taken for granted by most Americans. In one of the episodes, two main characters Kramer and Newman are playing *Risk* game, in which a player's goal is to conquer the world. Here is an extract from the script:

> *Kramer and Newman are on a subway car, the Risk board sits on their laps.*
> Newman: Are you sure you know where the impound yard is?
> Kramer: Oh, stop stalling. Come on.
> Newman: I can't think, there's all this noise.
> Kramer: Or is it because I've built a stronghold around Greenland? I've driven you out of Western Europe and I've left you teetering on the brink of complete annihilation.
> Newman: I'm not beaten yet. I still have armies in the Ukraine.

This comment perks up the ears of what appears to be a Russian immigrant.
Kramer: Ha ha, the Ukraine. Do you know what the Ukraine is? It's a sitting duck. A road apple, Newman. The Ukraine is weak. It's feeble. I think it's time to put the hurt on the Ukraine.
Ukrainian: I come from Ukraine. You not say Ukraine weak.
Kramer: Yeah, well we're playing a game here, pal.
Ukrainian: Ukraine is game to you?! Howbout I take your little board and smash it!!
The Ukrainian pounds the game board, destroying it and sending army pieces flying.[1]

This short extract contains a great number of humiliating characteristics of Ukraine, such as "Ha ha, the Ukraine. Do you know what the Ukraine is? It's a sitting duck. A road apple," "The Ukraine is weak. It's feeble. I think it's time to put the hurt on the Ukraine." Even the usage of the definite article demonstrates an attitude to a country as to a small territory within a bigger and more influential entity which is obviously Soviet Union or Russia. These characteristics come from the mouths of Americans insofar as the whole situation demonstrates the strategies of linguistic stereotyping. Plus these issues have been repeated thousands of times from TV screens all over the U.S. over the last two decades. Moreover, in mass consciousness they are perceived as humorous and witty what can be proved by the fact that souvenirs with those words inscribed on T-shirts, cups and other stuff are still sold online. Until now there have been hundreds of references to these stereotypes in press and mass media. For example, in 2014 this clip saw a surge in popularity during demonstrations in Kyiv, as it is stated by Lewis Dean in *International Business Times.*[2]

There are several observations about the visual representation of the Ukrainian guy in this episode. He is a stocky middle-aged man in a black coat, wearing a typically Russian-style fur hat, his face expression is more than serious—it is frightening; his behavior and his reaction to Kramer's words are rude and exaggerated. It means that this image is intentionally made different from the others in a subway with an aim to be recognizable and memorable. And it is a so-called visual stereotypification of the Other. Another mechanism involved in the semiotization of the Ukrainian guy is his

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[1] Seinfeld Scripts: *The Label Maker* <http://www.seinfeldscripts.com/TheLabelMaker.html>. 18 Aug. 2017.

[2] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ukraine-seinfeld-youtube-clip-surges-popularity-during-demonstrations-1438964>. 18 Aug. 2017.

language that is supposed to be a representation of Ukrainian American English. As it is known, any sign has a denotative and connotative meaning which Hall has directly connected with ideology, "So it is at the connotative *level* of the sign that situational ideologies alter and transform signification. At this level we can see more clearly the active intervention of ideologies in and on discourse: here, the sign is open to new accentuations and, in Voloshinov's terms, enters fully into the struggle over meanings—the class struggle in language" (Hall 512). In this particular series, we witness how the image of a Ukrainian is burdened with a string of ideological associations, among which belonging to a periphery undereducated minority with heterogeneous unstable identity (half-Ukrainian and half-Russian) is a major one. The fact that until now this image is the first reference to Ukraine in the minds of many Americans shows that most of them are "operating inside the dominant code" and the message itself was "signified in a hegemonic manner" (Hall 515).

Another comic image of a Ukrainian is represented in the 2008 hit *Fool's Gold*. A Ukrainian guy, Alfonz, played by Ewen Bremner, is a helper of Benjamin "Finn" Finnegan (Matthew McConaughey), who is a treasure hunter looking for a treasure from a Spanish galleon that was lost at sea with the 1715 Treasure Fleet. The screenwriters have differentiated the model-roles for these two characters. One of the strategies was to give them culturally meaningful names: an American bold guy is called Benjamin that may evoke allusions to well-known personalities like diplomat and inventor Benjamin Franklin, American President Benjamin Harrison, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, actor Benjamin Bratt, etc. Finnegan is also a very popular last name of Irish and Gaelic origin, and the meaning of Finnegan is "fair."[3] James Joyce's last novel was *Finnegan's Wake*. These intercultural references awake viewers' awareness of Finn's belonging to a long-lasting Western tradition, whereas Alfonz sounds close to Alfonso, which is often used as a synonym for a Gigolo. Such a naming strategy supports a vivid bright memorable image of a magnificent successful American guy and an exotic inconspicuous guy of a Ukrainian origin. The last is often used to make derogatory statements about his personality, as "Oh, you disloyal Ukrainian prick / If it isn't the Ukrainian sidekick."[4] This Ukrainian is represented as a marginalized character whose skinny and scruffy appearance in the movie aims at entertaining the viewers and juxtaposes the American protagonist.

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[3]   <http://nameberry.com/babyname/Finnegan>. 20 Aug. 2017.
[4]   Fool's Gold Script - Dialogue Transcript <http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/f/fools-gold-script-transcript.html>. 20 Aug. 2017.

Another way to represent Ukraine as a wild radioactive terrain in the middle of nowhere is perfectly illustrated by those movies which appeared in response to the Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion in 1986. Among them are the following films: *Collapse (Raspad)* (1990) was produced by the U.S. and the Soviet Union at that time when Ukraine was still a part of a suffocating Soviet empire. There is the second-season episode *The Host* of *The X-Files* (1994), in which the classic monster Flukeman appears for the first time, and later he would become a character of the 2013 comic continuation *Season 10*. A couple of short allusions to the accident can be found in *The Simpsons*. And a vast uninhabited territory around the plant became the landscape for the 2011 *Transformers,* the 2012 *Chernobyl Diaries,* and the 2016 TV-series *Shadowhunters*. Once and again Ukraine is imagined as a part of Russia in *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013).[5]

Another cluster of plots, themes and motifs often associated with Ukraine is Jewishness. This tradition has roots in Sholom Aleicham's works and their incredible popularity as Broadway shows. Also Bernard Malamud and his novel *The Fixer* (1967) that received National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for Fiction depicted the anti-Jewish atmosphere in Kyiv at the beginning of the 20th century.

One of contemporary movies *House of the Generals* (2000) tells a story of a Jewish young girl from 1917 until World War II. In this movie, Ukrainians and Jews are on the opposite sides because Ukrainians are equaled both to Nazi and to Soviets, who oppressed Jews and eliminated their traditions and culture. Ukrainians are presented as a second-rate totally dependable people without any moral values. We anticipate the juxtaposition even from the poster on which two symbols are opposed to one another—a David Star and Hammer and Sickle—presaging connection of the events with totalizations, 'large views' and 'national interests.' This movie propelled lots of negative comments from viewers toward Ukrainians: "The strength of spirit of these Ukrainian Jews stands in proud juxtaposition to the memory of the cruelty ac-credited to those notorious Ukrainian guards who manned the camps."[6] Such a comment proves that this particular movie is a good example of a successful representation of a hegemonic point of view, in terms of Stuart Hall, because the message itself does not allow ambiguous interpretation: 'white' and 'black' stereotypes are not questioned, rather they are used as ready-made formulas and viewers have to fully accept them. It is vivid that in the West,

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[5]   See also Ostapchuk, T. *Chernobyl: The Red Eyes of The Predator* <https://eefb.org/archive/may-2016/chernobyl-the-red-eyes-of-the-predator/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

[6]   *House of the Generals*: Reviews <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211423/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

even in 2000, Ukraine is not treated as a separate independent state but it has still been associated with a former Soviet regime, its anti-Jewish and even anti-Ukrainian propaganda.

The Jewish-Ukrainian relations are widely presented and discussed in Liev Shriber's screen version of a 2002 bestseller *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer. Two episodes are chosen for the analysis in which the Ukrainian culture is presented through the eyes of the Jewish American traveler Safran Foer. The first is an episode at the hotel. In this episode three main characters, Foer, Alex and Grandfather, arrive at a hotel and order meals. The Ukrainian men find out that the American is a vegetarian. This fact causes amusement, perplexity and misunderstandings. We see a series of communicative failures caused by different cultural perspectives, ignorance toward the mentality of the Other and negation of communicative ethics. On screen there are huge differences in an appearance of the American and the Ukrainians, so that the waitress could unmistakably recognize the American guy. In this scene Ukrainian exoticism differs from all above mentioned movies. Ukrainian reality is still depicted as strange, wild and uncivilized, but there is no surface attitude to it anymore because it is neutralized by exoticism of the American as a strange unpredictable Other in the Ukrainian chronotope. The final moment of raucous laughter equals all characters' otherness. The second scene shows us how Alex and Foer are asking road-workers for their way to Trachimbrod, a point of destination. Here both characters are treated as Others because the director explores the idea of ideological borders and separation to 'Selves' (road-workers who represent people of the Western part of Ukraine) and 'Others' (Alex who comes from Odessa in the South of the country) within Ukraine. This scene reveals and deconstructs another stereotype about Ukraine, which is that you should pay your tips with Marlboro cigarettes. When Alex tries to explain to the workers why Foer behaves so strangely, he simply says 'He doesn't eat meat.' So, the creators of this movie have made an attempt to show Ukrainian exoticism without prejudices as well as to create a new image of an American who is not so absolutely positive but mainly heterogeneous.

To my mind, the director Liev Shriber has tried if not to deconstruct negative stereotypes about Ukraine completely but at least to question them. One of the interesting visual decisions supporting my thought is how the same actors played different roles: a Ukrainian waitress and Ukrainian workers were completely transformed while playing the staff at the American airport after Foer's arrival to the U.S. So, it is clear that even at the stage of the production, the message of this movie was aimed to be treated from the negotiated position which, in Stuart Hall words, "operat[es] through what we

might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained by their differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power" (516).

The third in this pack is a 2010 movie *The Debt* in which Ukraine hosts a former Nazi, the Surgeon of Birkenau, Dieter Vogel, who is supposed to have been killed long ago by three Mossad agents. As he is still alive, those three agents go to Ukraine to conclude what they should have done thirty years ago. This 'Imagined Ukraine' is once and again a terrain of dark forces and a source of threat for the whole world community; it is unable to eradicate the evil itself without the help of brave Western warriors.

Lord of War (2005) stands apart from all of the above analyzed movies though it still combines the typical trends in the representation of Ukraine and Ukrainians. The film charts the rise and fall of Yuri Orlov from his early days in Little Odessa, selling guns to criminals in his local neighborhood, through decade of excess and indulgence into early 1990s, where he forms a business of illegally buying guns with his uncle's help in Ukraine and selling them to an African warlord. Yuriy Orlov is a total fake: his family pretended to be Jews in order to immigrate to the United States, and his real name is not Orlov. The motif of imitation, of fakeness is one of the dominant motifs in the whole movie: the synagogue becomes a place where fake Jews meet to discuss business not to pray; the main character cheats his future wife; Yuriy comes back to his native land just in order to buy guns from former Soviet army bases; etc. The episode, in which Orlov's younger brother suffers without Ukraine so much that he makes a map of Ukraine from heroin and sniffs it in, visualizes deconstruction of grand narratives such as Diaspora and Homeland in a modern American society. Actually, we witness that Yuriy Orlov has lost his national identity, and at the same time he has lost his human face. Yuriy's ignorance toward moral values is turning him into a bad guy. At the same time he is a sort of cool new American guy with money, a beautiful wife, a luxurious estate, and other stuff, the real value of which is questioned in this movie. Considering strategies of onscreen representation of the main character, there are no visual stereotypes and no linguistic simplification in his speech. We know about his belonging to Ukraine only on a verbal level. Also, we should acclaim a higher level of true-to-life presentation of Ukrainian landscape, of Odessa City and its port. Alongside, we see how this movie supports the tradition of representing Ukraine as a source of illegal guns. The theme of Ukraine is masterfully used here in connection with arms trade at the end of the Cold War. In addition, the movie coins a new aspect to the representation of Ukraine as a country of corruption. Even a true American policeman, Valentine, pursuing Orlov all over the world stays with nothing in the end, as he has lost this game to Orlov. Though Orlov is a winner at

screen, finally the viewer is given the freedom to operate with an oppositional code, the third type of decoding-encoding strategy according to Stuart Hall, "It is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He or she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework or reference" (157). For example, in this movie American viewers may recognize a contradictory image of a new successful emigrant whose life style, occupation and values come in tune with a modern image of a prosperous American, created and promoted in mass culture. Such a new American dream is questioned and deconstructed within the movie narrative. Ukrainian viewers who decode the message within a geographically, politically, and socially distant framework will speculate about Americanization, the positive and negative outcomes of immigration, multiculturalism, and globalization, the role of the U.S. in global affairs, and the place of Ukraine in the modern world. Different interpretations are possible because the message was constructed not from ready-made stereotypes but from multiple layers of meanings implemented in the plot, the themes, the motifs, the dialogues, the visual decisions made by the creators of the movie.

So far I have focused on 'imagined warlike Ukraines' and negatively stereotyped Ukrainian male characters. The second part of the article depicts representations of female Ukrainians, who have been growing in popularity and have even gained dominance in recent years.

The first vivid Ukrainian female character who is not much different from the previously described men is Cate Blanchett as Iryna Spalko in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008). That movie is a typical Indiana Jones-style film in which a highly intelligent and elegant Jones confronts the representatives of a totalitarian regime. This time his main antagonist is Iryna Spalko and Jones identifies her accent as Eastern Ukrainian. Iryna's image reminds of an image of Greta Garbo as Ninotchka in a very famous movie from the 1930s. They both have the same haircuts; we can trace indistinguishable body movements through a typical 1930s' image of a Soviet female worker supplemented with a truly masculine outfit and perfect fighting competences in the new movie. Apparently, this movie offers one more stereotyped image of Ukrainians.

More realistic images of Ukrainian women were presented in such movies as *Postmark Paradise* (2000), *Eastern Promises* (2007), and the Austrian movie *Revanche* (2008), which was an Oscar nominee as the best foreign film in 2009. All these movies tell us stories about tragic fates of Ukrainian women, selling their bodies in search of better life in the West. It is a new theme in

post-Soviet reality: migration of Ukrainians, mainly women, to Western Europe in pursuit of jobs and ways to support their parents and children staying in Ukraine. This is another kind of 'imagined Ukraine,' which is poor and in a state of crisis: economically and politically. Often it is connected with legal marriages between Ukrainian women and foreigners (as in the first movie), but unfortunately more often this theme is associated with illegal women-trafficking, which is depicted in the second and the third movie.

A bright example of a Ukrainian theme can be found in a 2008 Olivier Megaton's movie *Transporter 3*. This movie has all the necessary features to be called a classic mass product, a real blockbuster and a box-office hit. The synopsis is similar to the previous *Transporter* films. At the core of this movie is Frank Martin (Jason Statham), who gets behind the wheel to deliver Valentina, the kidnapped daughter of a Ukrainian government official, from Marseilles to Odessa on the Black Sea. En route, he has to contend with thugs who want to intercept Valentina's safe delivery and not let his personal feelings get in the way of his dangerous objective. There is a mix of fighting scenes, risk and eroticism at the center of the audience's attention. Other concepts such as supporting characters, locations and feelings do not play any role. They are chosen as more or less successful scenery to highlight the main character's belonging to the great men, the heroes, of a wide screen. That is why the presence of Ukraine in the third movie of this series should not confuse or mislead the audience: this is just another example of how to make use of exotic names and places. The main conflict of the episode is pointless: Valentina, the daughter of a Ukrainian Minister of Environment, was kidnapped to force her father to sign a contract. This contract will give permission to store toxic waste in Ukraine. Of course, in reality, the signing of such a contract under pressure is the basis for its immediate annulation. This statement shows that in movies produced for a mass audience a reasonable plot does not always play an important role. What concerns the creators primarily is an idea of visual pleasure, which will be discussed below.

This imagined Ukraine is presented in a slightly positive light. Firstly, the Minister appears to be an honorable man who does not sign the contract but tries to save his daughter and his country. Secondly, the Ukrainian cops are co-working with their European colleagues and they enormously help to solve the situation. Valentina is saved, the contract is thrown out, and the criminals are punished. Odessa is seen as a part of Ukraine, and a great advantage of the whole movie is that Ukraine is shown as a part of Europe. There are even several scenes in which the characters are trying to find differences between Ukraine and Russia, though their attempts look rather naïve. But if you have a look at some details, the creators of this blockbuster were guided by the same

stereotypes about Ukraine and Ukrainians. The Minister and his security guys visually follow their predecessor from *Seinfeld*: huge bodies and frozen face expressions. The Minister's office is packed with semiotically speaking items: massive carpets, huge heavy curtains, old-fashioned furniture and even a samovar, a traditional symbol of Russian culture. Also actors try to imitate a Ukrainian accent, which is always fun in Western movies.

Valentina is a new Ukrainian *femme fatale*. She represents a wealthy idling Ukrainian youth who live on their parents' money and spend time in best clubs all over Europe. She knows much about fashion and cuisine. Valentina is a woman of both intelligence and sex appeal who uses these features to manipulate Frank. Her role in the movie completely coincides with the concept of 'woman as icon,' as this role is named in Laura Mulvey's famous essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema":

> What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (2186)

Valentina's behavior provokes Frank; she seduces him and insofar as he starts to play an active role in protecting her, he ignores his main rule as a transporter never to mix his feelings with his job. As Mulvey explains, "Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectators within the auditorium" (2186-2187). Valentina's image helps to fulfill her tasks on both levels: her body movements, her dress and make-up styles and even her favorite theme of discussion—culinary and drinking preferences—aim to seduce Frank and the viewer. The main character plays "the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle" (Mulvey 2187). In *Transporter 3* the whole storyline is structured in a way that puts the male character in the center to let the audience identify with him. And because the audience associate themselves with the male protagonist, they are also eager to look at what he looks and have what he has, including his erotic object. So, there are clear oppositions: Frank is a positive auto-image and Valentina is an exotic heteroimage, and even further, Frank equals West and power while Valentina is to be associated with Ukraine/weakness/need to be protected/subordinate, etc.

At this stage, a clear contradiction for Ukrainian viewers appears. Though, the message of *Transporter 3* was perfectly encoded as a hegemonic one that is supposed to operate inside the dominant code of Western culture and the viewers' position is inadvertently meant to coincide with the position of the main male protagonist, the Ukrainian viewers have to oppose to it if they are not ready to identify themselves with a weak subordinate female character.

Some other kind of relations between a masculine West and a feminine East are presented in the 8th season of *House M.D.*, in which we meet a character named Dominika Ann Petrova (Karolina Wydra). As a female character, she needs help from House and actually he only marries her in order for her to obtain permanent resident status in the United States. In return, he gets someone who cooks and cleans for him. In Season 8, Dominika is identified as being from Ukraine. She works as a massage therapist, usually giving people foot rubs. Through this appeal to a body, its lowest part—feet, the creators of the message verify that Dominika's position in the American society is a marginal and subordinate one. A positive shift is that she eventually obtains a right to make her own decisions: She leaves House when she obtains her citizenship, because he withheld the news from her for several weeks after he was notified. For the first time, we witness a Ukrainian female character who opposes to the Western male dominance. Dominika's character is constructed in close connection to her imagined Ukrainian ancestry. We are presented with a whole life story of this character. Dominika was born in Ukraine in 1983 while it was still a republic of the Soviet Union. She is the daughter of Kateryna and Andriy Petrov. She has one older sister, Iryna, and three brothers—Volodymyr, Oleksiy and Fedir. Dominika is positively identified as Ukrainian in an episode "Man of the House." In that episode, she proudly displays items showing her cultural heritage, such as a portrait of the great Ukrainian literary figure Taras Shevchenko. She speaks Ukrainian in another episode "Body and Soul." There are many so-called fan videos on youtube.com illustrating this love-story between House and Dominika. And this is the first time when a Ukrainian female voice is heard as a solo one in American mass culture. Dominika as a woman and as an emigrant is still subordinate within male dominated culture but her personality is presented as self-confident, and her exoticism is positively valorized.

Based on the results of my analysis, it can be concluded that Ukraine and Ukrainians have been represented in American mass movies since the 1990s on multiple occasions. The findings of my research are quite convincing that the image of the country is highly stereotyped. Ukraine has been represented as an ancestor of the Soviet empire, as a warlike and hostile place which is potentially dangerous because of several historical and political reasons, such

as the information deficit about the role of Ukrainians in the Holocaust and World War II, numerous nuclear weapon storages, Chernobyl meltdown, illegal women trafficking, and corruption within the country. In popular movies, most male and female Ukrainians are negatively valorized and visually typecast as strange/belligerent/weak Others. Among the movies, I have distinguished those which were encoded within hegemonic or negotiated positions. In the process of cultural exchange, those messages may be decoded from hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional perspectives. The first approach offers positions that consume ready-made stereotypes and take them for granted. Such a strategy is appropriate and time-consuming for wide mass audiences who consciously or subconsciously identify themselves with positive on-screen auto-images. The negotiated and oppositional readings ought to be successfully used by those groups of viewers who are represented as Others on screen in order to debate the temptation of perceiving their own history, culture and values as underdeveloped, savage, and marginal ones. Moreover, the latest political events in Ukraine—the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of the Crimea, and the war conflict in the East of the country—have attracted huge international attention. Surely, the image of this country is also under ongoing re-consideration in American popular culture.

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ALEXANDRA GLAVANAKOVA

Transcultural Identity and Migration:
Zachary Karabashliev's *18 % Gray*

One of the most intriguing areas for research in contemporary world literature is the interrelation between migration and the imagination in the way it reflects on the construction of identities. My aim here is to explore issues of cultural and personal identity related especially to marginalization and cultural insularity in the complex experience of acculturation. How is transcultural identity demarcated in the process of mobility between different communities, which are ethnically, ideologically, and culturally distinct?[1]

Transculturalism offers a theoretical framework for analyzing creative expressions in the age of transnationalism and globalization. Though it is not an uncontested term, transculturalism provides an alternative approach in cultural and literary studies at once building on and surmounting the limitations of border studies, diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, multiculturalism, and the many strands of cosmopolitanism. Transculturalism, it should be emphasized, focuses both on the recognition of difference and on its transcendence through the creation of intersections. As a theoretical perspective, it endeavors to move beyond binary oppositions to a third space, and to grasp the new form of cultural order produced by cultural globalization. Wolfgang Welsch points out that the transcultural is distinct from any kind of uniformity; on the contrary, it involves the production of a new type of diversity of different cultures and life forms (194). Significantly, the transcultural perspective interprets "globalization not as homogenization but, rather, as further differentiation of cultures and their 'dissemination' into transcultural individuals" (Epstein 328). The phenomenon of transculturality "moves further, from the diversity of cultures to the even greater diversity of individuals, transcending their rigid cultural identities" (Epstein 349). Such individuals and the artistic works produced by them "are no longer identifiable with only one national culture or one national landscape" (Dagnino 8).

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[1] This chapter builds on a previous publication: "Where the West Ends" in Alexandra Glavanakova. *Transcultural Imaginings. Translating the Other, Translating the Self in Narratives about Migration and Terrorism*. Sofia: KX—Critique and Humanism Publishing House, 2016.

In this context, the U.S. emerges not only as a setting for the action in fictional works written by Bulgarian writers, but also as a trope rich in implications and references. American culture serves as a point of departure for self-reflection and for reflection on the contemporary processes of transcultural migration, dislocation, and expatriation in a post-communist, post 9/11-world. An illuminating illustration of this tendency in literary exploration is the novel *18 % Gray* by Zachary Karabashliev. It is one of a number of texts by Bulgarian writers that have appeared in English translation in recent years, owing largely to the activities and support of the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation.[2] The English translations of these texts, aiming also at the cultural translation of difference, have made them readily available to larger audiences, successfully transforming them into pieces of world literature.

Karabashliev's own experience of transnationality is an outcome of his life abroad and is reflected in his literary works. Born in Varna, he studied Bulgarian Philology, and then moved to the U.S. with his family in 1997 after winning a green card. He enrolled in Ohio State University to study photography, worked as a bartender, a photographer, a DJ, a radio rock-show host, a sales representative, altogether following the experiences typical for a first-generation immigrant. Should the reader be familiar with the writer's own life, he/she will inevitably discover many overlapping points between Karabashliev's and the protagonist's experience as writers of movie scripts, diaries, and eventually a novel, as well as their 'shared' talent for photography.

Karabashliev's life trajectory, similar to that of many other transcultural writers, has served as a source of inspiration for his writings. He has been empowered emotionally and creatively by the dislocation from his place of origin. Caught between the past and the present, he has voiced the experiences and desires, hopes and fears, expectations and disillusionment of the "transitional generation" following the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of

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[2]   The Elizabeth Kostova Foundation was established in 2007 by Elizabeth Kostova, author of the acclaimed novel *The Historian* (2005), to provide support for creative writing in Bulgaria, the translation of contemporary Bulgarian literature into English, and to establish contacts between Bulgarian, American and British authors. For more information see <http://ekf.bg/>. Among the Bulgarian books which have received support from EKF for their publication in English are: *Party Headquarters* by Georgi Tenev (2016); *Everything Happens as It Does* by Albena Stambolova (2013); *A Short Tale of Shame* by Angel Igov (2013); *18% Gray* by Zachary Karabashliev (2013); *Thrown into Nature* by Milen Ruskov (2011).

socialism in Bulgaria in 1989, and the *chalga*[3] and the *mutra*[4] culture of the 1990s, which spawned in the country in the aftermath. Ludmilla Kostova describes the identities of these writers as post-national, rather than transnational, emphasizing the fact that they retain links with their cultures of birth (Kostova 175). The new generation of Bulgarian migrants, faced with the "dilemma of how to position themselves across shifting cultural, political and psychological boundaries" (Kostova 178), are defined by a "post-national middle-class migrant identity," which in Kostova's view has been "brought into existence by the dislocation of the members of Eastern Europe's intellectual and technocratic elites" (175). Karabashliev exemplifies this dilemma, for after living for some time in the U.S., he chose to return to Bulgaria in 2014 and to work as the editor-in-chief of Ciela Publishing House–one of the largest publishers in Bulgaria.

   18 % Gray, originally written in Bulgarian, became an instant bestseller and the book has had 11 editions since 2008. It won the prestigious Novel of the Year Award in Bulgaria and was chosen by anonymous vote as one of the 100 most loved books by Bulgarians in the BBC campaign "The Big Read." The English translation of the novel by Angela Rodel came out in the U.S. in January 2013. Karabashliev's other works, not less transcultural in looking for the points of contact between Bulgarian and American cultures, include the short-story collections *Кратка история на самолета* [*A Brief History of the Airplane*, my translation] (2009), *Симетрия* [*Symmetry*, my translation] (2011), and a collection of his plays *Откат* [*Recoil*, my translation] (2010), which are not yet available in English.

   American culture is invested with multiple significations in *18 % Gray*, as well as in the short stories by Georgi Gospodinov, which are included in his

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[3]   Chalga music, sometimes referred to as pop-folk or ethno-pop, and the lifestyle and culture associated with it, is exceedingly difficult to define. It represents a mixture of various musical styles and traditions. It is a fusion of Serbian, Macedonian, Greek and Turkish popular music with Bulgarian folk-music elements. It may incorporate Balkan Romani music, Bulgarian pop songs, Western pop, rock, hip-hop and rap. Its rhythm is quite distinctive, basically associated with belly-dancing and activates the Orientalist, following Said, perception of the 'East' by the 'West.' For an in-depth analysis on the cultural and social ramifications of chalga music see Vesa Kurkela, "Bulgarian Chalga on Video: Oriental Stereotypes, Mafia Exoticism, and Politics," *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourse*, 143-174; Ivaylo Ditchev, "Pop-socialism, Pop-transition," *Gendering Popular Culture*, 64-73.

[4]   I find Ralitsa Muharska's definition of this concept quite precise: "'Mug' is the closest translation for the Bulgarian 'mutra' – (literally 'ugly face') thug, mobster, racketeer – a neologism which appeared in the Bulgarian language in the 1990s to denote the surfacing kleptocracy" (78).

collection *And All Turned Moon* (2013).[5] These texts portray the miserable life in post-1989 Bulgaria through intertextual references to American culture and literature. For example, Gospodinov's story "The Old Man and the Sea" revisits Hemingway's classic to render the despair and unyielding will power of an old man from a remote Bulgarian village not to part with his house, his past, his ancestors, memory and identity. Ultimately, he starves to death. Similarly, another character, named the Jagger—a Mick Jagger's look-alike, who is a die-hard fan of The Rolling Stones—is left destitute because of his admiration for the music of the group and eventually comes to 'experience' the oxymoronic title of the band's career-turning album, *Beggar's Banquet* (1968). Another telling example is the intertextual reference to the story "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry (1905) in Gospodinov's "O, Henry! A Christmas Tale" of love, compassion and generosity transposed to contemporary Bulgaria.

Writing about America in Karabashliev's novel is possible only within the transcultural framework, as author and protagonist include the home—a source of both love and trauma—as a continuous point of reference in describing the process of acculturation (and its failure) in America. *18 % Gray* is remarkably 'American' on many levels: it belongs to the picaresque genre of the road-novel, incorporating the mythology of the road, the Wild West, and the Western as a cinematic genre. It represents a Bulgarian author's depiction of America to a Bulgarian readership (and following its translation into English to an American readership as well) and is replete with clichés associated with such American corollaries as the work ethic, the meaning of success and failure, the American dream, mobility and new beginnings. The Bulgarian setting, atmosphere, character and environment is present in the novel, too.

The text does resort to archetypal representations of the U.S. and Bulgaria, most clearly so on the visual and verbal planes in the two drawings made up of words (*Gray* 201).[6] The first one aims at representing America in an S-pattern—like a serpentine road. It consists of 22 words denoting 'road,' thus emphasizing mobility as central to American identity. The second drawing on the same page is that of a tree comprising 26 words in Bulgarian, denoting the kinship relations between the members of an extended family, thus highlighting what used to be, at least in the previous century, the central value of

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[5] The title story was published in English in the *Best European Fiction 2010* anthology, edited by Aleksandar Hemon.

[6] Page numbers from Karabashliev's *18% Gray* refer to the English edition. Quotes are referenced (*Gray* plus page number) in the text.

Bulgarian culture: one's roots, origin, and family. However, Karabashliev underlines the fact that "Even though Bulgaria is the fabric of everything I have ever written, I don't write about Bulgaria. In my writing I try to consider 'What does it mean to be this person, at this moment?' Being Bulgarian? What does it mean? Being Steve, Zack, Philip, Ivan, Joe, Bob is what interests me" (Karabashliev and Wingate n. pag.).

<div align="center">

Toll road

Run   *Avenue*

Interstate

Boulevard

Path

Track

Trail

Road

Parkway

Expressway

Freeway

Lane

Street

Pathway

Highway

Drive

Artery   *Route*

Public Road

</div>

I decide to look for an analogue in my own language. The only thing I can think of are the words pointing out who is who in the family tree:

<div align="center">

dyado i baba

vuina   *bate*

chicho   *kaleiko*   *chinka*

kaka   *balduza*   *maminka*

vuicho   *svat*   *svatia*

strinka   *krustnik*   *zulva*

svekurva   *svekur*

badjanak *eturva*

kuma

shurei

tushta

tust

kum

kaincho

</div>

Illustration 1: *18 % Gray* 201.[7]

The novel traces the life of a couple of Bulgarian immigrants. The protagonist Zack (a shortened version of the writer's first name) and his wife Stella meet as students in Bulgaria in 1988, and come to the United States to continue their studies in the 1990s. They work at different jobs until they finally find financial success, if not a sense of personal accomplishment. The text focuses on the identity crisis of the protagonist following immigration. The issue of identity (de)construction is presented figuratively through the main themes explored in the novel: art, creativity, love, loss, time, the existential quest for meaning and one's place in the world. The long and winding road from Bulgaria to Ohio, via Mexico to California—Los Angeles and San Diego—and all the way back East to New York via Route 66, is not just a journey through space, but also one through time. It is a journey from Bulgaria in the 1990s to the U.S. of the first decade of the 21st century seen through the lens of a Bulgarian writer.

The novel incorporates three alternating sections, each dealing with time differently. In the present-day narrative, Karabashliev presents in a linear chronology Zack's journey across America. This plotline is dynamic, cinematic, raw, and reads like a Tarantino-style movie-script interspersed with violence. The reader follows Zack trying to come to terms with the sudden disappearance of his estranged wife, while he crosses the United States by car with a big bag of marijuana in his trunk, which falls into his hands by chance, and a vintage Nikon camera. In despair over the absence of Stella, he decides to drive from California through the Southwest and across the Midwest, stopping in small towns and bars along the way to observe how others live their lives on the periphery of American society. When he finally reaches New York, however, it turns out to be the urban desert he knows he cannot survive in, especially on a Halloween night: the city resembles Gotham with the letters 666 appearing on a building, which "pierces the light-polluted sky above Manhattan" (*Gray* 245).

The second narrative, which runs parallel to the first, is typographically set apart in italics. In a biography-like form, it relates Zack's story through a series of flashbacks: his life in Bulgaria from the first time he meets Stella in the seaside city of Varna, their subsequent romance, their marriage, and their miserable life in Bulgaria in the 1990s, which eventually leads to their decision to emigrate. The images in this plotline perceived as if through a photographic filter are softened by the nostalgia, which permeates the narrative about the past and the abandoned home. Stella and Zack move to America trying "to find a more dignified way to surrender to reality" (*Gray* 69). When they first arrive in Los Angeles, "a murky red sun was setting in the Pacific Ocean at the same time that an impossibly big moon was rising over the hills.

We kissed between the two for a long time. It felt like we were on a movie set" (*Gray* 81). This formulaic two-dimensional image, as if lifted from a cartoon, expresses the banality of their 'pilgrimage' to America.

After several failed attempts to succeed as a photographer, the protagonist realizes that California, contrary to all expectations, devours all he has:

> I sold another Carl-Zeiss and one Nikon body. California swallowed up my equipment, plans, dreams, and ideas one by one. California cooled down my eagerness, sucked up my energy and in just a few months stripped me down to despair.
> California—it became clear—had no use for me or my images. What California needed was the next drug. (*Gray* 98)

At that point, Zack chooses to adopt a false identity and to find a job as a clinical trial inspector, for which he does not actually have the proper education or experience. He settles for this mundane job where he can earn up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. He takes the decision to give up "art, photography, writing, philosophizing" and to spend instead at least one year of his life "dedicated to work, financial stability, and TV" (*Gray* 120), working hard to make his bank account pretty and his days unbearably boring (*Gray* 123). Zack withdraws from creativity and the imagination, which inevitably causes his withdrawal from love, his wife, and a self-alienation, leading to a withered non-life of monetary attainment. Eventually Zack finds himself in an American success story: the owner of a beautiful car and a beautiful house. Meanwhile, Stella finds her own success as a painter, while she refuses to make compromises with her art and grows increasingly disinterested in her boring Americanized husband, even though Zack, who feels he is forced to accept a series of destructive compromises, is never able to fit comfortably into the Southern Californian lifestyle.

The houses Stella and Zack live in symbolize the couple's failure to function in society according to the prescribed values. The ugly, tiny, bleak apartment in Sofia is as equally unwelcoming as is the "frigid house" (*Gray* 143) Stella and Zack buy in California, which never becomes a real home. Stella refuses to paint in it and never brings her pictures to hang on its walls, while Zack spends almost no time in it and never uses his state-of-the-art photo laboratory there. So instead of being able to fly "somewhere over the rainbow / [where] skies are blue / And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true," as the lyrics of the popular song from the 1939 Hollywood production of *The Wizard of Oz* go, Zack gets to "pass under the dirty rainbow" of smoke in the California skies (*Gray* 144). He actually starts living on the

road: at first in airports, airplanes, hotels and bars during his business trips, and then in rest areas by the highway, in sleazy motel rooms, and run-down bars, when he embarks on the journey of the hobo: the willing dropout from society, the homeless, restless wanderer he chooses to become after Stella's disappearance.

Karabashliev clearly presents the choices and experiences which mark the life of the immigrant without either denouncing them or extolling them. His main character embarks on several quests, which can be seen as paradigmatic for America. In the first place, he has to choose between two alternatives: individual freedom or success within the corporate money-valuing system. Assuming the role of a con man opens the doors to a lucrative job for Zack. He formulates it in a straightforward manner: "America is still one of the few places in the world where a person can make a decent living with honest work and perseverance. I did it otherwise" (*Gray* 156). This is followed by a devout dedication to the hard work ethic, which, however, comes at the expense of the complete numbing of his senses and his imagination, leads to a withdrawal from creativity and loss of self. His criminal exploits and the green bag of marijuana Zack totes from the West to the East coast evoke Gatsby's orgiastic green light from the final pages of Fitzgerald's novel and function in a similar fashion as a revealing commentary on the actual realization of the American dream. Zack's final choice is to become a hipster on the open road; an outlaw, a 'reversed' Gatsby, whose ultimate aim is to forget the woman he loves.

Short vignettes intersect the two plotlines about immigrant life and crime, love, home and memory. The 18 dialogues between Zack and Stella are not clearly positioned in time and space and serve as ruptures. The three intertwining sections of the narrative are marked by a descriptive minimalism, an excessive use of verbs emphasizing action, of jargon and the profane uncensored language typical of the instant interactions of social network communication. The text employs a focalized narrative through the limited point of view of the unreliable narrator, therefore leaving it to the reader to draw the important conclusions.

The signature mark of the novel is the combination of images, rendered with photographic precision, and cinematographic action. Zack's photographs, vividly described in the text, are used to emphasize that this is a narrative about *perception* in the meaning both of 'observing' and of 'gaining insight into' one's home country, one's adopted country, one's loved one, oneself, the existential road, death, the meaning of success and failure. Zack's vintage cameras are constantly personified as the eyes perceiving not just the phenomenal world around him, but also serving as the tool of hermeneutics,

as the final words of the novel reveal, "We watch the world outside through our reflections" (*Gray* 264). The focus is on the *gaze*: on the ways of seeing by the writer, the protagonist, and the reader.

The book offers its condensed philosophy of photography in the myriad nuances of gray. In monochrome photography the principal color is gray, which Zack defines as the golden mean, while taking long-exposure portraits of Stella. Gray is used to bring out the sharpest contrast between black and white. As Zack explains: "the beauty of every photograph, Stella, is in the development of its middle values, in the gray, black and white are simply extremes without which even the most interesting negative seems to be lacking contrast. The [sic] life of photographs is actually in their middle values" (*Gray* 81).

Art adds another dimension to the story when Zack begins photographing America along his journey, providing an unprocessed view on small towns, beat-up motels, markets and bars, and the nondescript people he meets on his journey. "On the road I'm always fascinated by the ever-present wooden utility poles, the barbed wire fences all along the way to the East Coast—evidence of the America I fell in love with so long ago" (*Gray* 122). One such shot captures the true spirit of rural America for him. "The mud-splattered truck bed, the cloud of dust, the red stop lights, the cowboy hat, the American flag, the street named 'Hope,' the mailboxes, the intersection, and the hand grabbing the fat pile of mail puts all of this together" (*Gray* 107-108).

Visuality becomes a prime feature of the narrative. The images that are captured by Zack's camera—his photos of love and of America—and their striking colors are foregrounded providing a strong sense of immediacy. For example, the fires ranging in California, which eventually destroy the protagonist's home and wipe out all traces of his life there, are depicted in a surreal manner in a dream-like scene: "I take pictures of the empty parking lot, the bending palm trees, the orange horizon, the American flag reflected in the orange windows of the motel […] I feel like I am in the quiet belly of an orange balloon, which will burst any moment now, and I will see the world in the colors I remember" (*Gray* 142, ellipsis in original). When leaving California, he observes that the colors of the rainbow are not the usual pastel ones, but are unnaturally saturated: "electric blue, poison green, and golden yellow to tangerine orange" (*Gray* 153-154).

The multiple references to the images photographed by Zack are part of the intended sensory quality of the text, as the writer's aim is to describe the sense perceptions of the protagonist vividly and to trigger the reader's imagination. Stella's representation, for example, is rendered exclusively through the eyes of the protagonist and through his sense perceptions of her body,

face, smell, and touch. She exists only as the object of the perceiving mind. Her presence is re-constructed through Zack's memories, which have a dream-like quality offering an alternative to the brutal reality, where she is markedly absent. Stella, the 'star,' achieves almost a saint-like status. She is presented as a romanticized, poeticized image of angelic purity, artistic integrity, and emancipated creativity, through the images of flowers, images of water, the moon, and the constellations in the sky.

The visual descriptions function as a connecting loop between the spaces traversed by the protagonist from East to West and back, and the recursive flow of time. The concept of time is central to the exploration of self in the existential quest that the text offers. *Now* is the moment that needs to be lived, to be observed and captured as it is, the protagonist realizes, and not to be rendered more beautiful, or falsified through 'Photoshop editing.' The epigraph to the novel points to this by a quotation from the *Book of Wisdom*, which foregrounds the perception of time as an evil net: "For man does not know his time. Like fish are taken in an evil net, and like birds which are caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them" (*Ecclesiastes* 9:12). In my view, this paratext also evokes the two epigraphs to Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926): one regarding the lost post-World War I generation, and the other the passage of time.

> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. […] The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose. […] The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits. […] All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again. (*Ecclesiastes* 1:4-7)

The post-1989 generation is lost, too. It is a generation which tried inner immigration for some time: remaining within one's home country in an intense state of alienation and distance from one's home culture. Then, refusing to succumb to such a life, and recognizing that the opportunities exist for trying out one's luck elsewhere, many (im)migrated, only to realize that they have been snared once again by society's restrictions and by time. Zack's choices include all of the above, so his experience becomes a paradigmatic one for his 'lost generation.'

The protagonist tries to free himself from the imprisonment which time brings on, by imagining a reversal of time and its flow backwards from death to the womb, as in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, a story of fantasy

by F. Scott Fitzgerald about a man born old who ages 'backwards.' But, as Stella points out, such trickery offers no real escape. Ultimately, it is constant mobility, which becomes the only reprieve from time. Being on the move is the eternal *now*, allowing one to achieve:

> [That] point of ecstasy, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotus-lands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. (Kerouac 156-157)

Zack—both the protagonist and, presumably, the author of the novel—are on a quest for identity, just like America itself, which has always searched for its roots in multiple acts of dislocation and mobility, taking the form of that unique American rhizome suggested by Deleuze and Guattari.

> America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for a national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors). Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside (Deleuze and Guattari 19).

Zack's journey is a manifestation of the American ethos of movement, which is at the very heart of American mythology. Getting on the road in search of individualistic freedom is a paradigmatic act of dissidence, and a universal act of rejection of the society that entraps. In this context, the hobo, the homeless drifter, who turns to life on the road not out of necessity, but as an existential choice, dominates American fictional narratives and cultural practices: from Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, John Dos Passos, through John Steinbeck, the Beats, and others. The outcome of this restless movement is that "[e]very great American author creates a cartography, even in his or her style; in contrast to what is done in Europe, each makes a map that is directly connected to the real social movements crossing America" (Deleuze and Guattari 27).

Whitman, for example, celebrates in heightened romantic terms the drive towards the perpetual journey in his poem "Song of the Open Road" (1856): "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, / Healthy, free, the world before me, / The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose" (lines

1-3). He sums up the feeling: "You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd—you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction / before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart" (line 11). A few decades later in the same century, Huck Finn's journey leads him to the rather romantic realization that freedom is impossible within a corrupt society and so his only remaining course of action is to head West, to "strike out for the territory ahead of the rest" (Twain 390). In a similar fashion, Dos Passos creates the character of Vag—a young man hitchhiking and turning to a life of vagabondage—at the end of his *U.S.A.* trilogy published in the 1930s. Constant mobility turns out to be the paradigmatic choice for those in search of a cohesive self in opposition to the ubiquitous technology, and the stifling homogeneity of the 20th century. Steinbeck perceives this drive to be "on the road" as typical of his fellow Americans.

> I saw in their eyes something I was to see over and over in every part of the nation—a burning desire to go, to move, to get under way, anyplace, away from any Here. They spoke quietly of how they wanted to go someday, to move about, free and unanchored, not toward something but away from something. I saw this look and heard this yearning everywhere in every state I visited. Nearly every American hungers to move. (*Travels* 10)

Striking a familiar chord with these writers, and in particular with Kerouac's *On the Road*, the protagonist of *18 % Gray* embarks on an experiential journey across the U.S. choosing the often beatnik-associated Route 66—"the Mother Road, the road of flight," in Steinbeck's eloquent description in *The Grapes of Wrath* (108). From California, through Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, to the East coast, Zack keeps wondering: "What did I expect of rural America? What did I expect from this life anyway?" (*Gray* 100) He comes to the U.S. as a first-generation voluntary immigrant both for economic and existential reasons, but eventually aims to escape from the shackles of fat, conformist, suburban, middle-class America, to live outside the system and outside the law—like the Beats. This existential vision is clearly articulated by the character of Neal Cassady in Kerouac's novel, the non-conformist, romanticized, Zen-like hipster who lives on the road in incessant motion trying to escape from the burdens of family life and obligations. Cassady is portrayed as "trim, thin, hipped, blue-eyed with a real Oklahoma accent—a sideburned *hero* of the snowy West" (Kerouac 4; emphasis added). In contradistinction, Zack is presented as the anti-hero, a deflated character. Far from being the outcast-hero,

Zack appears as "the underdog," i.e. that dog you would never bet on in a dogfight, as Karabashliev describes his own character ("Close up" n. pag.).

The mad, hedonistic adventures of Kerouac and his friends during the three trips across the continent were in essence a spiritual journey, reminiscent of Whitman's transcendentalist visions, and undertaken in search of an ecstatic and mystical union with the universe. The ultimate goal of their journey, as voiced by Kerouac, was to find "the road to Heaven" (165). The only way to achieve this is *to go*, because, as Dean Moriarty puts it: "the road must eventually lead to the whole world" (Kerouac 230). Similarly, Zack realizes that the road when traveled only in one direction—towards the horizon—would eventually lead the traveler to the point where he started from, taking him around the entire world.

The road in *18 % Gray* becomes not just the mechanism to beat time, but also the metaphor for the spiritual quest of the protagonist in alignment with the quest of the Beats for that ever elusive and vague 'It.' The aim of the Beat's journey is to "go someplace, find something" (Kerouac 105), which rendered in Buddhist terms would bring "the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being" (Kerouac 195). However, the frantic antics of Kerouac's characters are contrasted to the constant state of sickness and exhaustion experienced by Zack in America. He, too, puts himself outside society, which crushes and disempowers the individual. Devoid of agency, he, too, aims to regain control of his life through constant, hectic, at times mind-stupefying motion. In actuality, this tactic becomes Zack's desperate attempt to escape from time and memory—in itself an impossible endeavor. Haunted by the past, he travels to the East coast, closer to his geographical home, without ever actually arriving there, once again destabilizing the East-West opposition and the notion of home.

The mission of Zack's journey back East appears on the surface to be about finding a buyer for his bag of marijuana, but is actually a restless, anxious search for an answer to the question what he wants to do with his life, which Stella verbalizes for him. "To close up the little devil" (*Gray* 192) ritual becomes a metaphor for this process of soul seeking mirrored by the physical movement across the continent as described by the narrator.

> Every time I lost something as a kid and I tried to find it and couldn't, I'd get angry and be impossible to calm down. My grandma would tell me to close up the little devil. You close up the little devil with whatever is at hand—tree branches, pencils, or what have you. The important thing is to make some kind of a square and to imagine the little devil inside it. Then you find whatever you've lost. (*Gray* 192)

The magical space of the square renders symbolically the protagonist's effort to recapture a sense of self. In a crucial scene in the story, Zack steps out of his car under the Orion constellation to perform the ritual of "closing up the little devil," but instead of wishing to find his lost wife, his wish changes: "let me find myself. God, let me find myself!" (*Gray* 192) Following a terrifying nightmare of his own physical decomposition, Zack wakes up to the ultimate question in a dreary motel room: "God, what am I doing here? What's happening, God? What's the point of all this? What's the point of me even looking for a point? What if I put you in a situation in which you would have to make a decision? Huh? Huh?" (*Gray* 136) In my view, a parallel can be drawn to the following passage by Kerouac:

> I woke up as the sun was reddening and that was the one distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn't know who I was—I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap motel room I'd never seen [...] and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange second. I was halfway across America, *at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future*, and maybe that's why it happened right there and then, that strange red afternoon. (15; emphasis added)

Zack realizes how much depends on the road you choose, and the way you travel in the search for self. His starting point is the quasi-democratic, transitional society of Bulgaria in the 1990s. Though he aims to appear as a macho of the Wild West, he turns out to be an anti-hero, even a pathetic character from a tragicomedy, who fails in all his dreams about love, success, and recognition. In referring to his Bulgarian roots, he is simultaneously drawn to, self-identified and alienated from his home country, but he does not feel at home in America either. "Pacific Ocean, what am I doing here in your calm caress while the Black Sea thumps inside my head?" he muses (*Gray* 61). Trying to go back East in order to escape the restrictive and corrupt society of the West, Zack discovers that his journey resembles that of a B-Western film starring John Wayne. Because it turns out that the West, with its fluctuating frontiers and blurry lines, is impossible to grasp and equally impossible to reach.

> [D]irections in America are different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers. There is a whole American 'map' in the West, where even the

> trees form rhizomes. America reversed the directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East. (Deleuze and Guattari 19)

The complexity of the American West as a concept is perfectly captured by the confusing comparison to the Orient in the quote above. It is a vague, blurry notion, a mythological space invested with dreams and aspirations. Before undertaking his journey to New York, Zack stands on the beach in California, contemplating, "This is where the West ends. And here I am at its very edge. Here I am—at the brink of Western civilization, whose sunset I slept through today. So what's beyond this? The East?" (*Gray* 61). Indeed, Karabashliev's rewriting of the American West is in line with the proliferating constructions of the New West, as has been noted by critics, for example, by Paul Varner:

> The idea itself of a single West no longer holds validity. We now understand that all renderings of the West are renderings of multiple Wests, Wests constructed by American nationalists, Wests constructed by European writers and filmmakers, Wests constructed by native peoples, or Wests constructed outside the geographical boundaries of the US. (Varner viii)

The writer's intention to explore the West as a complex mythological concept in *18 % Gray* resurfaces in his reference to novels about the Wild West, which were, significantly, written by two non-Americans in the 19th century. This intertextual multiplicity gives rise to a web of appropriations and cultural translations of myths.

> First was the Irish writer Mayne Reid: *The White Chief*, *The Quadroon*, *Oceola*, *The Headless Horseman* and so on (I don't believe he ever set foot in the real West). Then there was his German follower Karl May who wrote novels set in America—he created the characters of Winnetou, the chief of the Apache Tribe, and Old Shatterhand, and Winnetou's white blood brother—all awesome stuff [...] So—to me America was the Wild West, and I came to find the Indians. As well as the Red Western.[8] (*Gray* 191, ellipsis in original)

Zack comes to realize that the American West is not an actual geographical place for him "but a sacred territory in my dreams" (*Gray* 191). It functions

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[8] The Red Western is the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries' version of the Western. Examples of such Red Westerns, which are set in America's "Wild West," are the movies *Lemonade Joe* (Czechoslovakia, 1964), the East-German *The Sons of Great Bear* (1966), *The Oil, the Baby and the Transylvanians* (Romania, 1981), *A Man from the Boulevard des Capucines* (USSR, 1987).

as the archetypal myth, the one subsuming all other myths regardless of national, regional, cultural, or historical origin. Karabashliev's West is rendered as a transcultural conflation of mythological narratives about national heroes and outlaws, about revolutionaries and freedom fighters:

> In *my* American West, there was a place for everybody—for Old Firehand and Winnetou, Levsky and Jesse James, for the Apaches and Benkovsky's Flying Squad, for Sitting Bull, Ivanko, King Arthur, Botev, Richard the Lionhearted, and Budyonny… (*Gray* 190; emphasis in the original)[9]

Zack's actual life in the West, though, holds none of the magic his imagination has attributed to it. His intention to live as a pragmatic, down-to-earth American ends in the actual death of his wife, and a near-death experience for the protagonist. The dream he once had was killed by California, which once again appears personified as a fake, sexualized object—a "blonde bitch" with "silicon breasts, whitened teeth, fitness-firmed buttocks, pink tank top, frozen smile, and empty blue eyes" (*Gray* 191). Whether on the East or on the West coast, where 'East' and 'West' function as larger mythological constructs, in actuality there is no sense of completion of the journey, which always ends in a sense of lack. In a post-postmodern world, the journey West and back is doomed to failure, for the frontier is nothing more than a mirage. While Kerouac succeeds in mystifying America through his characters' spiritual quest, Karabashliev succeeds in demystifying it through his protagonist's deconstruction of its illusory nature metaphorically represented by the beautiful sunsets in the Promised Land Zack always misses.

Zack passes through several stages in his life journey: from Bulgaria's velvet revolution of 1989; through the artist's, photographer's and writer's failed attempt at fulfillment in the land of philistines; through the rejection of the life of middle-class affluence and conformity; to the final recognition of the futility of material realization and the need to look for a path for spiritual development. Consequently, his frenzied drive across the continent to sell a bag of marijuana and thus make 'big money' is ultimately a substitute for lost hope. The compulsion to move arises from the inability to conform, to fit within the social structure, a given belief or philosophical system. His metaphysical journey initiated by the loss of his wife and her final appeal to him to discover what to do with his life, finds no resolution. However, this is

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[9] Levsky, Benkovsky, Botev are Bulgarian national heroes from the period of the Bulgarian Revival (1762-1878). They were freedom fighters against the Ottoman Empire, which occupied Bulgaria for nearly five centuries: from the late 14th century to 1878.

rendered not just as a personal failure of the individual. It is also the failure of America, as the mythological site vested with dreams, to offer a means for their realization. Further, what Karabashliev highlights is this widening of the gap between America as promise and America as reality in the post-9/11 period. In my view, the comparison with Kerouac's mystic existential journey is a valid one, but equally valid is the parallel, which can be drawn between the message of this transcultural novel and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*—one of the definitive texts about the deconstruction of the American dream.

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OLEKSANDR PRONKEVYCH

What Makes Don Quixote an American Hero?

Don Quixote in the Culture of the U.S.A.

In this paper, I will focus on the 'quixotic myth' in U.S. mass culture. I have chosen this subject because in the age of modernity and postmodernity the crucial part in establishing hegemonic readings of cultural mythology and of civic religion codes belongs to visual arts, kitsch, popular cinema genres, and to commercial communication (branding, advertisement, etc). By the phrase 'quixotic myth' I understand an independent, autonomous existence of the characters of Cervantes's novel found in other works of art, ideological texts, and mass media. Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and Dulcinea leave the novel and begin their new lives as protagonists of other novels, poems, dramas, films, sculptures, paintings, political discourses, and in the everyday life.

Moreover, the quixotic myth, together with other cultural myths (Don Juan, Hamlet, Faust, and many others), becomes an integral part of the collective unconscious, which determines the identification processes of ideological, artistic, social, and of course, national communities. Each national culture changes the archetypal nature of the 'quixotic myth' by inscribing it in the paradigms of its mythology and civic religion, and American culture is no exception. In the U.S., philosophers, journalists, artists, writers, film-makers, and advertisement producers are deeply engaged in converting Don Quixote into a symbol of identification, a cultural and national symbol, by loading it with new meanings which can be absent in the primary source (*Don Quixote* as a novel). They create their own American 'quixotic discourse' using arts and mass media to disseminate specific interpretations of the quixotic myth which are then included into global narratives of the American nation.

The quixotic myth is deeply rooted in the culture of the U.S.A., both classical and popular. First of all, it concerns a great number of literary works, which include references to the novel by Cervantes. Don Quixote appears in the drama *Camino Real* (1953) by Tennessee Williams, *City of Glass* (1985) in *The New York Trilogy* by Paul Auster, *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream* (1986) by Kathy Acker, *The Shadow Dragons* (2009), the fourth novel of the series *The Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica* by James A. Owen, as well as countless others. Besides literary production, Don Quixote is the

protagonist of numerous popular pieces of music both in the English and in Spanish languages. Among them one can find soundtracks of movies and animated cartoons, revolutionary and pop songs, karaoke, children's songs, etc. Maybe the most successful commercial project based on the novel is the famous musical *Man of La Mancha* by Dale Wasserman. In the book *The Impossible Musical*, Dale Wasserman confesses: "The financial side of *Man of La Mancha* may be dreamier than its philosophy, since it is possible to state the philosophy, but impossible to capture true statement of profit" (13). Here Dale Wasserman means two different things: it is impossible to estimate the amount of profit because the musical was sold fantastically well and because there are many cases when the performances were realized without the author being notified and without any royalties being paid. Roberto González Echevarría asks his readers if "they might know about the *Quixote*" (3). When looking for the answer he admits that many have heard the songs from *Man of La Mancha* "The Impossible Dream" and so forth; perhaps some have seen the show. "It is quite a good show, by the way. I do not look down on it. It is a version of the *Quixote* in an American mode, very much American mode, but a good one. So, many of you have seen *Man of La Mancha*, have heard the songs, and maybe you have read a comic book based on the novel" (González Echevarría 3).

Cervantes's novel has always been popular among the U.S. film-makers. Some of the products are a failure from the commercial viewpoint, but some are rather profitable. According to the website Internet Movie database (imdb.com), Arthur Hiller's *Man of La Mancha* (1972) earned about 12,000,000 dollars. Similar to other classical books in the American cinematographic tradition, the Quixote films have never been adaptations in the traditional meaning of the word. Instead, Quixote films are improvisations which freely play with the original plot. This approach towards visualizing the book can be found in all American films about Don Quixote starting with the first screen versions *Don Quixote* in 1916, directed by Edward Dillon. It was followed by the animated cartoon film of Ub Iwerks in 1934; *They Might Be Giants* directed by Anthony Harvey in 1971; and *The Amorous Adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* by director Raphael Nussbaum and others in 1976. However, *Don Quixote*, the Television Hallmark Entertainment/TNT production directed by Peter Yates in 2000, must be mentioned among those few films which actually more or less respect the original plot. The overview of the American films about Don Quixote would not be complete without mentioning the two most important quixotic cinematographic adventures, *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* (2018) by Terry Gilliam, and *Don Quixote* (1992) by Orson Welles. In both cases the quixotic spirit consists of the

directors' ambition to find unusual solutions when looking for the new cine-matographic idiom, which is the ability to 'translate' the poetics of the novel into the screen versions. Although both directors failed to finish their projects, they were not defeated as they had renovated the art of filmmaking.

Don Quixote as a Protagonist of American Western Movies

The list of works based on the novel by Cervantes in American mass culture is always open, and every year brings many new original quixotic products to the market. All of them contribute to the 'Americanization' of the character. By this term I understand converting the Knight of the Sad Countenance into the symbol of American identity. Don Quixote as the protagonist of Western movies is the best illustration of this phenomenon.

The history of adventures of Don Quixote in the American West starts with *Don Quickshot of the Rio Grande* (1923, Dir. George Marshall). The film is based on Stephen Chalmer's short story, published in 1921, and tells the story of a cowboy dreamer named Pep who turns out to be an extremely well-read person. *Don Quixote* is one of his favorite books. His tastes as a reader influence his everyday behavior and complicate his life. Once upon a time, after losing his job, he is involved in a fight in a saloon, in which a man is killed. Pep has to run away because he is accused of a murder which he did not commit. The film ends happily: Pep's innocence is proven and he marries the daughter of a rich rancher. The next quixotic Western movie, entitled *Western Pluck* (in Spanish the title was translated as *Don Quijote del Oeste*), was also produced by Universal Studios in 1925 (Dir. Travers Vale). The film has almost nothing to do with the novel by Cervantes and does not contain any references to the episodes of the book. The only connection between Don Quixote and the heroes of the Western in this film is the idea of showing "the cowboys as contemporary representatives of the old glorious chivalry" (De España 47).

After World War II the attempts to incorporate Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in the world of Westerns was restarted. In 1947 Comet Productions produced the film *The Adventures of Don Coyote* (Dir. Reginal LeBorg). It develops the comparison of Cervantes's characters with errant knights of the frontier, which can be found in *Don Quickshot of the Rio Grande* and *Western Pluck*. The main character Don Coyote is accompanied by Sancho, his friend and assistant. They help a rancher-lady to protect her against capitalists who want to build a railroad on the lands where she lives. The plot does not repeat the events of the novel and resembles more the adventures of

Cisco Kid, a Mexican hero, which was created by imagination of O. Henry (De España 64).

To the list of full-length feature-films I should add an animated cartoon movie which uses some Western clichés. It is *Huck of La Mancha,* the second episode of the series *The New Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, produced in 1968-1969 by Hanna-Barbera/NBC. The director Charles A. Nichols uses a mixed technique of combining real acting with animation. In the episode Mark Twain's characters Huck, Tom and Becky meet Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, a Mexican peasant. The film is set in a rocky desert which resembles the landscape of the states near the Mexican border. Sancho is kidnapped by Don José de Indio, the leader of the local bandits. Don Quixote and the children try to save the squire but instead Don José captures Tom and the knight. Huck and Becky ask Don Pedro, the owner of the castle situated nearby, for help. In the end, Don Quixote and his friends overthrow Don José and his lot. In the film Don Quixote is not a cowboy, but he acts as a real Western hero: He saves peaceful children and defeats criminals.

In the 1971 film *Scandalous John*, which was produced by Walt Disney Studios by director Robert Butler with Brien Keith as an actor playing the main part, one can see another Don Quixote of the Wild West. In contrast to the previously mentioned films, the connection between the characters of the novel and the movie is expressed more explicitly. To a great extent, there is an intertextual game with the novel. John MacCanless resembles Don Quixote: He is an elderly poor gentleman, whose only property is a poor rancho. He has his own Rocinante, an old cow. Before starting his adventure he finds a squire, a Mexican, whose name is Paco. The latter has come to the U.S.A. to look for a job. In an effort to pay for the mortgage of his rancho the gentleman decides to sell the 'cattle' (their poor cow) at a local fair. On the way to the fair, he and his squire get into comic situations because MacCanless takes the products of his imagination for reality: He sees dry deserts in the places where other people see bars or believes that bikers are a tribe of Native Americans. Moreover, the banker creditor Whittaker sends his men to arrest MacCanless in spite of the fact that his son Jimmy has fallen in love with MacCanless's daughter Amanda. The rancher fights with the capitalist and his hired assassins and is killed accidentally by Whittaker secretary's shot. The death brings victory to John because Jimmy and Amanda decide to take care of the property as MacCanless wanted to. Paco inherits the cow and goes back to Mexico (De España 106).

Chronologically the last quixotic Western was made in 2004. It is entitled *The Gentleman Don La Mancha* (Dir. Ted Roach). This film was screened in many festivals and won an award for Best Student Film at the Mexico

International Festival. The action is set in a small town located on the border between the U.S. and Mexico. The white American ranchers make a group of bullies who are eager to teach a lesson to those Mexicans who penetrate the U.S. illegally. A local teacher, noble Don LaMancha, an idealist who believes that the U.S. is the land of equal opportunities that should give shelter to all who seek freedom and better life, starts his quixotic fight against the ranchers.

The films which have been presented above are not first rate cinematographic products. Nevertheless, they are worth studying as they show the ways of integrating the most Spanish literary character into the popular mythology of the American nation. Moreover, when studying the adventures of Don Quixote in the American West, one can trace the global changes in the cultural paradigms which have taken place in the cultural consciousness of the U.S.A. in the 20th and 21st centuries. I mean the 'melting pot' versus 'salad bowl' shift in the understanding of American identity. The action of many American quixotic movies is set in the Western states which are located along the Mexican border. The choice of the location is explained by the language considerations: as Cervantes wrote in Spanish, the characters also should speak some Spanish or at least have Spanish (Mexican) names. However, we should remember that Spanish is the language of those who belong to lower classes. In Westerns the master is always an 'Anglo' man who speaks English. The Mexican squire appears in two Westerns and in the animated cartoon film *Huck of La Mancha* and in all three cases his position is subordinate. "Coyote," the local name which is given to the cowboy Don Quixote in one of the films proves to be ideologically suspicious as it reflects the negative opinion about the Mexican as the Other, as the Alien. The animal 'coyote' which sounds as an onomatopoeic variant of Quixote in the Mexican folklore is a trickster, a mysterious being that looks as threatening and dangerous and tricky as the stereotypical Mexican robbers or narcos. Multiculturalism tries to change the attitudes toward the image of the Mexican in the quixotic Westerns. The Gentleman Don LaMancha (actor Pedro Shannahan) also has his Sancho, a Mexican helper (actor Eloy Méndez), but they are already equal. The Don Quixote of today wants to change the citizens of the Borderlands but finds it practically impossible. Frustrated by the difficulties, the teacher's passion throws him over the edge and into a rebellious alter ego still fighting the American Revolution. In the name of Lady Liberty, this modern-day Don Quixote rides courageously toward a confrontation with the ranchers, and his date with destiny. The resolution of conflicts on the U.S.-Mexican border still remains a quixotic utopia.

Americanization of Don Quixote in the U.S. Commercial Communication

Another form of 'quixotic myth' in the mass culture of the U.S.A. is its use in commercial advertising. The popularity of quixotic commodities proves the observation of Edward Riley, who wrote:

> Don Quixote and Sancho have become profitable merchandise for the Spanish tourist industry. The ultimate phase in their diffusion is the commercial exploitation of their visual images, either on monitor or screen or as artefact. If you can literally sell the image, you have achieved the necessary condition of celebrity in the twentieth century. They are not as universally known as Mickey Mouse or Snoopy (who are only known visually), but they are in the next league (105).

Despite Riley's words mentioning only Spain, the same concept can be applied to commercial products within the U.S.A.

The Knight of the Sad Countenance, in the U.S.A. as well as in Spain, is used in order to sell goods and services. The most important commodity is the Spanish language. The novel *Don Quixote* as a book is also extremely popular on the market. One can find quixotic souvenirs, among them magnets, calendars, toys, watches, ash-trays, cups, glasses, key-chains, clocks and watches, wood-cutting tables, glazed tiles, pins, thimbles, candles, spoons, gums, phone cards, cigar boxes, t-shirts, clothes racks, coins, cufflinks, etc. Some services are rather sophisticated, which can be seen in the stamp of Maryland Criminal Defense Attorney Association. These particular lawyers identify themselves with Don Quixote whose image resembles the knight from medieval romances. Interesting information about visual representation of Cervantes's character can even be found on the labels of alcoholic drinks produced in the South of the U.S. The label of Napa Valley Table Wine is a piece of abstract art.[1] The protagonist also appears on a bottle of tequila. In this case, however, the character looks much younger and more melancholic than in the original book.[2] Among the extraordinary quixotic commodities one should also mention tattoos, *The Riches of Don Quixote,* a playtech casino game and the poster, which advertises the product and reproduces the

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[1]   All examples are taken from the sources which are available in free access. For the label of Napa Valley Table Wine: <http://www.studio-707.com/blog/archives/clients/quixote/index.php>. 20 Aug. 2017.

[2]   <https://www.behance.net/gallery/25548041/Don-Quixote-Tequila>. 20 Aug. 2017.

binary opposition: Don Quixote is an Anglo-Saxon sage and Sancho Panza a Mexican looking peasant.[3] A huge network of Japanese supermarkets, *Don Quijote,* also has subsidiaries in Hawaii.

The popularity of Don Quixote in the U.S. explains why creators of commercial advertisements often use this image to sell their goods and services. As it can be seen in the collection of the quixotic images created online by Centro de Estudios de Castilla—La Mancha, the character has been involved in this business for many decades as the first quixotic advertisements were produced in the U.S. at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century. In 1881 the newspaper *Daily Picayune* in New Orleans used the image of Don Quixote as a symbol of a fighter for freedom of speech.[4] Other commodities advertised by the character were jewelry, food,[5] and restaurants.[6] The advertising campaigns of those times looked like book illustrations: commodities "were sold" with the help of images which presented certain episodes of the book, as for example in the commercials of the cooked meats.[7] Below the picture one can read explanations which inform about what part of the novel the scene comes from: Don Quixote attacks the flock of ships, Sancho Panza talks tenderly to his donkey, etc. If all advertisements are put together as a series, they look like a comic book.

The series of advertisements of Durkee's Salad Dressing which is offered for sale by the website Period Paper, uses elements of cultural mystification. In every picture the artists placed the images of Don Quxiote and Sancho Panza which parody the style of illustrating the novel. The term 'parody' is appropriate here because the characters are set in situations of American everyday life at the end of the 19th—the beginning of the 20th century. In one of the images Don Quixote is shown after his fight with the windmill.[8] Next to him on his shield one can see a poodle. Sancho Sanza in the costume of a Native-American and a girl wearing typical Spanish folklore costume are coming up to the Knight. He says: "Quick! Give me some salad dressed with Durkee's Salad Dressing!" Another image shows Don Quixote with his poodle on board of a yacht.[9] The Knight recommends to his companions:

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3   <http://casinogamesonnet.com/?game=the-riches-of-don-quixote&id=1240>. 20 Aug. 2017.

4   <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ceclm/8642816588>. 20 Aug. 2017.

5   <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ceclm/sets/72157632081760238/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

6   <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ceclm/sets/72157633220893788/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

7   <https://www.uclm.es/ceclm/CentenarioQuijote/wilson/index.html>. 20 Aug. 2017.

8   <https://www.periodpaper.com/collections/worlds-fair-exposition/products/1897-ad-e-r-dur kee-salad-dressing-world-fair-medal-original-advertising-080523-lhj4-273>. 20 Aug. 2017.

9   <https://www.periodpaper.com/products/1897-ad-durkees-salad-dressing-sauce-knight-quix ote-original-advertising-078463-lhj3-166>. 20 Aug. 2017.

"Always have an anchor and a bottle of Durkee's Salad Dressing on board."
In the next advertisement Don Quixote and his companions go for a picnic.[10]
This time Sancha Panza is wearing a cowboy costume. The Knight pro-
nounces in a loud voice: "My good people, give me Durkee's Salad Dressing.
I never accept anything but the best." In the last example Don Quixote is on a
stagecoach.[11] His poodle is near him. The Ingenious Hidalgo speaks to the
servant: "Ho, Guard! Give me a bottle of Durkee's Salad Dressing. Never ac-
cept any other, ladies and gentlemen."

Another field of commercial communication in which the character is in-
volved is brand-making. In the U.S.A. there are companies and businesses
named after Don Quixote. They work not only in areas populated by
Hispanics, but all over the country. There are hotels, hostels, tourist vehicles,
restaurants, cafes, bars, etc. In The Virtual Museum of Don Quixote[12] one can
find information about a company from West Hollywood. It helps people
solve problems that occur in the process of film-making. Another example is
Quixote Traffic Corporation. Its slogan is "Making the world a safer place to
travel!" Cervantes's character decorates houses (Home Decor Studio in
Austin, Texas), plays music in the International Music Hall in Santa Cruz,
California, and, of course, serves communities, as it does at the Don Quixote
Center in Maryland. For more than 40 years, its workers have been involved
in helping people: They cut trees, build houses and even participated in the
restoration of Haiti after the earthquake.

Besides being used as brands, Cervantes's characters have become logos
of many American companies. I would like to focus on the semiotic analysis
of this phenomenon. The figures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza possess a
great potential for symbolization. This is possible because both characters
make a binary opposition which can describe the dynamic interaction (dia-
lectics) of the extremities of human existence: conflicts between idealism/
materialism; asceticism of spiritual practices (reading)/carnal hedonism;
senile impotence/plentitude of vital energy which corresponds to the period of
maturity; gestures of a mad dreamer/movements typical of common sense;
chivalric model of behavior/'plebeian' behavior and body constitution, etc.
One should keep in mind that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza combine tragic
and comic features, that the story about them written by Cervantes is open-
ended and playful. Essentially, Don Quixote and Sancho as literary characters

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[10]   <https://www.periodpaper.com/collections/vintage-advertising-art/lhj3>. 20 Aug. 2017.
[11]   <https://www.periodpaper.com/products/1897-ad-durkees-salad-dressing-meat-sauce-condi
      ment-original-advertising-078494-lhj3-179>. 20 Aug. 2017.
[12]   <http://www.donquijote.org/vmuseum/quixote-companies/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

are constructed in such a way that they become signifiers which are able to represent practically any life situation. Their images are perfectly fit for the symbolization of any field of human activities, including commerce and national identification.

However, on the visual level this unlimited richness of their images is expressed through iconic simplicity. The figures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza can be reduced to simple graphical schemes which are reprinted, copied, reproduced by many means at a low price. Thus, as a visual icon, Don Quixote is a universal sign well-known to many people in different parts of the world.

The two basic constituents of our icon, says E. Riley, are the figure of the tall thin gentleman complemented by his short fat peasant companion. Rocinante is usually present, and sometimes the donkey. In most modern representations Don Quixote is equipped with arms and armor, and there is most probably a windmill or two. Think of Picasso's masterly Scribbler (Riley 108).

E. Riley has also pointed out that it is the recognizability of the images which makes of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza perfect commercial tools:

> But as for the merchandise and tourist souvenirs, is there anything quite comparable? I would seriously like to know. Who has a statuette of Oedipus? Can one find Orlando furioso on an ashtray? Has Lady Macbeth been seen on a soup plate? Tartuffe on a T-shirt? A Manon Lescaut pencil-sharpener? Anna Karenina on a bathroom tile? A set of Brothers Karamazov bookends? I am ready to believe that such things may be on sale in Milan, Paris or Stratford-on-Avon. But which of these figures from the world's great literature would one honestly know by sight without being told? One the other hand, Don Quixote, whom I have seen ornamenting nearly all these objects, is usually identifiable at once. Sancho Panza on his own just possibly might not be. But together with Don Quixote, there is no problem (Riley 106).

Thus, the iconic signs representing Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are graphically simple and cheap for commercial reproduction but they are unlimitedly rich from the viewpoint of producing new meanings. It would be a surprise if business and commerce did not take this advantage and did not use the Don Quixote icon as a brand for making good profit. Favorable conditions with the copyright (Cervantes and his relatives have been dead for many centuries and there is no one from whom businesses should ask for permission), a global popularity and recognizability of the images, together they all produce a multiplication effect for newly created companies that cannot resist the

temptation of manipulating Don Quixote's glory for commercial purposes. As a result, contemporary culture is flooded by Don Quixotes; they are everywhere and this invasion is only accelerating with the passing of time and further development of new information technologies.

Don Quixote as a Symbol of the American Dream

Such an extensive dissemination of quixotic imagery in the culture of the U.S. determines the reception of the novel and interpretation of Don Quixote as a cultural myth, which is ultimately used to represent certain types of identities and in this particular case, of the American way of seeing the world. From the viewpoint of the phenomenology of the reading act, a person who reads a book is influenced by a variety of factors which make him/her choose certain modes of his/her interpretation of the text. Visual information related to it is of vital importance, especially today when people (especially young people) have the tendency to visualize first and then to read. The mechanism of influence of the visual information on the reception of *Don Quixote* in the historical perspective was described by James Iffland. The scholar states that numerous illustrations of the novel by Cervantes were not only

> symptoms of the *reception* of *Don Quijote* but […] *producers* of modes of reception. Put differently, graphic illustrations have convinced readers to read the text in certain ways. […] In fact, in many cases I would say that they *impose* certain readings. They end up 'occupying' the space of the text, or rather, 'colonizing' it (Iffland 96; emphasis in the original).

Iffland further explains that strategies of visualizing Don Quixote are rooted in social and cultural conventions, aesthetic tastes of the epoch, technological level and requirements of the printing industry, ideological preferences, and national traditions of those countries where *Don Quixote* was published, etc. As a result, the images of Don Quixote on the illustrations sometimes have nothing to do with the original text or at least the reader has the impression that he/she deals with a different literary character. The researcher explains how our understandings of the character change if the illustrator skips or transforms the shape of only one detail—the beard:

> Does Don Quijote have a beard or doesn't he? The text mentions it, but some artists prefer him with only a moustache or even without a single hair on his face. This may seem like a minor detail, but go ahead and give an imaginary

shave to some bearded fellow you know—Jesus Christ or Fidel or Osama. Is
he the "same person?" (Iffland 106-107)

Thus, even the most unexpected visual representation of the protagonist sets a
new mode of reading the novel.

The same thing happens with the reception of the famous novel under in-
fluence of the iconic signs of Quixote produced for entertainment and com-
mercial purposes: Movies, cartoons, commercial videos, logos, and other pro-
ducts containing images of the protagonist also impose certain understanding
of Cervantes's text. What main modes of reading the novel were set by
American mass culture, Western movies, and commercial advertising? Most
of Don Quixote's brands and images of 'the quixotic cowboys' are based on
the simplification of the concept of the Romantic Quixote. By the "Romantic
Quixote" Anthony Close understands a method of reading *Don Quixote*
which consists of a) idealization of the hero and the denial of the novel's
satiric purpose; b) the belief that the novel is symbolical and that through this
symbolism it expresses the ideas about the human spirit's relations to reality
or about the nature of Spain's history; c) the interpretation of its symbolism,
and more generally, of its whole spirit and style, in a way which reflects the
ideology, aesthetics, and sensibility of the modern era (Close 1). This practice
was developed by Romantic writers and critics and was very influential for a
long time. However, in reality, such a reading ignores the variety of the
meanings of the novel. And in Spanish literary studies much has been done to
undermine this approach in order to propose more objective models of cri-
tically reading the book, based on reliable text analysis and convincing
theory.

The Romantic Quixote is a complex philosophical phenomenon which has
its tragic and dark sides, both are hardly acceptable in industries of enter-
tainment, brand-making, and commercial communication. Creators of mass
culture and owners of businesses and companies need one-dimensional posi-
tive images of *Don Quixote*. If the Romantic Quixote denies the satirical pur-
pose of the novel, the 'popular' and 'commercial' Quixote eliminates the mel-
ancholic, sad part of the book. As a result, the protagonist is presented as a
happy positive hero with good intentions. When choosing the name of 'Don
Quixote' for their businesses and companies, their owners want to say: "We
are noble because our services help people eat, travel, pay fewer taxes or
spend less money, etc. We can look strange or even insane but our goals are
idealistic and high. We will never do you any harm." And here I see the main
difference between the Romantic and the 'mass cultural' or 'commercial'
Don Quixote. The former makes Don Quixote a myth-figure; as such he is

free to be re-interpreted by posterity. The latter is a trick to entertain people or to make them buy a service or a commodity. However, as a result of constant reproduction and annoying presence in the contemporary cultural space, this type of representing Don Quixote becomes a factor which imposes a certain reading of the novel and interpreting the quixotic myth.

Evidence of this observation can be derived from the visual hegemony of Don Quixote's image, of the icon which was described by E. Riley—the icon, which is organized as juxtaposition of the binary antipodal oppositions of constitution of the human bodies of the knight and his squire: tall/short stature; leanness/corpulence, etc. In the past much has been done to propose a pluralistic visual reading of *Don Quixote*. José Manuel Lucía Megías, James Iffland as well as other scholars have tried to prove that it would be a mistake to speak about the visual hegemony of any approach towards graphical representation of *Don Quixote*. Thousands of illustrations from the 17th century to the present day have been collected in an effort to demonstrate that visual images of characters from this novel are dependent on cultural and technological conventions. However, in spite of the diversity of the icono-sphere, the stereotyped images of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza based on the binary oppositions of the antipodal forms of the body constitution not only exist but have come to dominate the consciousness of the ordinary reader. The creators of monuments, films, commercials, children's books, computer games and other products of the mass culture did their job—the silhouettes of the tall and skinny knight-errant accompanied by his faithful the corpulent squire can be seen practically everywhere. As a result, when opening the book many people already have these ready-made images in their mind, which ultimately influence their imagination to work in a certain direction.

Without any doubt, the American creators of cultural industries, filmmakers, and producers of commercials use the Romantic Don Quixote stereotype. In doing so, without any hesitation, they add or cut whatever they want in Cervantes's primary source and transform the archetypal basis of Don Quixote's image in order to adjust it to the needs of the American consumers. The character is Americanized and starts to express typically American values. He is no longer a melancholic dreamer defeated by reality, but a man who believes in his ideals and finds resources to implement them into reality, even though those resources are limited and the whole world is acting against him. With few exceptions (for example, Ub Iwerks's cartoon and Steven Spielberg's *Pinky and the Brain*, which show Don Quixote as a maniac) the American quixotic movies and advertisements emphasize the principles of self-reliance, trust in imagination, as well as the heroic enthusiasm of an individual who is not afraid of being abandoned by others. It lays the foundation

for rethinking the image of Don Quixote in terms of the American cine-matographic mythology. In many cases Don Quixote in American movies be-comes synonymous with the American Dream. Dale Wasserman's *Man of La Mancha* is the most striking example of this trend. Taken in the context of American mass culture, the image of Don Quixote in Wasserman's musical and Hiller's film can be read as a reincarnation of typical American iden-tification features such as creativity, non-conformity and freedom, which are juxtaposed to the repressive system. The 'quixotic myth' glorifies a super-man, a typical cinematographic American Hollywood hero. In spite of all dif-ficulties and limitations he finds a way to become a winner—how to achieve an unreachable star and how to dream the impossible dream.

It is important to emphasize the fact that in the U.S. the line from the fa-mous D. Wasserman's musical has become a citation brand, which is used in advertisement. This phrase itself has gained enormous popularity in everyday American life. Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez states, "through the years the 'The Impossible Dream' has become an anthem for high school graduation cere-monies, for religious services, and for all kind of social events, as for indi-vidual inspiration" (187). Many superstar singers have included this song in their concerts. In the U.S. the phrase has penetrated the political and social discourses.

According to Sandoval-Sánchez, it is a formula of the conservatively interpreted American Dream:

> *Man of La Macha* is about an utopian quest, a noble idealism, a triumph over adversity, all personified in Don Quixote who symbolizes hope, conviction, and faith in a world ruled by cynicism and corruption. In its musical creed, *Man of La Mancha* mobilizes the ideology of the American Dream and sets its ideologemes that define the American way of life: "I am what I am," "The sky is the limit," "Be all you can be," "Liberty and justice for all," "There can be a better day," "The sun will come out tomorrow." These are all poetically transcoded in the musical into "To dream the impossible dream" and "To reach the unreachable star" (195–196).

No wonder this phrase has been converted from the emblematic expression of the Americanized quixotic worldview into a commercial citation brand. Its primary meaning is to motivate social transformations, to change life by applying entrepreneurial spirit. It appears in commercials which sell products considered to be material incarnations of the American Dream; first and fore-most cars. Moreover, this phrase presents the commodities and services which are created by the imagination, for example some sophisticated ad-

vertising images or campaigns. And quite predictably this brand appeared in an advertising campaign by the Japanese company, Honda. In 2005 the company produced a 2-minute video "The Impossible Dream."[13] The protagonist (actor Simon Day) sings the aria performed by Andy Williams while traveling and changing models of vehicles (motorcycles, cars, boat, etc.) produced by Honda for many decades (including the Formula 1 Honda of 1960). In spite of the fact that this advertisement was not made in the U.S. and the action is set in the landscapes of Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, New Zealand, and Japan, in many senses the video can be interpreted as a triumph of the American values, such as creativity and resourcefulness in looking for successful solutions of life and technical problems. Due to the fact that Honda's target audiences for this commercial were not consumers in the U.S.A., the video proves that this constituent of the American Dream has become an inseparable element of the capitalist globalized popular mythology.

At the same time, the American Dream itself has become quixotic. In this sense it is interesting to analyze some products in the Internet space of the U.S.A. Among them is the website "Quixotic, US." It defines the word as "romantic to the point of occasional impracticality." The Internet store "brings together Cute, Adorably and Quirky items from all over the world to the US of A."[14] The adjective "quixotic" as a synonym of "creative" is used by the project "Inside the Windmill," which is a product of the Quixotic United. Its goal is proclaimed as follows: "Our mission is to create and distribute work revealing the hidden magic within everyday life."[15] There are no limits for those who decided to call themselves 'quixotic.' In 2009 a North American Guild (the Association of Internet gamers) was established, which also called itself by this name.[16] One can easily go online and find many word combinations like "quixotic living," "quixotic coffee," "quixotic publishing," "quixotic road," etc. Many commodities and services sold by the websites can seem strange or even crazy, but they have a common feature—they present the U.S.A. as a country of unlimited imagination, which is the quintessence of the American understanding of quixotic worldview. The culmination of this trend is a cartoon showing Barak Obama as a quixotic President of the U.S.A. It is published at the website of the Association of American Editorial

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[13] The video can be watched at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCMv_hnOcME>. 20 Aug. 2017.

[14] <http://www.quixotic-us.com/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

[15] <http://quixoticunited.com/talktimes/sample-page/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

[16] <http://www.quixotic-guild.net/home>. 20 Aug. 2017.

Cartoonist.[17] In the image the central position is taken by Barak Obama as an insane knight with the windmill representing the U.S. in the background. On the blades the main slogans of his program are written: "Sovereignty," "Limited Government," "Entrepreneurship Values." All those values appeal to the trust to individuals' creativity. Barak Obama was not the first American president to be depicted as Don Quixote, as this tradition has a long history in the U.S.A. but he is the only American President to be shown as 'quixotic' because he wants to start the people's imagination to work.

Final Observations

The transformations of the archetypal meanings of the quixotic myth in mass culture and commercial communication in the U.S.A. is a convincing illustration of how cultural exchange in the contemporary world functions. On the one hand, in American classical and mass culture, in Western movies and commercials Don Quixote, the most known representative of 'Spanishness' in the English-speaking world, has become an American hero. There are two reasons which explain this phenomenon. First, the idealistic and romantic concept of Don Quixote is widely used by American popular culture because it coincides with many basic features of the American life-style. Don Quixote represents Idealism, Dream, and Will, while Sancho Panza is considered to be the symbol of Materialism, Conformity, and Laziness. Such interpretation of the quixotic myth is popular all over the world but in the U.S., as I have said, the Romantic Don Quixote serves as one of the icons of the American Dream. In the cultural products, films and commercials which have been mentioned above, Don Quixote is a noble Dreamer, who inherits the spirit of chivalry and resourcefulness. He is a brave and honest person whose intellectual integrity is not broken. Second, the affinities between Don Quixote and heroes of American mass culture, including cowboys, are explained by the fact that they belong to the frontier culture. Don Quixote is a frontier type with all controversial features of his behavior. Many critics stress that the errant knights described in the romances which were gathered by Don Quixote in his library had been produced by the frontier culture of the Spanish Reconquista. Don Quixote imitates their adventures and he himself, to a great extent, is a frontiersman. He is straightforward and stubborn. He is scandalous, as he shocks people with his extravagant behavior. He follows his own understanding of what is good and how the wrong can be improved. He combines serious and

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[17] <http://editorialcartoonists.com/cartoon/display.cfm/112781/>. 20 Aug. 2017.

funny features. He is a warrior and a clown at the same time. He looks funny, clumsy, and outdated but he is noble.

On the other hand, American mass culture and the quixotic myth are involved in dialogical relationships and produce the effect of resonance, which reveals the idealistic sides of the American identity. The American Dream, together with other foundational myths of American culture, among them Manifest Destiny, frontier spirit, non-conformity, and the multi-cultural shift in the cultural consciousness in the U.S., are re-written as a quixotic quest. Thus, Cervantes's protagonist is a clue for understanding the American national character.

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Section 3 "Cultural Exchanges Between 'America' and 'Europe'"

BÄRBEL SCHLIMBACH

"Once Upon a Time in the West": Cross-Cultural Appropriations of Western Films

In my paper, I investigate the mutual influences between European and American Western films. The Western is often seen as 'the' typical American film genre dealing with the settling of the West and the creation of an American identity. But the fascination for Westerns and the West was never limited to the United States, and my paper will investigate the fruitful cross-cultural appropriations of the genre. "Westerns deal in cultural currency," (15) as Mark Cronlund Anderson phrased it, and my paper analyzes how typical features of the genre are used to (de-)construct representations of 'the West.'[1] After the declining popularity of the genre in the U.S. during the 1960s, so-called Spaghetti Westerns[2] gave the genre new impetus by appropriating some of the typical features and employing some American actors while simultaneously introducing new conventions. Many of these innovations can be found in later 're-inventions' of the genre in the U.S., a development which is often labelled as the evolvement of Neo-Western or Post-Western. These films create "new Wests" which are "a state of mind, not a geographical place but a mythic space" (Varner VIII) and include voices that were silenced in traditional Westerns, although the genre until today still focuses on white, heteronormative masculinities.

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[1] Consult David Hamilton Murdoch's *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* for an introduction to the myths and imaginaries connected to the West as well as a discussion of the constructedness of these images of the West.

[2] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'spaghetti Western' as "'Western' or film set in the U.S. 'old west,' but made in Italy or by Italians, esp. cheaply" (n. pag.). More generally, the term is used to refer to European productions of Western movies during the 1960s and early 1970s. Most screenwriters, directors and producers came from Italy and the films were shot in Italy and Spain with an international cast, e.g. actors from Italy, Spain, the U.S., Austria, and Germany. The films were in the first place produced for European audiences and were marketed in dubbed versions in different European countries but also in the U.S. The term Spaghetti Western is preferred in English-speaking countries, probably originating in the U.S. and denominating a negative or even pejorative evaluation of these movies. Some European languages use the more neutral 'Italo Western' but over time, the term Spaghetti Western was re-appropriated by many European languages, coining an ironic or positive re-interpretation of Spaghetti Westerns.

After a brief introduction to the genre of the Western and an overview over some important developments during the genre's history, I will show the transnational influences on my examples especially with regard to 'imaginary Wests' and representations of nation building and national identity. Concerning the analysis of mutual influences between American and European Western movies, my paper will briefly contextualize the production of Spaghetti Westerns before connecting some filmic and representational innovations in these European movies to their influences on later American productions. For these interrelations, I will refer to Reinhold Wagnleiter's studies on mutual influences between the U.S. and Europe, which he developed foremostly in connection to influences in the time after World War II. His concepts of the "Coca-Colonization" of Europe and the "Europeanization" of the U.S. allow to read the developments of the Western genre not as one-directional but as mutual or even multi-directional. I will argue that some innovations which were introduced in Spaghetti Westerns can be traced to developments in recent U.S. productions, showing the transcultural influence and appropriations across the Atlantic and the fruitful dialogue of imaginary Wests across national borders. My analysis will show how Spaghetti Westerns, on the one hand, profited from previous U.S. Westerns, how the genre was transformed, and how the features introduced were later taken up by U.S. productions.

Development of the Western as Genre[3] and the Emergence of European Westerns

The Western genre originates to a large extent in the tradition of Wild West Shows, probably the most influential one by William F. Cody, better known by his alias Buffalo Bill. Cody's Wild West Show[4] helped to create an imaginary West via performances. The show consisted of small re-enactments of Western scenes with actors and 'real' Western persona, e.g. Sitting Bull who joined the show for one season. The show toured the U.S. and later on also

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[3]   For detailed information on the emergence and development of the genre in the U.S., see, for example, John White's *Western*.

[4]   For more detailed information on Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show as well as general information on the tradition and development of these shows, consult, for example, the homepage of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West: <https://centerofthewest.org/learn/western-essays /wild-west-shows/>. Interestingly, the Center names French shows as one of the sources for Buffalo Bill's show, an interesting point towards transnational influences in connection to the Western genre.

parts of Europe between the 1880s and the outbreak of World War I. With his show, Buffalo Bill helped to spark the imaginations of European audiences, who were in part already familiar with novels like James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. But the Wild West Shows also transferred the imaginary quality of the West into popular culture.

The second source for the Western are dime novels or pulp fiction, featuring stereotypical depictions, characters, and plot lines. A genre that was highly popular during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century; some stories appeared in serial publication, sometimes in magazines, others were published individually in cheap book editions. Famous examples of Western literature are *The Virginian* by Owen Wister (1902) or *Riders of the Purple Sage* by Zane Grey (1912). These fictional texts are precursors of Western films and were popular both in the U.S. as well as in Europe. The European market included translations but also works by European authors, thereby creating trans-Atlantic appropriations of the American West or rather an imaginary West. European translations of American texts, e.g. Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, were published shortly after the originals. In the German speaking context, there were several authors who wrote novels and short stories about the American West. Friedrich Gerstäcker and Charles Sealsfield are two examples, both of whom travelled parts of the United States and later wrote travel accounts and also fictional texts. Probably the best-known author in a German-speaking context is Karl May,[5] whose *Winnetou* books were best-sellers in his time. These books are still influential today mainly due to the movie adaptations from the 1960s.[6] Interestingly, the most influential and best-liked author writing about the American West in Germany only visited the U.S.[7] years after his books were published, although he always marketed his books as based on first-hand experiences.

Clear-cut definitions or classifications of the Westerns genre seem easy but are, in fact, rather difficult. Certain features are elementary for Westerns, e.g. characters such as cowboys, sheriffs, gun slingers, undertakers; landscapes like the Grand Canyon or iconic props like hats, horses, boots or guns. Another important aspect is the time in which the plot is set. Many Westerns

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[5]   For detailed discussions on Karl May and his works, including film productions based on his books, see, for example, Helmut Schmiedt and Dieter Vorsteher's edited volume *Karl May: Werk – Rezeption – Aktualität* or Gerd Ueding's handbook *Karl-May-Handbuch*.

[6]   In 2016, the TV broadcasting station RTL commissioned re-makes of the 1960s *Winnetou* movies, premiering at the end of the year on TV with good audience ratings but also discussions about questions of representations, especially the fact that Native American characters were (still) played by white, European actors.

[7]   May did not travel the American West but visited the East coast.

are set in the time of the 19th century, most often between the 1850s and 1900 and narrate conflicts during the process of nation building (cf. Buscombe 13). Or as John White remarked: "Westerns tend to take as their subject matter a particular (if somewhat elastic) historical era, but they also reflect (and participate in) the various contexts of the periods in which they have been made" (2). With respect to Spaghetti Westerns, some critics claim, for example, that features are identifiable which reveal more about Italy or better Europe than about the Old West. As Buscombe suggests:

> the Italian Western is little concerned with historical themes relating to the nineteenth century West. In so far as there is an interest in ideological issues, they centre on the unequal struggle of the weak against the strong, often represented as poor peasants, especially Mexicans, battling against unscrupulous landowners and their hired gunmen, a kind of class struggle which seems to relate more to contemporary Italian politics than American, as perceived by predominantly leftist writers and directors, and with an occasional dose of anti-clericalism thrown in, something quite foreign to the American Western. (22-23)

Throughout the history of the United States, the West referred to different geographical areas. The settling of the West is connected to historical events such as the Louisiana Purchase (1804), the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) or the 'closing of the frontier' in 1890 but also the American Civil War (1861-1865). The fact that the areas west of the Mississippi became part of the U.S. within roughly 50 years and that these areas gained the status of states within a short period of time, was influential for the development of the U.S. The Westward Movement was one of the fundamental components in the process of nation building. Concepts like manifest destiny and exceptionalism are closely linked to this growth during the 19th century and influenced the conception of the United States as a nation. Campbell connects this to the Western genre:

> The origin story of the United States was solidified in the Western, materialized in the actions of its heroes and villains, and naturalized through its specific geomystical symbolic locations. Its apparently progressive, linear history intimately associated with Frederick Jackson Turner's lucid, expansive frontier line moving inexorably across from East to West epitomized the inevitable narrative sequence and the logical language of internal colonization's nation-making process. (*Post-Western* 11)

The Western is often considered 'the' prototypical American genre and is sometimes even called an American form of epic since it is understood to provide a national myth for the emerging U.S. nation or, as Edward Buscombe phrased it: The Western is not

> so much a question of specific events or individuals; rather, the Western […] is underpinned by a meta-narrative of history which focuses on the concept of the frontier, the line marking the furthest point west of white settlement (13).

Spaghetti Westerns therefore constitute a paradox: why should Italian film makers be interested in the depiction of the American West and why should European audiences be interested in watching these negotiations of American national identity? The main attraction probably lies in the imaginary factor of the American West, which serves as a foil for freedom and self-reliance which was and is attractive for audiences around the globe and which allowed for local appropriations of the Western genre.

Most Westerns feature a fight good vs. bad, thereby negotiating one of the overarching universal themes in literature. Good vs. bad is often represented as a conflict between white settlers and Native Americans or Mexicans. Other ethnic groups are represented less frequently. Good vs. bad is sometimes also depicted as a conflict between law enforcement, most often personified by a sheriff fighting against outlaws or vice versa, for example a corrupt sheriff against outlaws fighting for a 'just cause.' Further oppositions include 'nature' or 'wilderness' vs. 'civilization' or 'nature' vs. 'culture' but also equality vs. class differences. Audiences in the U.S. as well as in Europe were attracted by the imaginary potential of these ideals, and they found in the Western a genre which enabled them to pursue their dreams of liberty, freedom and equality.[8]

Typical features of the Western are wide landscapes which can be diverse, from desert to scenic mountains, depending on where the respective story is set. Often a typical Western setting is created as a town set on the border, regularly consisting of one main street with buildings such as saloons, warehouses, etc. These towns are often presented as the first outpost of 'civilization' in the 'uncivilized' world where law needs to be enforced and order established. Western films frequently feature certain props and costumes: boots, guns with the respective belts, hats (most often Stetsons), horses, etc.

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[8] For typical features of Western literature and movies confer Jane Tompkins's *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, in which she identifies typical characteristics of Westerns and exemplifies them with readings of classic Western literature and films.

Characters often have stock character qualities: the cowboy, the sheriff, the good-hearted prostitute, the bar/saloon lady, the undertaker, the gun slinger etc. Concerning gender roles, the Western represents a male-dominated world, although recent productions sometimes depart from this scheme.[9] Women generally play minor roles; sometimes they trigger the conflict but they rarely act as independent characters with major roles in the plot. Or as Susan Armitage phrased it:

> There is a region of America that I have come to call Hisland. In a magnificent western landscape, under perpetually cloudless western skies, a cast of heroic characters engage in dramatic combat, sometimes with nature, sometimes with each other. Occupationally, these heroes are diverse: they are mountain men, cowboys, Indians, soldiers, farmers, miners and desperadoes, but they share one distinguishing characteristic—they are all men. ("Through Women's Eyes" 9)

The emergence of the Western film coincides with the emergence of film as a new medium. Edison's film productions in the 1890s and 1900s featured 'Western motifs,' e.g. poker games, gun fights or a 'Sioux Ghost Dance.' These productions were not films in today's sense but featured vignettes or small scenes and basically were filmed versions of 'real-life' scenes without a script. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) is often seen as the first Western film because it had a scripted plot (cf. White 10-16).

In the U.S. the genre of the Western was most popular from the 1930s to the beginning of the 1960s, with the 1940s and 1950s often labelled as the classic era. It lost its popularity during the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Campbell holds film-makers' policies responsible for this disinterest:

> cinematic Western, however, was oddly out of time with these developments [i.e. political fights for equality of various groups and questions of power and representation], preferring to look backward to the nineteenth-century frontier, utilizing the stories of the Old West to tell symbolic parables about national identity, masculinity, race relations, power, and anxiety (*Post-Western* 11)

instead of adapting the genre to new forms and motifs. After World War II, discussions in society started about questions of representations and the power of societal groups, which culminated in the Civil Rights Movement.

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[9]   Compare for example *The Ballad of Little Jo* (Dir. Maggie Greenwald, 1993), *The Quick and the Dead* (Dir. Sam Raimi, 1995) or *Jane Got a Gun* (Dir. Gavin O'Connor, 2016) which feature female lead characters and add female perspectives to well-known plots.

Debates concerning the Western, which started in the late 1950s and continued in the 1960s, mirrored these discussions in society as a whole. Are certain groups silenced in these movies? Are ethnic groups stereotyped and discriminated against in the films? How are women represented? The waning interest in Westerns during the 1960s in the U.S. is therefore interconnected to these critical questions and led to an increasingly negative perception of Western movies.

Spaghetti-Westerns[10] emerged from the mid-1960s onwards, filling the gap that the decline in U.S. productions left. But these movies did not initiate the European Western tradition, which can be traced back to literary texts until the 19th century and performances of Wild West Shows travelling through Europe. Several European countries produced Western movies[11]: West Germany's 1960s adaptations of Karl May's *Winnetou* even preceded Spaghetti Westerns and the GDR had its own Western productions,[12] sometimes referred to as 'Red Western.'[13] Some of these German productions are slightly older than the first Spaghetti Westerns but they were not able to be as influential as Spaghetti Westerns.

A small revival of the genre in the U.S. can be traced since the 1990s which is usually termed 'New Western,' 'Neo Western' or 'Post-Western.'

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[10] For further information on emergence and development of Spaghetti Westerns see John White's *Western,* especially 27-31. Christopher Frayling's seminal study *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (1981) is dedicated to the development of European imaginations of the West as well as European appropriations of the Western genre. The book's revisions and extension for new editions in 1998 and 2006 prove the ongoing interest in the genre.

[11] For reasons of coherence, this paper mainly concentrates on Spaghetti Westerns compared to U.S. productions, with some references to German productions as European contextualization. For further details on Western movies from a wider range of cultural contexts see for example Thomas Klein's *Geschichte – Mythos – Identität: Zur globalen Zirkulation des Western Genres;* Lee Broughton's *Euro-Western: Reframing Gender, Race and the 'Other' in Film* or Cynthia J. Miller's and A. Bowdoin Van Riper's edited volume on *International Westerns: Re-Locating the Frontier.*

[12] Westerns produced in West Germany as well as the GDR frequently center on Native American protagonists who are partly portrayed more positively than in traditional U.S. productions but whose portrayal is nevertheless racist. For a more detailed discussion of representations of Native Americans in German Westerns see for example Nicole Perry's "Reconsidering Winnetou: Karl May Film Adaptations and Native American Reponses." For a more general discussion of representations of Native Americans in cultural productions, consult the insightful book by Pauline Turner Strong: *American Indians and the American Imaginary: Cultural Representation across the Centuries.*

[13] 'Red Western' or sometimes 'Eastern' are terms used to refer to Western films produced in communist countries in the time of the Cold War, i.e. the former Soviet Union and countries in Central and Eastern Europe belonging the Warsaw Pact.

One example would be *Unforgiven,* in which the fight between good and evil is questioned by the plot itself. These films often playfully deal with clichés and stereotypes and deconstruct them. Some of these changes were introduced by innovations Spaghetti Westerns started in the 1960s. Campbell claims that recent productions "investigate […] 'gaps' and 'secrets' for an inheritance buried deep in the American national psyche and played out on its movie screens through what Kathleen Brogan calls 'cultural haunting[14]'" (*Post-Western* 15).

Not referring to the Western genre but to the influential factor of U.S. cultural productions in general, Reinhold Wagnleitner argues for a more differentiated interpretation than the often quoted "cultural imperialism" of the U.S. As a historian, Wagnleitner analyzed the mutual and multi-directional influences between U.S. culture and the culture of his home-country Austria after World War II. For Wagnleitner the interest in and appropriation of American culture and products can be seen as act of "self-colonization" (2), which was, on the one hand, "welcomed [as] antidote to the imperialism of National Socialist culture" (2) and, on the other, related to anti-Soviet fears in Austria after World War II. He further sees the interest in American cultural productions in combination with the development of a global "communication network" (3) with popular culture as the most important factor if the definition of culture is connected to a culture of capitalism. Furthermore, "the identity of exported cultural signs is altered exactly at the moment in which they intersect with other cultures" (3). Especially the two last points are important in connection to the transnational and multi-directional influences the Western genre experienced. Local appropriations and exported/ imported variations re-negotiate the traditional formula. Exemplary readings of selected scenes and elements which are innovative in Spaghetti Westerns and their later re-appropriations in U.S. productions show how these influences are transnational rather than one-directional.

Spaghetti Westerns vs. Neo- or Post-Westerns

Spaghetti Westerns profited from the long tradition of American Western production, and since part of the cast and film crew consisted of Americans, the influence can at first glance be understood as one-directional, i.e. Europeans using an American film genre and appropriating it. Looking at the depiction

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[14] Cf. Kathleen Brogan's 1998 study *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Fiction*.

of the emergence and development of the Western genre as shown above, these interconnections are rather multi-dimensional and can be considered transnational. In addition, Spaghetti Westerns add new perspectives by creating “a European version that looked authentic […] both familiar and un-familiar, strangely unsettling, ‘more Western than Westerns themselves’” (Campbell, *Rhizomatic West* 114). Especially the films by Sergio Leone were not mere nostalgic rewritings which quoted American films “uncritical[ly]” but they “established [new] ideologies, iconographies, and histories of the West” (Campbell, *Rhizomatic West* 119). These rewritings can be seen as “re-productions” within the so-called “circuit of culture,” which re-negotiated hegemonic productions and readings in a circuit.[15] The different producers and consumers actively appropriate the reading of cultural products, thereby changing meanings and interpretations.

The nostalgia for a time past which was inherent in U.S. productions of the 1960s was destroyed and deconstructed in Spaghetti Westerns by adding a new form of realism. American Western films frequently displayed the Old West in a rather sterile form: although there was dust and tumbleweed rolling through the scenes, altogether the scenes were presented as rather clean. If you compare, for example, scenes from *The Searchers*, a 1960s U.S. pro-duction starring John Wayne and Richard Widmark with Leone’s *Once Upon a Time in the West* (original: *C’era una volta il West*) from 1968, the clothes of the characters in the U.S. production sometimes look dusty but never dirt-stained regardless of the action in the respective scene. Some characters wear shabby clothes but even those clothes look rather clean. In comparison, the opening sequence of *Once Upon a Time* features characters with dusty and dirty clothes. Stains of dirt or sweat are not uncommon and if a character is wounded the blood stain is clearly visible. This new realism can also be found in *Unforgiven*, an Academy Award winning 1992 U.S. production, starring Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman.[16] Sergio Leone stated concerning the newly introduced realism:

> I wanted to show the cruelty of that nation, I was bored stiff with all those grinning white teeth. Hygiene and optimism are the woodworms which

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[15] Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall and others introduced the concept of a five-point circuit in the 1990s to analyze the Sony Walkman. The five points are production, consumption, regulation, rep-resentation and identity and they present an interconnected circle instead of a five-step model.

[16] For example, the opening scene in which William Munny, the ageing protagonist who was an outlaw/killer/headhunter, is presented in his new profession as a farmer, chasing animals through a muddy pig pen.

destroy American wood. It is a great shame if 'America' is always to be left to the Americans (Leone quoted in Campbell, *Rhizomatic West* 149).

Spaghetti Westerns introduced new perspectives with respect to ethnic diversity, first and foremost by including ethnically diverse characters without reducing them solely to stereotypical representations although there still are various stereotypes and discriminations with respect to ethnicity and race in these movies. Western films up until today have predominantly focused on white, heteronormative masculinities and highlight viewpoints of white, male characters in their plots but Spaghetti Westerns were at least able to introduce some more differentiated representations of ethnic characters. Recent productions like the French-American co-production *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* from 2005, starring Tommy Lee Jones, written by Guillermo Arriaga, profited from the changes introduced by Spaghetti Westerns. The film features characters from different ethnic backgrounds and allows for more nuanced representations, playing with some of the clichés but deconstructing them at the same time.

Another aspect which was always present in Western movies but which was emphasized and enhanced in Spaghetti Westerns is the depiction of violence. Due to the plots of Westerns, it is not uncommon that characters die or are killed, but U.S. productions until the 1960s depicted these deaths not in full detail. Especially the so-called *Dollar Trilogy* by Sergio Leone set a new style: Killings are shown in detail. Considering the time of the production, this focus on violence on the screen was innovative. This blatant depiction of violence is later incorporated in U.S. productions like *Unforgiven*. Connected to the direct representation of violence is the senselessness of most of the violence, which works against traditional representations of good vs. evil in Western movies, leading to questions about missing 'poetic' justice. As Campbell remarks:

> Leone's capacity to work both inside and outside the accepted frameworks of the Western reveals a similar desire for "juxtapositions and transformations" that places the viewer between "accents," temporarily "exiled" from the comfort of generic conventions and their con-comitant values, into a new uncanny cinematic thirdspace "bridging" the familiar and the strange. (*Rhizomatic West* 121)

The Spaghetti Westerns' innovations from an 'outside' perspective might have been able to offer new ways of seeing the West or rather of imagining the West by asking questions about representations and the portrayal of the

history of the West. Although *Once Upon a Time in the West* does not direct-
ly question the justness of Westward expansion, some plot elements can be
interpreted as criticism: Morton, the crippled railroad tycoon, who initiates
the plot by hiring a killer to murder a family because the father refused to sell
his farmland to the railroad, is presented as an ambivalent figure who is cruel-
ly murdered in the end. The sadistic hired gun, cast against type with Henry
Fonda, who usually played the (immaculate) hero in U.S. productions, is
killed in the end, as well as most other violent male characters of the movie.
The surviving male characters, e.g. the mysterious Harmonica, leave the de-
veloping town, allowing Claudia, the female protagonist, to emerge as a
powerful character. Although the masses of railroad workers in the scene are
male, the interpretation towards a certain amount of female empowerment as
well as a critical re-evaluation of the myth of progress is inherent.

  With respect to cinematography, some Spaghetti Westerns, especially the
ones directed by Sergio Leone, introduced new techniques and styles. Leone
is famous for his style of cutting wide-shot scenes, for example landscapes, in
direct contrast to extreme close-ups, for example, the eyes of a character or
details like the wheels of a train. In the opening scene of *Once Upon a Time*,
several of these 'contrasting' cuts can be found. These innovations opened
new ways for representing the West, which were later taken up by U.S. pro-
ductions in a fruitful way. As Campbell explains:

> This can be a zone of discomfort, where expectations are stretched and broken
> and ideologies destabilized and questioned, such as when *Once Upon a Time*
> *in the West* opens with a lengthy, almost speechless sequence that echoes
> familiar Westerns like *High Noon* […] but simultaneously reverses and
> distorts expectations formally and thematically with a stylized sequence
> heavily influenced by the surrealist artist Giorgio De Chirico. (*Rhizomatic*
> *West* 121)

Irony is another important aspect of Spaghetti Westerns. Characters engage in
a play with clichés and stereotypes and references to other Western movies.
For example, the catching of a fly with a gun in the opening scene of *Once*
Upon a Time shows the ironic character of this representation and emphasizes
the contrast to the violence that follows. Later U.S. productions sometimes in-
corporate a similar form of irony. For example, in *Unforgiven* the retirement
of the former killer Murray to farming and the character of Kid, who fashions
himself as a successful head-hunter/shooter without being one, can be seen as
ironic aspects. Here again irony works to highlight the senselessness of the
violence with which it is contrasted. Spaghetti Westerns were able to

contras[t] the familiar mythologies of the Western with alternative, re-structured notions, the effect of which, as Sarah Hill[17] has put it, "undermines the traditional white/black hat binarisms of the genre to create a new form of western that is far more ambiguous." (Quoted in Campbell, *Rhizomatic West* 134)

In this way Spaghetti Westerns criticized hegemonic models and in a second step influence film productions in the U.S. Campbell refers to these trans-cultural appropriations and influences as "active[e] and dialogica[l] en-gag[ements] with the Hollywood tradition in complex webs of exchange, or […] as 'cultural import-export'" (*Rhizomatic West* 122). For Campbell these

> generic codes embedded in the Western, as in art, literature, and history […]—are synonymous with and rooted within an American national narrative, its cultural imaginary of westward expansion, Manifest Destiny, frontier conquests, settlement, and the bringing of light into a dark land. Yet as Frayling suggests, Leone cannot be 'read' in quite this way, for his films move in and out of the established genre so that, as Smith suggests, their "displacement of the generic verisimilitude is put to the service of a displacement of the cultural imaginary that inhabits the generic conventions." (Campbell, *Rhizomatic West* 130)

Spaghetti Westerns but also later Neo- and Post-Westerns depend on the conventions and traditions of the genre but "resis[t] [Hollywood's] hegemony in an effect to seek another form of storytelling" (Susan Kollin quoted in Campbell, *Post-Western* 7).

Conclusion

My paper has traced the transcultural influences of Western movies and imaginary Wests by examining innovations made in Spaghetti Westerns and their later appropriations in U.S. productions. The examples show that the influences are not one-directional but multi-directional, working across the Atlantic in both directions. The imaginary factor of the West exemplifies the global dimension of the West, moving away from readings only focused on the frontier to more diverse readings, including aspects of traveling concepts within a global context. Spaghetti Westerns added new readings and

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[17] Cf. Sarah Hill, "Sergio Leone and the Myth of the American West: Once Upon a Time in America." *Romance Languages Annual* IX (1998): 202-210.

perspectives to the West, away from linear history to multi-facetted readings including transcultural dimensions, routed in different histories. Especially Sergio Leone's films gave new impetus to the genre by playfully acknowledging traditional features and deconstructing them. The films played with the audience's expectations and knowledge of genre conventions and invented new ways to represent the West. These innovations can be traced in later developments in U.S. productions. The innovations have not changed the focus of the movies which still foreground white, heteronormative masculinities but Spaghetti Westerns definitely added some diversity to the traditional formula.

As I have shown, the export of Westerns to Europe can be seen as a form of "Coca-Colonization."[18] More productively though, the analysis of the cultural exchange of Western movies around the globe should focus on the many multi-dimensional influences. In fact, Spaghetti Westerns can be seen as examples of transnational productions or what Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake have described—with respect to end-of-the-20th-century productions—as

> a new world-space of cultural production and national representation which is simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capitalogic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance) in everyday texture and composition (1, emphasis in original).

The Western formula is taken up and re-negotiated through various cultural contexts, through different production and consumption circles, through various re-negotiations within and across different cultural frames, thereby producing innovative strategies which influence other Western productions.

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[18] Wagnleitner does not use the term 'Americanization' because he sees the United States as emerging out of European colonization and stresses the multi-directional influences between different cultures over time.

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SEBASTIAN WEIER

Becoming Detroit: Techno Music and the German Post-Nation Narrative

I. German Reunification and "Der Sound der Wende"

Promoted through recurring events organized by the global Goethe Institute[1] network, advertised in tourist brochures, celebrated in social media spheres (e.g. residentadvisor.net) and a rapidly growing number of German-authored popular culture historiographies (e.g. Poschardt, Feige and Müller, Gutmair, Rapp, Teipel), anthropological monographs (e.g. Schwanhäußer), memoirs (e.g. Calma, Denk and von Thülen, Marquardt, Westbam), novels (e.g. Airen, Goetz, Innerhofer, Meinecke), picture books (e.g. Farkas, Fesel and Keller, Saage) and films, both fictional and documentary (e.g. *Berlin Calling*, *Real Scenes*, *We Call It Techno*, *Watergate X*, *Bar 25*), Techno Music has for many years been portrayed as the "Sound der Wende" (Denk and von Thülen, Gutmair): the sound of the end of the Cold War, of the reunification of West and East Germany and of a new German post-national identity. In these German narratives, accounts diverge on where in Germany and for what reasons Techno music and Techno party culture 'originated,' but they generally converge in portraying the ruins of the inner Berlin border zones and the 1990s as the place and time when Techno became the quintessential cultural expression of contemporary Germany and the global cultural force that it is today, with the reunified city now its capital.

It is no coincidence that this *Wende*-narrative first and foremost emerged out of personal memoirs set in cities such as Berlin, Mannheim and Frankfurt am Main that were marked by a strong U.S. military presence and its cultural effects. Be they critical or positive concerning Techno music and culture, most German Techno historiographies combine the autobiographical and the documentary, merging narratives of personal becoming with the birth and becoming of a subculture, the historical transformation of a divided nation ridden by historical guilt into a new culturally avant-garde post-nation not

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[1] The Goethe Institute is a non-profit organization seeking to promote interest in German culture and language learning through a network of 159 German cultural centers spread all over the world.

defined by filiation but by affinities, and the ultimate decadence of both the subculture and post-nation as the former becomes commodified, the cities and ruins that fostered them gentrified and the communities they spawned historicized and recaptured by new national narratives. Focusing on Felix Denk and Sven von Thülen's *Der Klang der Familie* and Tobias Rapp's *Lost and Sound,* the following pages will look at German Techno historiography to show how encounters with 'American Culture' have shaped European identities both in terms of fostering cultural formations and in terms of phenomena of historiographical erasure or marginalization of those encounters as narrative strategies necessary for these identities to be perceived as true expressions of European and, more specifically, post-national German identities. As German reunification marked a cut with the long history of World War II and the ensuing military occupation, so Techno had to be extricated from the American cultural matrix that fostered it in order to be able to serve as the new German sonic body politic, as the *Sound der Wende* and *ipso facto* the sound of a new communion and community. As will be argued below, this extrication amounted to an erasure not just of histories of nationalism, national occupation and cultural hybridity, but also cut across and into histories of race, technology and sexuality, offering a complex analytical example of the relation between individual physical bodies (desiring bodies, bodies dancing to the beats of drum machines and often in substance-induced ecstasy) and cultural and political narrative bodies (in throngs of the ex-stasis of historical events) and their mutual interlocking in the materialization of a historical caesura and the creation of a new citizen. Significantly, appropriating Techno as the expression of a new German post-national identity came at the price of marginalizing, rewriting or completely ignoring the historiographies of non-national and sometimes even anti-national subcultures and identities such as the gay, queer and largely Hispanic groups that gave birth to early DJ club-culture in 1970s New York City in clubs such as *The Paradise Garage*, the suburban African-American Detroit student party scene that was home to the birth of Techno music in the 1980s or the gay people-of-color party environment centered on Chicago's *The Warehouse* Club and the city's own brand of electronic music called *House* (Hanf, Reynolds, Sicko).

II. From Becoming to Being Post-Nation

In considering "how the signifier 'America' functions as an intermediary in the production of transnational civic European cultures" (of which contemporary Techno Music is a prime example), one may mobilize a critical

reading of the concept of "becoming" proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to frame processes of rewriting and marginalization within German Techno historiography. Often combined into tropes such as becoming n***, becoming woman or becoming minoritarian, becoming does not actually propose that one identify with and end up being or imitating that which one becomes. Rather, it means initiating a movement of impossible to-finish becoming in which one adopts the affective intensities of that which one becomes in order to subvert one's own identity and environment and liberate one's desires and subjectivity from the power structures they are enmeshed with. Becoming is not a movement in which one takes the place of that which one becomes, but it is a movement of "involution" in which one enters into an "alliance" or "symbiosis" with that which one becomes. Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that becoming is not productive (291-292). Its goal is to shake the subject of power (e.g. the citizen) to the point where parts of it break lose, become fugitive and escape; not into another singular self, but into a multiplicity of being. Becoming is not related to filiation, it is neither regression nor descent, but an act of contagion (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 295) in which what is always already inter-existent reacts in a way that lets it split from the discourse that held it. That which one becomes, then, must not be understood as an ego-ideal but as a totem whose inner nature and workings remain both unknown and unattainable. In becoming, a totem[2] (an animal, a woman, a drug, a minority, a movie-star, etc.) is chosen towards which one will become in a movement that is at once external because moving away from the subject one already is and internal because the notion that that which one becomes is separate from that which one is, is but an illusion produced by subjection. Becoming is not a controlled process, not a controlled transformation, but a letting go of the parameters of identification and thus control. The totem serves to sustain this process of letting go not by offering a new identification or cathexis, but by annulling the identifications already in effect. In other words: through the alliance with the totem, the self experiences that it is not what it used to be, but it does not (yet) know what else it is. In becoming, the subject is not transforming into a unified new and better or different subject, but liberating a flux of desire, a multiplicity of contacts and communities, a bit of everyone, but no one specifically.

This flux is precisely the state of individual bodies in trance (culturally and/or physically induced) that can be found in historiographies of Techno,

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[2] Deleuze and Guattari would disagree with this use of the term "totem" to characterize their work, because they consider it a structuralist term too rigid to describe their emphasis on free movement and time independent of structure (291-292).

both in Germany and beyond. Within it, new communities emerge not out of the filiation or territorial principles that inform the concept of the national body politic as constituted through kinship and historical continuity. Instead of referring to ontological principles of community, Techno historiographies seek to narrate communities of becoming, of bodies not bonded by blood but one in desire and dance and detached or deterritorialized from the nation and the identities grounded in and by it (Hall and Zukic).[3] In these subcultures, the contagion of becoming meant that it theoretically did not matter who you where as long as you could not resist the beat, viz. culture did not represent pre-existing communities but produced new ones. In principle, Techno memoirs, both German and non-German (e.g. Garnier) remember these produced and productive communities as affective associations, as groups that emerge from outside history (because based on art forms considered unprecedented and closely connected to non-normative lifestyles and identifications) and in non-places (viz. spaces perceived as being without socio-symbolic sedimentations that would overdetermine the subjects within it, spaces at the same time individual, yet with interchangeable and exchangeable serial characteristics),[4] such as clubs or raves that are both distinctly local (e.g. through details of prevalent musical styles) and transnational, because defined through globalized cultural tastes and lifestyles. It was precisely this combination of experiencing oneself as outside time and

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[3] Especially younger authors that entered into Techno subcultures after the 1990s describe similar patterns of becoming for contemporary Berlin night and club life: "Berghain [Club] challenges you in your very existence: it's not only a place to let off steam after your working week, to find a partner or to hear interesting music. It's a free space—what you do there doesn't have to be consistent with your lifestyle outside. Since the club shows you the greatest pleasure imaginable, you have to ask yourself the question: What do I want? Where do I place myself on the map of social, sexual and musical pleasure?" (Waltz in Rapp 138). My point concerning the transformation from nation into post-nation refers precisely to the creation of this kind of libido-socio-aesthetic "maps" as contagious communalities of belonging subverting the logic and epistemologies of geo-political cartographies of being.

[4] I take inspiration here from Marc Augé's *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* yet differ from his concept of the non-place in that I wish to shift the focus away from the "solitary individuality" (78) of non-places such as shopping malls or airports to non-places as trans- and post-national common spaces that mark both the ending of one socio-symbolic sedimentation and the beginning of new ones from which emerge new communities whose territorialities are no longer defined by the distinct bordered place of the nation-state axiomatic, but by contagion and movement, much like the nomadism proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (434-440). The non-place as I use it here, then, is not defined as a transition space and by "passing" through (Augé 85) but by flux in terms of a dynamic dwelling in which communalities are able to form within a specific yet temporary space and then spread from there into other spaces that are therewith transformed.

space and the impurities of the localized (e.g. hometown-pride) and the trans-national that made these perceived affective communities fertile ground for narratives of a new post-national and non-nationalist German discourse seeking to culturally no longer define itself exclusively through filiation and territory but through communities of desire, affect and aesthetics.

It is the *Wende* that will provoke a specifically German rupture within general Techno historiography, a rupture shaped and driven by the sudden accessibility of partly autonomous urban zones in East Berlin (specifically in the former border zone death strip) and the narrative of new "blühende Landschaften"[5] (in Chancellor Helmut Kohl's infamous words) that a Germany now self-identifying as freed from the remnants of political paternalism, military occupation and the facts of historical guilt set out to create.[6] Through the *Wende*, the non-places of raves and ruins transform into the territorialities of the post-nation: "Auch die Vereinigung von Ost und West, die hat im Underground stattgefunden. In den Clubs. Nirgendwo anders" (Annie Lloyd in Denk and von Thülen 192).[7] It is at this point that the subcultural becoming transforms from a counter-cultural undoing into a template for the new post-national citizen, a shift that would not occur in other Techno subcultures, such as those of the U.S.A., Belgium or the United Kingdom. It is in order to consume and ultimately perform this transformation from becoming to being (viz. to arrest the becoming) that the totem that activated the becoming and towards which the becoming moved, had to be discarded and its foundational function blurred or erased in the historiographies of the post-national citizen-subject and its bodies, affects and desires. It is here that marginalizing, rewriting or completely ignoring the totem set in, and that a closer look at that totem becomes both possible and necessary. And although it is also here that the most notable differences between authors emerge and that the specific ways of appropriating the becoming are given their individual spin, there is one common denominator to all of them: Black America.

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5   "Flourishing landscapes." (my translation)
6   "Ich kann mich noch an Reisen nach England oder Frankreich in den 80-er Jahren erinnern, wo man als ‚German Nazi' oder ‚sale boche' beschimpft wurde. In den 90-er Jahren, wenn man aus Berlin kam, haben einen die Leute auf die *Loveparade* angesprochen und gefragt wie es in diesem oder jenem Club ist" (Mijk van Dijk in Denk & von Thülen 398). ["I can remember trips to England or France in the 80s, where they called you 'German Nazi' or 'sale boche.' In the 90s, if you were from Berlin, people would talk to you about the *Loveparade* and ask about this or that club." (my translation)]
7   "The reunification of East and West, too, happened in the underground. In the clubs. Nowhere else." (my translation)

III. "Detroit" and the Whitinizing of German Techno Historiography

Black America is both persistently present and notably absent in German Techno historiography. Most significantly, it is only rarely referred to in explicit terms and usually appears implicitly through use of the referent "Detroit," the city's name marking both a geo-political location of another and a direction on the libido-socio-aesthetic map of becoming. "Detroit" thus performs a double articulation, at once assimilating and erasing Black cultural production in German Techno historiography. By referring to a city instead of specific people, it not only distracts from matters of race, but also safely posits the productive instance or totem of becoming outside of Germany, assuring that the desedimentation of spaces into non-places that a *becoming Detroit* effected would never go too far and possibly even tilt into a closure overdetermined by that totem, thus guaranteeing both the fungibility of blackness while keeping it at a safe distance. In accordance with this, German Techno historiography generally ignores the role of African-Americans and specifically Black G.I.s living in Germany in introducing this musical genre and the club cultures associated with them into the country from the late 1970s onwards (see Weheliye, Alliiertenmuseum). Quite to the opposite, the influence of Detroit Techno on German Techno culture is even narrated in terms of a white German—Dimitri Hegemann, founder of the *Tresor* club and record label—going to Detroit in the early 1990s and bringing the music and musicians back to Berlin with him, thus safely keeping white Germany in the position of the active historical and now post-national agent reaching out to integrate those traditionally outside its territorial and filiative borders. By making a location instead of people the historical referent of cultural production and the catalyst of sub-cultural desiring, a set up is created which allows post-*Wende* Germany to succeed and supersede its culturally colonized and militarily occupied pre-*Wende* self, to the extend that as a location in historical locomotion in its own right, it now absorbs the people of "Detroit," making even their work German after all:

> Natürlich, Techno ist—vereinfacht ausgedrückt—Mitte der 80er-Jahre in Detroit entstanden. Doch eine Heimat fanden die neuen elektronischen Klänge dort nicht. […] Dass ein Großteil der Detroiter Produzenten und DJs ausgerechnet in Berlin eine zweite Heimat gefunden haben und sich ein symbiotisches Verhältnis zwischen diesen beiden desolaten Städten

entwickelte—auch das ist neben dem Einsatz und dem Enthusiasmus einiger Musikbegeisterter zu einem großen Teil glücklicher Fügung zu verdanken. (Denk and von Thülen 9)[8]

What this indicates is a "whitinizing" (Tal) of German Techno historiography that, unable to completely avoid the Black and American presence that generated it, seeks to contain it by embedding it in a larger narrative that reduces the *becoming Detroit* into a *being German*.[9] This is performed by pointing to the influence of German avant-garde culture on American and Black Techno producers, emphasizing the influence of bands such as *Kraftwerk* or *D.A.F.* or composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen on the formation of electronic music and thus relocating the origins of Techno to Germany, a narrative strategy not exclusive to German authors:

> The story of Detroit Techno begins not in early-eighties Detroit, as is so often claimed, but in early-seventies Düsseldorf, where Kraftwerk built their KlingKlang sound factory and churned out pioneering synth-and-drum-machine tracks like 'Autobahn,' 'Trans-Europe Express' and 'The Man-Machine.' (Reynolds 3)

This narrative is a symptomatic expression of a larger post-colonial cultural matrix, connecting to mythologies of 'white' European civilizations with a long historical trajectory of technical mastery that is implicitly put into play to activate notions of black technological and artistic prowess as only emerging in succession and in debt to, in this case, the German techno-sonic avant-garde.[10] In shifting the origins of Techno back to Germany, the de-americanization and whitinizing necessary for the possibility of making Techno the *Sound der Wende* occurs. At the same time, the principle of

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[8] "Of course, simply put, Techno developed in Detroit in the mid-80s. But the new electronic sounds never found a home there. […] That a mayor part of Detroit producers and DJs would find a second home in Berlin of all places and that a symbiotic relationship developed between these two desolate cities—this too is largely due, besides the efforts and enthusiasm of a few music fans, to a stroke of fate." (my translation)

[9] Alexander Weheliye disagrees with this analysis, seeing instead black-facing taking place in German Techno history, with white composers seeking success by having black performers present their music. His extremely large understanding of what constitutes Techno music, however, even includes acts such as *Milli Vanilli* (on which his black-facing argument is based), and makes it impossible to engage with his logic due to a lack of terminological rigor.

[10] This narrative is also present within African-American communities. As black Detroit Techno producer Juan Atkins points out: "[…] African American audiences think of techno as essentially white and European" (Atkins in Albiez 149).

filiation is reinstated within aesthetico-affective communalities, thus re-nationalizing the flux set and signaled by *becoming Detroit*, capturing its de-nationalizing power and banning it into a post-national principle that changes but also maintains the national principle: although filiation is now open to new desiring bodies of different birth, although territorialities have become porous, there is within the post-nation still an unavowed principle of filiation (e.g. race, style …) and ever changing territorialities that sustain both new transnational communities ("easy jet set" (Rapp)) and traditional divides (e.g. metropolitan cities as cultural hot spots vs. the provinces). This whitinizing of the post-national community is further solidified through a whitinizing of sub-cultural desires performed both within the technology-as-white narrative[11] and by emphasizing the queer and gay dimensions of Techno culture, which can be easily assimilated into a German context, as opposed to the Black cultural aspect that, supposedly, cannot: "This [Ostgut club] is where today's dominant clubbing model was developed—this special social constellation in which all party-goers come together under the hegemony of Berlin's gay community" (Waltz in Rapp 131). No mention is made here of the before alluded to Chicago and New York club cultures or their racialized character: America has disappeared and so have its people to give way to a post-Wende Germany in which it is easier and better to be white and gay than black and American.

IV. (Conclusion:) The Nationalism of the Post-Nation

Seeking historical caesura, German Techno historiography colludes with narratives of a post-*Wende* German post-national identity, defining itself as a community of desiring and belonging, affect and aesthetics rather than kinship and territory. Opening the body politic in and through German reunification, European integration and general globalization, the post-national citizen is portrayed as being situated on a map of fluctuating bonds and bounds of cultural production rather than a cartography of bordered national (self-)representation. However, as I have argued above, even the post-nation is still a nation and its logic and epistemology is not completely severed from

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[11] "Und es gab Vorbehalte gegen den Begriff Techno. Von [DJ] Motte etwa, der wollte immer House. Das wollte ich nicht, weil da ist Soul drin. Aber ich bin ein weißer Junge, ich habe keine Seele" (Tanith in Denk & von Thülen 96). ["And there were reservations concerning the term Techno. From Motte for example, who wanted House. I didn't want that, because there is soul in it. But I am a white boy, I don't have a soul." (my translation)]

that of the nation-principle.[12] It is for this reason that the close cultural exchange with the United States and specifically African-Americans so fundamental to the formation of crypto-post-nation subcultures, such as German Techno, has been downplayed or even erased within narratives that still seek to locate the origins of Germany's cultural productivity in the country's national tradition, thus capturing the flux of change within a logic of representation that makes change itself the permanent permutation of a German constant and thus the ultimate paradigm for the *Wende* and the post-nation it spawned: ever new and mobile, yet only so due to its old (pre-*Wende*) origins whose purity and force requires, as all purity and force do, an artificial purging of the national narrative which for Germany and its cultural narratives (such as German Techno historiography) ultimately requires a de-americanization and whitinizing. Reterritorializing the subcultural becoming it connects to, the post-*Wende* German post-nation narrative maps bodies, desires, affects and aesthetics to create a body-politic that is porous and future-bound, yet contained by cartographies that are still those of the nation state.

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[12] As is very visible in the current border crises (both in terms of libido-socio-aesthetic maps and geo-political cartographies) caused by the displacement of larger numbers of people on and within European territories (a movement referred to sometimes—in an act of border-consolidation or even classically nationalist border-positivism—as "refugee crisis.")

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Section 4 "Cultural Exchanges Between 'East' and 'West'"

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Voicing the 'Inappropriate': Creative Strategies in Ukrainian and American Female Singer-Songwriters

Decolonial/Feminist Resistance:
American/Ukrainian Ways

The artistic birth and development of a generation of prominent female singer-songwriters in Ukraine was largely the result of Ukraine's gaining of independence in 1991. Until that time female pop and pop-rock musicians of Soviet Ukraine were prevailingly confined to the role of performers. It is quite symbolic that as artists of a newly independent state lacking in self-identification Ukrainian female singer-songwriters engaged in the construction of the nation through transformative and decolonial creative practices. In this respect their role as authors gain absolute significance.

Female singer-songwriters of post-Soviet Ukraine experienced an impact of both mainstream pop-rock and independent American female scene of the 1990s, which was thriving at the time.[1] However, as surprising as it may seem, the presence of female singer-songwriters on the Western (and, particularly, American) scene was rather scarce until the 1990s. Emma Mayhew points out the inequalities of women's place in popular music, in terms of access to the sphere and "in the construction of musical artistic values," mentioning the *Rolling Stone* survey, which shows that in the period from the 1950s to the 1990s female solo artists made up ten per cent of the total albums listed as the best ever (63). Notably, the considerable change in women's artistic presence coincided with the tendencies pronounced by the feminist scholarship at the moment. Generally, the third-wavers have persistently emphasized the importance of cultural production and critique, as well as the necessity of focusing particular attention "on female pop icons, […] beauty culture," and not only "on traditional politics per se" (Snyder 178). As opposing to authoritarian/paternalist ideologies, feminism has vigorously attended to popular culture. To a large extent, this situation proved that Western female musicians—even if their agency was legitimized simply by

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[1] The Girl Power and Riot Grrrl phenomena are worth mentioning in this respect, although a thorough analysis of them is not provided in this study.

their growing presence, or because they chose to employ subversive practices in their creativity—were successfully performing a series of decolonial efforts. In many cases, they were de-constructing/de-centering grand (patriarchal) narratives (of the nation) for the sake of re-construction in storytelling, which equaled bringing forward the previously silenced voices. Ukrainian singer-songwriters chose similar strategies.

Such a decolonial job, carried out within the domain of popular culture, certainly encountered a variety of impediments—these were defined by American/global and post-Soviet Ukrainian circumstances. The popular culture industry of the society of the spectacle constructs popular culture as 'totalizing,' therefore the deadlock of resistance is inevitable in that, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, "anyone who resists can only survive by fitting in" (132). On the other hand, though, popular culture's innate subversive potential makes it a perfect setting for a decolonial endeavor—for example, Andreas Huyssen, in his reflections on modernism, postmodernism and mass culture, labels the latter modernism's perfect 'Other' and 'Woman' (44-62). It may be expected then that the subversive de-constructing efforts are to be the efforts of Woman performed in the domain of Woman—and it becomes the case with female singer-songwriters. Significantly, Ukraine's popular culture of the 1990s and its largely DIY-nature reveal the mentioned debasing potential of popular culture, since popular culture industry at this moment in time is not fully established. In this respect the agency of Ukrainian singer-songwriters, re-defining the very notion and image of a female author/performer in post-Soviet Ukraine, should not be read simply as the act of mimicry (of a post-Soviet/'Eastern' subject). To the very least, their active presence on the Ukrainian popular music scene and their choice of creative strategies prove them to be a part of the global ('Western') change of conditions.

Mechanics of Resistance: The Case of Tori Amos and Iryna Bilyk

American Tori Amos and Ukrainian Iryna Bilyk are highly representative of the generations of American and Ukrainian singer-songwriters of the 1990s, and occupy special places within the mentioned artistic phenomena.

Amos (born in North Carolina, U.S.A. in 1963) has brought the instrument of the piano on the pop/rock'n'roll stage and has fully legitimized it there, after decades of painful struggles with the industry. Bilyk (born in Kyiv, Ukraine in 1970) has redesigned popular music in post-Soviet Ukraine, becoming the first pop star of the newly independent nation.

It must be noted—considering the labor conditions in popular culture industry—that both singer-songwriters play a definitive role in their oeuvre, being first and foremost authors (composers, lyricists, performers, producers). However, their authorial status interestingly reveals the 'Western'/'Eastern' circumstances. While Amos has been signed to major labels for most of her career (this meaning a constant fight for creative independence), Bilyk entered the 'lucky' grey area of the non-institutionalized popular culture arrangement of post-Soviet Ukraine, a condition providing a level of creative freedom unprecedented for the Western popular culture arrangement.[2]

In their creativity Tori Amos and Iryna Bilyk began by choosing unconventional practices. Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance include Amos in their list of artists who "have impelled and disturbed the boundaries of 'acceptable' female musicianship" both socioculturally and musically (xi). Indeed, since the start of her career and until now, the American singer-songwriter has played her piano in a dominative manner, sung in a fairly non-normative way, and openly addressed provocative issues (like rape survival, or reconsideration of the image of Jesus Christ as female).[3] Bilyk justly labeled herself "Nova." Musically, she drastically modernized traditional (Soviet) pop sound: Her somewhat childish voice did not fit the previously valid canon; lyrically, she offered candid, confession-like verses; visually, Bilyk juxtaposed herself to the pseudo-patriotic discourse and innocence commanded by the official Soviet Ukrainian narrative. Instead of vyshyvankas (national embroidered clothing) and long-sleeve gowns she chose cutting-edge costumes with a hint of streetwear fashion. In the middle of the 1990s, the Ukrainian singer-songwriter became influenced by Tori Amos.

As this research aims to show, both artists subversively work upon official historiographies of the nations—in fact, this becomes one of the main tasks for the generation of female singer-songwriters of the 1990s in the United States and Ukraine. They re-collect the nations' muted memories, providing them with a female (colonized) voice. The particular technique that is focused upon in this study is that of lyrically locating the 'inappropriate' (and, therefore, silenced) women's experiences of displacement in the instituted structure of the official narrative in an effort of pronouncing them. The

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[2]   At least this was the case for the first decade of her career.

[3]   Amos' a cappella ballad "Me and a Gun" (*Little Earthquakes*) is based on her personal experience of rape, while "Muhammad My Friend" (*Boys for Pele*) features lines like, "Muhammad my friend / it's time to tell the world / we both know it was a girl back in Bethlehem."

outcomes of such practice reveal its expected efficiency, and altogether the dramatic failures of the overall task of voicing the muted.

Hypotexts. Tori Amos and Iryna Bilyk engage in postmodernist play upon hypotexts carrying a 'sacred' status within official historiographies. Amos creates a remake of "A Home on the Range,"[4] the state song of Kansas and one of the favorite scout songs of America. It serves as a perfect hypotext— the song had played its part in constituting the social imaginary and became almost a folk tune. The singer-songwriter's version released as part of *God* EP (1994) features a significant extension in the name—"Home on the Range (Cherokee Edition)"—and contains the story of a young Cherokee woman.[5] Bilyk's "Ne Plach, Marichko" ("Don't Cry, Marichko")[6] is not based on any particular folk song. An originally written track, it invokes archetypality and appeals to the gallery of outstanding Ukrainian figures—therefore, referentially works with hypotextuality. The song incorporates the archetypal figure of Marusia Churai, the legendary 17th century Ukrainian singer-songwriter who was demonized as a supposed revengeful murderer of her un-faithful lover, the Cossack Hryts. Her outstanding poetic and musical gift combined with her fierce character has gained her a special status of a mythi-cal Siren, this ambivalence making her part of the archetypal national ima-ginary.[7] On the track Marichka (Marusia)[8] is rendered author/(unheard) prophet/Mary Magdalene/Ukraine. It is important to mention that "Ne Plach, Marichko" appears on one of Bilyk's concept albums, *Bilyk. Krayina* (*Bilyk. The Land*) (2003). This LP is probably the main result of Bilyk's decolonial efforts undertaken during the previous 13 years of her career. Emblematically, it is also the last Ukrainian-language album of the first pop star of the independent Ukraine.[9]

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[4]   Considering significant lyrical similarities, I provide comparative analysis of Amos' version with John A. Lomax variant of "A Home on the Range."

[5]   "God" itself is one of the most quoted and controversial songs by Amos: it redefines the tra-ditional (patriarchal) image of a deity. Significantly, on the record the track "God" is followed by a provocative re-reading of the state song.

[6]   Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

[7]   Tellingly, personal demonization might just as well be accounted for by Marusia's subject position as (female/unconventional) poet.

[8]   The name Marusia or Marichka are diminutive forms of Maria, this name also appearing on the track as Mary Magdalene's.

[9]   The reasons for a drastic detour in Iryna Bilyk's career, while being very significant, are not in focus of the present study and, thus, are not discussed in detail.

Lyrics: Points of Discoveries

A Cherokee's 'Home.' Tori Amos starts her remake of "A Home on the Range" rather cautiously—very much so in order to later emphasize her sub-version. In fact, the comparison of "(Cherokee Edition)" to the John A. Lomax lyrics version shows that the first verse and refrain remain unchanged. They articulate an idyllic picture, with a specific accent on the wilderness:

> Home, home on the range,
> Where the deer and the antelope play;
> Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
> And the skies are not cloudy all day (Lomax, 39)

However, the human presence within this serene environment is obvious—"a discouraging word" that is hardly heard is language. Actually, this becomes a starting point for Amos; the singer-songwriter points out how the dis-couragement has always been there, it just has been unpronounced or, perhaps, "seldom heard." The narrator's task is to enunciate what has been muted. While the original version of the lyrics contains another verse of praising the pure air and the balmy breezes, the narrator of Amos' "Edition" starts unraveling the alternative story, introducing the silenced heroine:

> well jackson made deals, a thief down to his heels
> hello long trail of tears
> the smokies could hide a cherokee bride
> her brave was shot yesterday (Amos, "Home")

The story of the silent Cherokee bride, even here narrated by someone else, is indeed a "discouraging word" about what has actually happened and not found its place in the instituted imaginary. Additionally, the muted prota-gonist—symbolically placed outside language—remains part of the idyllic natural scene that has once been her home. Maurice Blanchot claims, "[l]anguage can only begin with the void; no fullness, no certainty can ever speak; something essential is lacking in anyone who expresses himself" (324). The narrator of the track is speaking, while the forever silent witness of the events is unable to speak—Amos can crack the officially established nar-rative open just for a moment, showing there is no way to undo the damage done: The real of the trauma remains inaccessible. Having stated that the Cherokee bride is now lonely, and comparing The Indian Removal Act, or "Jackson's deals," to a theft resulting in the "trail of tears," the narrator

contrastingly slides from open accusation into the idyll of the refrain, again identical to the original version.

Amos also accentuates the discrepancy contained in the "home" image. Alluding to the Lomax version lyrics line "I would not exchange my home on the range," she chooses to follow the refrain by an added verse:

> mmm, we know it's not caroline
> your home is your home
> the range may be fine for some
> but not in my eyes (Amos, "Home")

Notably, the narrator—stating that however wonderful, Kansas, the imposed new 'home,' is not "caroline"—becomes a "we," and then, for the first and only time on the track, the voice of the silenced Cherokee girl is heard, as in "not in my eyes."

All along, the image of the bride has its 'predecessor' in the Lomax version:

> Oh give me a land where the bright diamond sand,
> Flows leisurely down in the stream;
> Where the graceful white swan goes gliding along,
> Like a maid in a heavenly dream (Lomax, 40)

The image of the bride is that of anticipation and promise; in Amos' track it is beautifully played upon as merging with the notion of the lost home, that was about to be established.

The author further introduces the category of whiteness. Ironically re-defining the "white swan" as the non-white Cherokee bride, the narrator speaks of the white men claiming their 'right,' "the white man came," "this land is my land" (Amos).[10] Impressively, the original "A Home" lyrics feature a verse saluting the removal of the "Red man" from the banks of Cimarron River:

> The red man was pressed from this part of the west,
> He's likely no more to return,
> To the banks of the Red River where seldom if ever
> Their flickering campfires burn (Lomax, 39)

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[10] Quite provocatively, the singer-songwriter implies the first line of possibly the most famous Woody Guthrie song "This Land is Your Land." The track was recorded by many other artists, and stands as an example of a subversive narrative in its own kind.

This verse is paralleled with a climactic moment in Amos' text. The narrator addresses America (or, rather, America's white supremacist partriarchal arrangements) in a bitter, ironic and quite a derogatory way, bringing forward the question of colonization/appropriation:

> yes, yes america!
> hey, ah, america!
> oh, who discovered your ass (Amos, "Home")

The track then floats back into the tranquility of the starting verse. Amos, exploiting the circle structure that is often found in folk tunes (bringing her back to the hypotext), presents the silenced version of the story that tears open the thick surface of the traditionally acknowledged narrative, even if for an instant, with all the difficulties of such narration remaining.

Ukrainian (Female) Orpheus. Although the lyrics of Iryna Bilyk's track "Ne Plach, Marichko" ("Don't Cry, Marichko") are originally created, the title of the song bears allusion to the archetypal figure of Marusia Churai. A kind of mythical Medea, Churai might have taken revenge for her lover's unfaithfulness—in this respect she is the survivor of a personal betrayal.

The song starts with the narrator addressing the protagonist, implying the parallel between them as singer-songwriters. All along, the opening dialogue touches upon the personal experience of a lonely survival:

> Ти кажеш, що він далеко,
> Ти кажеш: "На чужині."
> Ти кажеш: "Життя нестерпне!"
> Я відповідаю: "Ні!"
>
> You tell me he is away
> You tell me, "He is in the strange lands."
> You tell me, "Life is miserable!"
> But I'm responding, "No!" (Bilyk, "Ne Plach")

The absence of Marichka's man can be accounted for by a number of reasons: As a Cossack he might be away as part of the Cossack self-governed troops. In fact, those were the basis for the brief establishment of the Cossack Hetmanate, in the middle of the 17th century.[11] This version is quite optimistic,

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11   Because of numerous controversies within this Ukrainian state, it did not last long, but still holds a sacred status in Ukraine's official historiography as one of the brightest moments of the nation's actual independence.

but rather unlikely. Because Iryna Bilyk works with the hypotext creatively, and her protagonist might be placed outside the time of her actual living, the assumption goes that the protagonist's man had been recruited to serve in the imperial army—either Austro-Hungarian, or Russian. Both empires had long subordinated parts of Ukraine.

With the first assumption, Marichka's man attends to the cause of the state, but still bears the characteristics of a traitor on a personal level, while with the second, the protagonist's beloved embodies Ukrainian national (male) inability/betrayal. Particularly, this is what the song focuses upon—unraveling from the story of a personal to political betrayal and further into the archetypal story of outcasts. Ukraine—a nation without a state, with a status of (female) marginality—is easily inscribed in the latter.

Ukrainian scholar Nila Zborovska sees Ukraine as a Woman in a patriarchal world, thus bound for colonization and silencing, and claims that the feminine character of the basic national masculine type has defined Ukraine's specific Being in the world (*Feministychni Rozdumy* 80-81). The scholar later explains this condition as a "colonial perversion in the national character development" (Zborovska, *Kod Ukrayinskoyi Literatury* 11).

Since Bilyk's track features the figure of unconventional/female poet (thus rendered untrustworthy), the nation's iconic 'main' poet should be mentioned. Taras Shevchenko reads Ukraine (and, significantly, Ukrainian woman) in only two possible versions of the national femininity, Irina Zherebkina concludes (108). These are: 1. that of a seduced and betrayed young girl (usually a serf) becoming a betrayed lonely mother (*pokrytka*);[12] this type being 'worthy' of compassion; 2. that of a 'cruel' woman, trying to outlive her trauma from male betrayal by becoming violent (usually she is the former *pokrytka*); this type does not 'deserve' any compassion (Zherebkina 108). In Lacan's terms, Zherebkina states, the first topos of femininity may be considered 'high,' acquiring characteristics of a sacred object (the masochistic type); the second topos is that of a 'bad' object, acquiring characteristics of a thing (constituting the sadistic type) (112-113).

It is emblematic that both images are absent from the analyzed track by Bilyk; even if some features withstand, the singer-songwriter creates a drastically different meaning employing the traditional form. For instance, there is

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[12] *Pokrytka* stands for a young girl who has lost her virginity and has given birth outside marriage. She is then publicly humiliated, with community performing a ritual of cutting her long hair, after which she has to wear a headscarf. A headscarf in traditional Ukrainian culture is an attribute of a married woman. For pokrytka it is a humiliating symbol of her lost status as a virgin.

an implication of a 'bad' violent woman's presence in Marichka's image ("Ти кажеш, що вчора вкрала" / "You tell me you stole yesterday") (Bilyk). However, Marichka's ways are justified in the very next line through externalization, "Не красти ж сьогодні—гріх" / "Since not stealing is sin these days" (Bilyk). The ways of personal survival might be twisted, but what can one do if there is corruption in the ways of survival of the nation—with opportunistic deals of Ukraine's patriarchal arrangement, 'ensuring' the state is continually 'stolen' from the people. Additionally, where one would expect a lonely young woman (a kind of a *pokrytka*) in need of compassion/pity, there is the next re-definition: Marichka is empowered as (unconventional) poet/prophet/savior. It is her poetic gift that drives the protagonist out of the sado-masochistic couple of Ukrainian symbolic femininity, and onto the territory of creation (not procreation) commonly prescribed to men. Remarkably, her stealing act is humbly redeemed by/paralleled to her act of creation, opening way to self-victimization and personal scapegoating ("А потім вірші писала / Й молилась за нас за всіх" / "And then you were putting down verses / and then you were praying for us all") (Bilyk). An eloquent link is present between the practices of poetry and selfless prayer.

The lonely Marichka stands for the image of an undefined stateless nation, and she could have remained just the reflection of it (as in Taras Shevchenko). But the narrator of Bilyk's track accentuates Marichka's self-sacrificial mission as poet, burdened by the sole fact that she is female. Under the conditions of statelessness it is precisely the female poet figure that in Bilyk's reading fulfills, in Platonic sense, the poet's role in the harmonious establishment of the polis (nation). Plato's *Republic* features a claim that the poet is "thrice removed from the king and from the truth," and that the true poets are necessarily those in possession of knowledge at the moment of poetic creation allowing them closer to the truth (Plato Book X). Bilyk's Marichka, a marginal female poet of a nation without a 'king' (state), skips within Plato's hierarchy directly to the truth.

Another layer of the protagonist's polyvalent image is that of Mary Magdalene. The figure silenced among the Apostles, one of the ultimate Others, Magdalene is compared not only to Marichka—the homeless female poet, but to Ukraine. Further on, the narrator of the track identifies herself, as (non-recognized) poet/creator/prophet, unheard in her own land, with all the mentioned figures. Interpreted as scapegoats (in Girard's terms) and God's poor ("the poor in spirit"), they become responsible for Ukraine's survival:

> Марічка і Магдалина—
> На зле повелось обом.

> Марічка і Україна
> Край шляху стоять разом.
> Чекають та й виглядають,
> Чи краще іде життя.
> Замислилась і не знаю,
> Здалося вона—то я.
>
> Marichka and Magdalene
> Oh, unlucky they are.
> Marichka and Ukraine,
> They stand together, there, by the roadside.
> They wait and they look after it
> If life is getting any better,
> I thought to myself, although I cannot really tell,
> It seems that she is me (Bilyk, "Ne Plach")

Despite the self-sacrificial nature of the (unheard) prophet's mission, each re-frain of the track is yet another appeal to the poet to use her gift for the sake of staying on a missionary way:

> Не плач, Марічко, не плач,
> Не плач, серце не край,
> Не плач, Марічко, не плач,
> Співай, Марічко, співай!
>
> Don't cry, Marichko, don't cry
> Don't cry, don't cry your heart out
> Don't cry, Marichko, don't cry
> Sing, Marichko, sing (Bilyk, "Ne Plach")

The necessity to 'sing' (create) is pronounced as the task of utmost impor-tance. Archetypally Marusia Churai (who stopped singing and writing after being convicted of murder) has been portrayed as the silenced (female) Soul of Ukraine, or, if Zborovska's definition of Ukraine as Woman is applied, Ukraine itself.[13] The multivalence of the image becomes obvious: the self-imposed silence equals death for a poet; any silence equals betrayal, if a poet is a true one (in Plato's terms); all along though, the patriarchal logic of

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[13]   Note the tragic irony in the common national thinking made obvious in Zborovska's example of an anecdote on Ukrainian national features, "At least, we sing beautifully" (*Feministychni Rozdumy* 81).

silencing a woman equals normative practice. Marichka's duty to 'sing' rather than lament over her fate (or, Ukraine's fate) is how Iryna Bilyk reads her own duty as singer-songwriter.

"Ne Plach, Marichko" presents an unorthodox perspective of a female creator, leaving the domain of (sadomasochistic) personal and taking on political responsibility of constructing a nation. It is alluring in this respect to take a look at Orpheus whom William Freiert defines as "the figure of alterity" (36). Freiert renders Orpheus' rejection of *logos* as revealing (37), and sees his music as "a language that antedates and then parallels the conventional language of the polis" (32). Bilyk's Marichka, the female poet on a mission of building a nation, has her music as well. Sometimes Orpheus might be a Woman, at least the Ukrainian Orpheus is one.

Conclusions: Authorial Deconstruction as a Struggle to Narrate the 'Unpronounceable'

At the time of "Ne Plach, Marichko's" release in 2003, Iryna Bilyk was still the first and most important pop star of independent Ukraine. Starting out in the 1990s, when Ukrainian popular culture industry was quite non-institutionalized and the state was struggling for self-identification, Bilyk remembers these conditions even at the peak of her career, at the turn of the millennium. Namely, she remembers her creative freedom and thus, bravely voices the 'unpronounceable' on "Ne Plach, Marichko." The narrator's dialogue with the female poet evolves around the ongoing Ukrainian condition of national (male) betrayal. Importantly, this situation is enunciated by the voice of a woman placed outside the boundaries of the sadomasochistic national femininity due to her subject position as (unheard) author/poet. Having presumably identified her own mission with that of the protagonist, the Ukrainian singer-songwriter defines not only the past, but also the present condition of the nation. Still, because the message is brought forward by the marginalized female poet, it remains largely muted—hence the narrator's appeal to the poet to never cease 'singing.' With the inclusion of marginalized sacrificial figures of archetypal (non-national) nature into the polyvalent image of the poet/prophet/Mary Magdalene paralleled to Ukraine, there appears the reading of them through the optics of the scapegoated Other. All along, the 'singing' of all the personae equals Ukraine's existence. Bilyk symbolically emphasizes that the central event of national (male) failure has never entered the instituted imaginary, and therefore is pictured as continuing. It is quite interesting how this national circumstance enables the dialogue

between the narrator and the protagonist, and not just the narration of the event— somewhat similar to how the initially non-institutionalized Ukrainian popular culture industry (post-Soviet/'Eastern' condition) has once enabled the singer-songwriter's creative independence.

In the 'Western' case of Tori Amos there is presence of both full state-hood and the operative popular culture industry. She, thus, addresses the distinct episode of the official historiography (The Indian Removal Act which she calls "Jackson's deals"). The extension added to the original name of the song signals the act of re-telling. A Cherokee's story muted in the grand narrative is a *herstory* that needs to be pronounced; however, any anticipation of the Cherokee's own voice is frustrated, as the narrator of the track only talks of the protagonist. Therefore, Amos not only provides the repressed version of the well-known events, but also creatively analyzes the patriarchal conditions of nation state formation—and especially the mechanism of muting the event that has entered the instituted imaginary. In accentuating this, Amos decides to leave her protagonist silent, instead 'lending' her story to the narrator. On the one hand, voicing the silenced disrupts the patriarchal logic, on the other—voicing them only by means of the author's voice follows it. It might be that Amos utilizes the logic of binary oppositions to debase it: by silencing the voice of the Cherokee she, as author (read synonymously to the (male) creator of a historiography, a discourse, a narrative), demonstrates the patriarchal 'right' for and the very mode of silencing in action.

Both singer-songwriters (with Bilyk drawing inspiration from Amos' subversive strategies) try to realize what Judith Peraino defines as one of the functions of a song—that of "inviting an imagining of what things would be like if they were different" (3). The dramatic experience behind Amos and Bilyk's efforts is their revelation that the "if" area (or the traumatic experience) remains inaccessible even for description, despite the courageous act of voicing the 'inappropriate.' However, the 'Eastern' enunciation insists on the potentiality of dialoguing, while the 'Western' condition intricately appropriates the disruptive attempts at making the silenced heard, instead leaving the attempting with the sole possibility of exposing the workings of the patriarchal logic.

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M. KATHARINA WIEDLACK

"American Boy, American Joy"—Gendered National Imaginations between Russia and the United States of America[1]

> *"If we accept that US-Russian relations are at least in part about love, then America is the ultimate bad boyfriend."*
> *(Borenstein)*

This paper addresses the existence of gendered national representations that influenced popular discourses, and arguably politics, during the dissolution of the former Soviet Union (USSR). This work focuses especially on the construction of the United States of America as a potent male heterosexual nation in contrast to a feminine and promiscuous post-Soviet Russia by analyzing a selection of popular songs by Kombinaciya, a 1990s Russian female pop band. This investigation of gendered national identities is accomplished through an analysis of the songs "American Boy" (1990), which tells a tale of a Russian girl dreaming about an American boy who will take her abroad, as well as "Russian Girl" (1990), which describes the love between foreigners and Russian women. The findings are tested against Kimberley William's argument that the image of a feminized (in this case geopolitically weakened) Russia compared to a masculinized America, represented by a primarily white male "U.S. foreign policy elite" (Williams 22) lies at the center of the American national identity, in an effort to conclude if or how Russian representations mirror the American cultural and political influence during the 1990s. Additionally, I include an analysis of a modern amateur video of "American Boy," which was produced in 2011 to ridicule the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, who danced to the song at a private party. I argue that although the song was initially produced to confirm masculinized American triumphalism, its ironic repetition does not only ridicule Medvedev, but also irritates the co-construction of a masculine potent U.S.A. and a feminine and sexualized Russia. In other words, I argue that the video of Medvedev dancing to "American Boy" in 2011 equally addresses the gender

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[1] Kombinaciya 1990.

of national identity as the initial song did in 1990. A comparison between the two cultural artefacts against their historic background shows how the gendered representation between the U.S.A. and Russia has changed.

National Identity, Femininity and Masculinity in Times of Turmoil

The songs "American Boy" and "Russian Girl"—both released in 1990—were amongst the most successful hits of the popular Russian band Kombinaciya. The band was founded in Saratov, Russia in 1988 and consisted of six, later five, young women, styled in the latest fashion of the late 1980s/early 1990s, which consisted of big hair, tight pants and the obligatory shoulder pads. The official pictures of Kombinaciya depict that the group challenged the image of stereotypical Russian women during the Soviet Union, as their style followed the latest international fashion trends, and their sound incorporated the latest international technical and musical standards. The group's name equally challenged assumptions of Soviet seriousness, as Kombinaciya is a sexualized joke; it is "the Russian word both for 'combination' and a woman's frilly slip" (Seplow). Kombinaciya's songs included melodies that easily stuck in your head and the typical pop-song dance rhythm. Music journalists point out that "American Boy" "had some serious staying-power;" (Burke n. pag.) it was, and still is, frequently played at parties and on the radio, and "[i]n 2009, the Ukrainian electronic group Stream put out a house-music remix," (Burke n. pag.) and thereby newly contributed to the song's popularity. In a recent instance, an April 2011 YouTube video shows the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev "gettin' down to 'American Boy' at a college reunion" (Burke n. pag.), which went viral and was reported on in the U.S. and international media (Papenfuss, "It's Disco Medvedev").

It is evident that these two songs play with the stereotypical Cinderella story, but they also address the history of the Cold War, where Russian-U.S. relationships were essentially non-existent. Additionally, the song needs to be read against the tragic reality of what scholars call "the mail-order bride

industry" (Chun 1155).[2] During the early 1990s a strong industry emerged
that facilitated transnational marriages. In newspapers and later on the Inter-
net, Russian and Asian women advertised themselves to a Western, mostly
male U.S. clientele. In "American Boy," a Russian woman praises herself in a
couple of crude clichés in the Russian language. For instance, she states that
"I play the balalaika / It is the most Russian instrument" (Kombinaciya,
"American Boy," translated in MacWilliams 151). She continues with the line
"I dream of living in Jamaica / In Jamaica, there are no balalaikas," choosing
the place presumably for the sake of the rhyme, rather than for a specific
meaning. Jamaica stands for a distant place, a place that is not Russia, here
symbolized by the balalaikas, a common Russian instrument. Russia is the
place where

> there is no happiness in my personal life / My years are passing by in vain / so
> where are you my foreign prince? / Come for me faster / I am waiting for you
> (Kombinaciya, "American Boy," translated in MacWilliams 151).

The foreign rescuer, however, is not as arbitrary as the geographical place she
longs to be; it is the "American boy," who should bring her "American joy."
The chorus "American boy, American joy / American boy for always time" is
sung in the English language, ending with the Russian stance "American boy
I am leaving with you / I am leaving with you—Goodbye, Moscow"
(Kombinaciya, "American Boy," translated in MacWilliams 151).

   Kombinaciya's "American Boy" reflects the turmoil, uncertainty and final
depression of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 1980s
had been a period of economy stagnation and hopelessness. When Mikhail
Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he implemented two main policies:
glasnost (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). Through the lifting cen-
sorship and ideological control, *glasnost* introduced transparency into the
USSR in attempt to create an environment more welcoming to political and
cultural diversity. *Perestroika* focused on the restructuring of the political and
economic sectors. The formerly state-run economy became open to the pri-
vate sector as well as to domestic and foreign investment. The reforms, how-
ever, did not bring the much-desired revival. The whole economy collapsed

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[2]   By 1996, the Philippines and Russia served "as the principal suppliers of mail-order brides"
     (Chun 1157) to the U.S.A. "Although a few countries targeted by the bridal agencies oppose
     the bride trade, the United States and the international legal system support the industry's
     legality" (Chun 1157). As of 1996, the business was largely unregulated, unmonitored and
     unstudied. "The United States has responded to the trafficking of mail-order brides only
     through immigration laws" (Chun 1157).

and the 15 Soviet republics including—Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Georgia, Latvia, Estonian, Lithuania— separated. The Soviet regime failed to catch up with the rapid changes that the area of the former USSR underwent.

> In June 1990, the Russian Parliament, the Congress of People's Deputies, decided to begin drafting a new constitution. At this time, Russia was the largest republic of the Soviet Union; a multi-national state, composed of 15 Union republics ruled by the Communist Party. Three years later, in June 1993, the Congress of People's Deputies was still trying to draft a new constitution, but in a completely different context: Russia was an independent country and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. (Morgan-Jones 1)

Against the disastrous economic and social conditions, as well as the political disorientation in the former Soviet republics, the new proliferation of movies such as "Gone with the Wind," which were translated into Russian and played in Russian movie theaters in spring of 1991 (cf. Mitchell), offered handsome and strong American movie stars that rescued beautiful women in distress. Journalist Thea Singer summarized the public image of the American male in the Boston Herald in 1994 in the following way: "[M]ovies, TV, and massive PR efforts have given American Men an image of elegance, ambition, and success" (Singer 4). It was not only the imagined attractiveness and smoothness of the American man that made them so appealing in the eyes of Kombinaciya. In post-Soviet Russia, "[t]he old system was falling apart and the contours of the new one had not yet been defined during the early 1990s" and most of "[t]he Russian elite was looking to the West as the main factor of development," according to political analyst Lilia Shevtsova (32). Culturally, Russians equally looked at the West. Kombinaciya serves as an example of a group that successfully adapted the Western pop-style to their Russian context. Contrary to common belief shared by Westerners, especially in the United States, Russians were never completely closed off from the world of consumer goods and culture. American jazz (Borenstein), rock'n'roll and pop culture landed on Soviet Russian soil and found its fans, like everywhere else. During the 1990s, however, the gaze towards the West was intensified and much political hope was invested in the U.S.-Russian relationship (cf. Sakwa, Borenstein, Shevtsova).

Considering the orientation of the cultural and political elite in the West as well as the general political and social climate of hopelessness in the post-

Soviet Russia, Kombinaciya's wish for an "American Boy" might have been more than just a woman's dream. Feminist scholar Kimberly Williams argues that Russia historically represented itself as feminized and that this "feminized presentation of itself has heavily influenced depictions of Russia and Russians in the U.S. media, particularly in film and television, over the course of the last century—and most definitely after 1991" (21). If Williams' statement that Russia has long presented itself as feminized is true, the depiction of the Russian girl in Kombinaciya's "American Boy" cannot only be read as representation of Russia as a country, but by extending Williams' argument, it suggests that Russia's feminization was always in reference to a Western—in this case American—counterpart. In other words, the gendering of Russia as a feminine country and territory was always in relation to the West, which was primarily represented by the United States from the second half of the 20th century onwards, given the intense relationship that the two countries had during the Cold War. As such, Russian popular culture supported the gendering of Russia as well as the United States, and produced gender as integral parts of the countries' national identities.

Williams further argues that "the narrative and visual depictions of Russia and Russians by/in the U.S. media has enabled the creation not only of a gendered (feminized and/or emasculated) Russian imaginary that (at least rhetorically) serves to weaken Russia geopolitically" (21). Moreover, such an image of Russia is an integral part of what she calls the "triumphalist mythscape so central to American national identity, […] a gendered (masculinized) American imaginary that emboldens the (mostly white male) members of the U.S. foreign policy elite" (Williams 22). Williams continues by showing how U.S. presidents adapted the image of the 'American cowboy' to demonstrate their (world) leadership and power. The Russian political elite during the late 1980s and early 1990s could not compete with such the image of the 'American cowboy,' nor was it in their immediate focus to do so. They had clearly more pressing economic and political issues to resolve and they directed their gaze to the Western economies for help. Even if Gorbachev—the first president of the Russian Federation—and his communist party were concerned regarding the feminization of Russia and its "configuration of itself as the world's prostitute, recycled and reconfigured from the Silver Age" (Williams 15), the last general secretary in the history of the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet political elite made no visible attempts to make masculinity a visible and important feature of the post-Soviet Russian national identity—that task was left for future President Vladimir Putin (Sperling, "Putin" 36-38). Rather, during the post-communist transitional period, the leaders of the new Russian Federation turned to the West for assistance. The image of

the 'American cowboy,' although without an equally masculine Russian challenger for the time being, nevertheless did leave an impression.

The fact that Russian leaders turned to the Western world for help during their post-Soviet transition and the availability of images of strong masculine heroes through Hollywood films might have inspired Kombinaciya's cry for an "American Boy." A third aspect, however, was the seemingly inability of Russian men to save their country or provide appropriately for Russian women. Numerous Russian scholars—such as Katherine Verdery, Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux, Elena Zdravomyslova and Anna Temkina—and U.S. political scientist Valerie Sperling argue that Soviet ideology infantilized and demasculinzed Russian men. They argue that the lack of personal responsibility, personal ownership, competition and independence created the feeling that the Russian male population's influence and power was circumcised and their masculinity diminished. Following the opening of the market economy and the resulting drastic impoverishment, new "market-derived standards emerged for masculine achievements" (Sperling, "Putin" 60). The inability to meet these new standards, however, had an even greater de-masculinizing effect (Riabova and Riabov 57), leading to what can be called a crisis in gender identity. Although the Soviet idea of a man, which was equated with a worker, was soon replaced "through the image 'muzhik'" (Sperling, "Putin" 60)—the 'real man,' such an image was unavailable and unattractive for the young pop culture-oriented women in Kombinaciya in 1990. The glossy magazines, which flooded Russia at that time equated a male's success with financial success (Sperling, "Putin" 60). Due to the fact that financial success was rare, if at all possible, for the Russian male at the time, it is not surprising that Kombinaciya chose an "American Boy" to be their male hero. The U.S.A. is commonly associated with economic freedom and the possibility of great success is at the heart of the American Dream (Hanson and White 4). Although the post-communist transition allowed for the transformation of the image of the de-masculinized Soviet man, the initial image was rather unappealing to the new Russian society. The Russian or "'traditional Slavic macho' in the 1990s" was rough and crude, and his financial success derived from his overtly masculine and authoritative demeanor "gangster style" (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 30). This image of the "krutoi" (Sperling, "Putin" 60)—a word derived from prison lingo meaning 'a real mean'—depicted a "macho, authoritative demeanor" (Sperling, "Putin"

60); however, the "krutoi" image later lost its edgy qualities and morphed into the successful testosterone masculinity of the Putin era (cf. Zdravomyslova and Temkina 30).

The Emergence of a New Russian Man

Upon his election in 2000, the conspicuous nature of President Putin's masculinity became the standard for the new Russian man. The YouTube video of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev dancing to "American Boy" proves that the new Russian male ideal is based on Putin.[3] The clip "had drawn nearly 300 comments only hours after it was posted on the Internet site" and it had "more than 72,000 views" on April 22, 2011, according to the *Daily Mail* ("It's Disco Medvedev"). The video served as a source of laughter and ridicule around the world, especially in Russia and Russian-speaking communities. The always tidily groomed Medvedev was increasingly seen as weak, especially against the ever more masculine appearing Putin, and caricatures often showed him as Putin's puppet ("Vladimir Putin with a Dmitry Medvedev Puppet"). Considering the newly manifesting Russian nationalism, which arguably arrived with a strong emphasis on masculinity and homophobia as well as anti-Western attitude, Medvedev's *YouTube* performance must be interpreted as infringement of this new Russian nationalism on many levels.

The start of Putin's second term in office in 2004 produced a new model of masculinity that manifested itself to a previously unseen degree within the Russian public and media. This new image of the Russian male coincided with decreased efforts to cooperate with Western nations, especially the United States to the point where analysts started speaking of a New Cold War (Sakwa 243). Riabov and Riabova argue that the promotion campaign to sell Putin's overtly and cordial masculinity was a broader strategy to "re-masculinize" Russia domestically and internationally (57). Under the reign of Putin, "Russia had to embody—or be perceived as embodying—a set of traditionally masculine characteristics, which include independence and strength. Therefore, the Kremlin's PR strategy of emphasizing Putin's outward physical signs of masculinity echoed Putin's own declarations in 1999 about Russia's need to 'get off its knees' and demonstrate its power" (Riabova and Riabov quoted in Sperling, "Putin" 77). Sperling, Riabova, Riabov and others

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3   The original upload is no longer available, but a later uploaded video titled "Dmitry Medvedev dancing Disco-hit 'American boy' (Kombinacija)—Russian President dance Moves" showing the same event can be watched at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCwp 28d2Kzc>. 20 Aug. 2017.

argue that the specific gender norms—frequently labeled as 'traditional'—
were increasingly used for political legitimation. The end of the Cold War
created an opportunity "for masculine contestation in foreign affairs"
(Sperling, "Putin" 75) and Putin's regime took the opportunity to strongly
support, if not create, a new Russian national identity. This new masculine
Russia was embodied by its president himself, who appeared in macho poses
such as hunting, fighting, and other activities that display his physical
strength.

   During the 1990s, a feeling of national pride lacked amongst Soviet and
later Russian citizens (Sperling, "Putin" 75, "Making the Public Patriotic"
218). The Soviet Union had been seen as superpower, but the new Russia
could no longer claim this title. The shrunken country's financial situation
was in great jeopardy, the transformation from a state into a market-capitalist
economy was turbulent and disrupted by corruption and opportunism. Ad-
ditionally, the strong presence "of Western consultants [and] advisors"
(Sperling, "Putin" 75), only contributed to the feelings of defeat as Sperling
describes:

> Russia had been reduced from the status of a world leader equal to the United
> States to that of a troubled and recalcitrant pupil in need of outside assistance.
> By the end of the decade Russians' feeling of patriotism and national pride had
> considerably deteriorated. Economic chaos, a devastating war in Chechnya
> […], the loss of communism as an official state ideology that had at least
> proclaimed that the country was in the vanguard of a worldwide communist
> movement toward paradise on earth—these woes and others plagued Russia's
> government and population in the first post-Soviet decade. (75)

Williams and Sperling argue that the masculine superiority and power of the
U.S.A. in comparison with Russia was reflected in the self-presentation of nu-
merous U.S. leaders on a symbolic level, including President Ronald Reagan
(Williams 16) and President George W. Bush (Williams 186; Sperling,
"Putin" 77). Reagan represented the "rugged cowboy [with] white hat, plaid
shirt, blue jeans and boots" (Williams 16). Like Reagan, Bush sold the U.S.-
American macho cowboy all to well, while Putin seemed too urban and so-
phisticated in contrast. By 2011, however, at the time when the infamous
video of Medvedev dancing to and mimicking the lyrics of "American Boy"
went viral, "Putin's PR team had caught on, releasing bare-chested photos of
Putin on a Siberian fishing trip—apparently responding to or echoing the
'rugged outdoorsman' image used by Bush" (Sperling, "Putin" 77; see also
Williams 186-188). Medvedev's effeminate appearance compared to the new

masculine Putin was re-enforced by his dancing to "American Boy." Interestingly, the emphasis of the presidential and general Russian masculinity was also frequently set in relation to the U.S.A. and its (former) presidents (Holland, "Putin to Bush: My Dog is Bigger Than Yours"). "National pride required meeting or exceeding the masculine image of the Western rival and his country. National masculinity, like individual masculinity, is thus a relative or relational condition" (Sperling, "Putin" 77), Sperling argues. Between Russia and the U.S.A. it was never Medvedev who was competing, though. Shortly after the upload of the *YouTube* video of Medvedev's "American Boy" dance, multiple videos titled "Barack Obama vs. Dmitry Medvedev"[4] appeared, uploaded by Russian providers. The videos showed Medvedev in comparison to President Obama dancing at *The Ellen Degeneres Show*, a popular TV show hosted by lesbian comedian Ellen Degeneres. Such videos must be read as equally ridiculing the American President, as well as Medvedev in a homophobic and anti-feminist gesture, considering their Russian context of origin. Obama is not understood as the strong macho his predecessor Bush was, nor is the U.S.A. still the world power it used to be. While this fact grants President Obama a liberal fellow-ship within the U.S.A. and abroad, it is read as weakness in a comparison looking for masculine power. Medvedev, a placeholder for Putin, is feminine and weak, the video seems to suggest, but so is the U.S.A. "With the election of Barack Obama to the presidency, global attitudes toward America are changing. [Only] the Russian elite, stuck in the past, still accuses America of dictating to the world" (Shevtsova 128). Even the U.S.-American *Forbes Magazine* crowned Putin the number 1 of the world's most powerful people, granting second place to the German president Angela Merkel, and only third place to Barack Obama ("The World's Most Powerful People").

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4   One of those videos titled "Обама против Медведьева / Barack Obama vs. Dmitry Medvedev, dance contest" can be found under <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-awk5Z nzCY>. 20 Aug. 2017.

Russian Girls—"Caught in a Bad Romance"[5]

Before closing this discussion, I briefly want to address "American Boy's" lesser-known pendant "Russian Girl," to reinforce my previously made arguments. "Russian Girl" speaks again from the position of a Russian woman addressing foreign men, but this time, the relationship is not in the future but lies in the past.

> One day I went for a walk with a foreigner
> He escorted me home.
> He invited me to the embassy to a dance,
> And then under the window,
> Standing on his knees,
> He whispered (not in Russian of course, and so there is something foreign):
> Russian Russian Russian girls My baby
> Give me, give me only love
> Russian Russian Russian girls You take my soul
> He went back to Copenhagen Left me here
> This is what they do, Those foreign guys
> And next year I decided To get married
> And after that […] To hell with it
> I don't even want to talk about it.
> (Kombinaciya, "Russian Girl," my translation)

In this case, the song is addressing a foreign male of unknown citizenship, however, the disillusionment could equally apply to an American male. Again, the song speaks uncomfortably to the history of the mail-order bride industry (cf. Chun) as well as the intense sex trafficking from Russia to the U.S.A. during the 1990s (Williams 93-96), because it addresses the hopes and dreams the Russian woman has with regards to foreign men. Additionally, the song implicitly speaks to the relationship of the two nations and its populations. The United States, with its lavish and wasteful consumer culture, pop-culture industry and individualism, had an appeal to most young people all over the world. Russians were no less lovers of "jazz (broadcast on Voice of America for years)," "blue jeans," (Borenstein), Elvis Presley or Madonna than any other nation. For most Russians, "this love was political only to the

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5   Borenstein, Eliot. "Caught in a Bad Romance: What America Means to Russia." *Public Books*. 15 October 2015. Web. 20 Aug. 2017. <www.publicbooks.org/nonfiction/russia-today -part-1#borenstein>.

extent that turning one's attention to the 'enemy' was a politicized gesture. The appeal did not stem from the U.S. economic system or democratic institutions as Russians were not seeking 'freedom' or the 'American Dream;' they were simply charmed," Russian studies scholar Eliot Borenstein argues, describing the 'love-affair' between Russia and the United States. This distant love ended rather sadly and with great disillusionment when the U.S.A. failed to provide the Russians with the aid and support that they hoped for based on the initial interest showed by the U.S. government and non-government organizations (NGO) regarding the development of Russia in the early 1990s.

> America was briefly infatuated with Russia and the Soviet Union during Gorbachev's perestroika […]. The damage, however, was done: for at least five years (late perestroika through 1993), citizens of the (former) Soviet Union could justifiably convince themselves that we were actually concerned about their well-being. We sent them McDonalds and Pizza Hut, and eventually humanitarian aid in the form of chicken ("Bush legs," as Russians called them) and leftover Desert Storm MREs. More ominously, we sent our "experts" to reform/ruin the national economy, and acted as indefatigable cheerleaders for the country's new democratic institutions (even when Russia's president disbanded and then shelled the country's parliament in 1993). And, by the end of the 1990s, we more or less forgot about them. (Borenstein)

America turned out to be the "ultimate bad boyfriend" (Borenstein) in the brief U.S.-Russian love affair. Accordingly, Kombinaciya's "To hell with it" ("Russian Girl," my translation) was equally prophetic regarding the Russian attitude towards the West, specifically the United States, as their expectation of the American Dream/"American Boy" turned out to be a phony. Russia recovered its national pride from the shards of their disappointment. Newly choosing the West, and the U.S.A. in particular, as its opposition; the old American masculine superiority now serves as a rival to the new masculine Russian strength. Ironically, the Russian choice of sexist and homophobic masculinity sought to challenge an equally masculine superpower that has a more subtle, liberal and prudent U.S. president that welcomes diversity and a nation dedicated to human rights, at least on the very surface. The change in U.S. representation of the American male did not really irritate Russia's gender identity. On the contrary, the United States' commitment to LGBT rights, gender equality and other human rights seems to serve as grounds for Russia to distance itself even more from the United States. However, for the researcher of Russian-American cultural relations, it is at least a source of

pleasure and pain to compare the blatant, over the top masculinity and hidden homoeroticism of a Vladimir Putin and a George W. Bush, two sides of a medal titled "American Boy" by Kombinaciya.

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Notes on Contributors

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This collection examines how the signifier 'America' functions as an intermediary in the production of transnational identities and analyzes how different forms of cultural exchange between 'East' and 'West' are constituted in literary and cultural texts. In particular, the essays investigate the transnational flow of cultural texts, analyzing how, by whom, and to what purposes and effects (pop)cultural practices have been appropriated and transferred to local contexts and how the significance of place, especially the category of the national, has changed in the process. Analyzing various spaces of cultural transmission, the articles focus on patterns of movement and the flows of culture in order to approximate the question of whether the dialogue with 'America' in the 21st century still plays a vital role in the production of 'European' identities. What specific role does the flexibility and adaptability of the signifier 'American' play in this intermediary function of American culture? This book therefore gauges the potential and the limits of 'American' culture as a third term that can 'other' both national and European traditions (for identification or dis-identification) and can serve to reconstruct and to transgress national cultural identities.