

STUDIES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

EDITORS

FRANS AMELINCKX
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln

MICHAEL OSSAR
Kansas State University

EDITORIAL BOARD FROM KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

LOREN ALEXANDER
DOUGLAS BENSON
DONALD BUCK
HEINZ BULMAHN
ROBERT CORUM

CLAIRE DEHON
WALTER F. KOLONOSKY
BETTY McGRAW
THOMAS A. O'CONNOR
KENNETH RIVERS

BRADLEY A. SHAW

EDITORIAL BOARD FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

RALPH ALBANESE
BRUCE ERLICH
WILLIAM GIBBON
LUIS GONZALEZ-DEL-VALLE

BRUCE KOCHIS
NICOLE FOULETIER-SMITH
RICHARD W. TYLER
REINO VIRTANEN

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

ANNA BALAKIAN
New York University

ELIZABETH K. BEAUJOUR
*Hunter College of
The City University of New York*

LLOYD BISHOP
*Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University*

H. L. BOUDREAU
*University of Massachusetts,
Amherst*

WILLIAM BUSH
University of Western Ontario

VICENTE CABRERA
Colorado State University

ROBERT CHAMPIGNY
Indiana University, Bloomington

RONALD CHRIST
Rutgers University

VERENA CONLEY
Iowa State University

JOSEPH L. CONRAD
The University of Kansas

E. J. CZERWINSKI
*State University of New York,
Stony Brook*

NED DAVISON
The University of Utah

ANDREW P. DEBICKI
University of Kansas

PETER G. EARLE
University of Pennsylvania

JOHN MARTIN ELLIS
University of California, Santa Cruz

VICTOR ERLICH
Yale University

ROBERTO GONZALEZ ECHEVARRIA
Yale University

SUMNER M. GREENFIELD
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

KARL S. GUTHKE
Harvard University

JOST HERMAND
The University of Wisconsin, Madison

PETER U. HOHENDAHL
Cornell University

TAMARA HOLZAPFEL
The University of New Mexico

DJELAL KADIR
Purdue University

VICTOR LANGE
Princeton University

CONTENTS — FALL 1982

- “German Culture is where I am”: Thomas Mann in Exile.
Helmut Koopmann 5

Abstract. Thomas Mann in exile reacted like many writers expelled from Germany: totally irritated he tried to defend his own identity by claiming that he was still the leading representative of Germany. But about 1938 a process of dissociation from Germany started which led to sharp remarks on Germany in his *The Beloved Returns*, to his conviction that German culture was where he lived and to the acknowledgement of America as his new home. Traces of his experience of exile, and a late answer on his separation from Germany in 1933, however, are to be found even in his incompleting novel *Felix Krull* which seems to have turned the disgusting experience of exile into friendly mythological light. (HK)

- Kafka's Writing Machine: Metamorphosis in the Penal Colony.
Arnold Weinstein 21

Abstract. Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" is a problematic story, largely because of the conflicting interpretations it has received: does its famous machine dispense grace or torture? Is Kafka giving us a parable of Old vs. New Law? How does the "liberal" explorer or the "liberal" reader assess the Officer's impassioned pleading for the Machine and the kind of justice it serves? A strange kind of coherence emerges, however, when one focusses on the central unifying motif of the story: understanding. The tale itself is little more than the Officer's desperate effort to make the explorer-reader understand; the machine itself makes its victim understand the nature of justice. Language is, of course, a primary vehicle for understanding, and Kafka's story dramatizes two radically opposed languages: verbal and physical. All efforts to bridge the distance between people, between matter and spirit, seem to fail, at least insofar as spoken language is concerned; the machine's mission is to create physical language, an unmediated script which is the reality of which it speaks. By writing

the crime onto and into the flesh of the criminal, the machine offers a sublime and frightening figure of “visceral knowledge,” of the open self as the opened self. By entering into the machine himself, the Officer undergoes the classic Kafka metamorphosis: he becomes the prisoner, and he thereby suffers knowledge. The entire parable may be seen as an illustration of the writer’s yearning for a language so potent that the reader would experience, “in the flesh,” the writer’s words. Kafka’s own narrative techniques aim at precisely such a metamorphosis in the reader. (AW)

The Gulag Archipelago: From Inferno to Paradiso.

David Matual 35

Abstract. It is apparent from the title of his novel *The First Circle* and from various details there and in other works that Alexander Solzhenitsyn is familiar with at least the imagery of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. One direct and several indirect references to it also suggest a Dantean subtext in his longest and most ambitious project, *The Gulag Archipelago*. Indeed, the *loci* of the *Comedy*—*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*—are transformed in the *Gulag* into metaphorical representations of the various stages in the development of man’s consciousness—and especially Solzhenitsyn’s consciousness—during the ordeals of arrest, inquest, imprisonment, and exile.

The *Inferno* is surely the most prominent and in some ways the most memorable part of Solzhenitsyn’s work. It is the phase in which most of the *zeks* live—the phase of unremitting hatred, cynicism, and selfishness caused by the cruelty and degradation of their experiences in prisons and labor camps. It is a life among rapacious thieves and police informers, a life in which only the self matters.

The *Purgatorio* is the stage reached by those who, like Solzhenitsyn himself, begin to question the validity of all ideologies and who recognize and admire the strength of those whose personality derives from an uncompromisingly spiritual worldview. But in the *Purgatorio* the light of understanding is just beginning to penetrate the darkness; the process of spiritual rebirth is in an embryonic state.

When a *zek* crosses the threshold of the *Paradiso* (as Solzhenitsyn clearly does—notably in Part IV), he attains a wisdom and understanding not yet accessible to the majority of men. He realizes that attachments to property, possessions, and even loved ones only add to the sufferings of the prisoners. He now knows that the life of the spirit, divorced from earthly preoccupations, is the only life that is eternal and inviolate. With that realization he has achieved the ultimate knowledge and the ultimate happiness. (DM)

Tchen's Sacred Isolation—Prelude to Malraux's Fraternal Humanism.

Roch C. Smith 45

Abstract. While Malraux's life-long quest was to seek new values in man's perennial and shared struggle against an overwhelming fate, his early protagonist, particularly the assassin, turns to destruction and terrorism in a frenzied search for absolutes. This attempt to identify with the very fatality that has the power to destroy him is especially developed in Tchen, who embodies a despairing fascination with totalistic nihilism that Malraux must overcome in his search for a new notion of man. Tchen's initiation to murder in *La Condition humaine* marks a transgression of a taboo that thrusts him into what Georges Bataille calls the realm of the "sacred." His attempt to reconcile life and death by identifying with his victim irredeemably isolates Tchen from other, uninitiated men. Transformed by murder, he leaves the reality of revolution for the inhuman world of cosmic existence and individual death. Seeking to escape the human condition, he becomes obsessed with killing Chang-Kai-shek in order to kill himself and thereby "possess" his fate. But the illusion of such an escape dies with Tchen. Even his admiring disciples repudiate his nihilistic temptation as Malraux begins to seek in human fraternity the foundations of a new humanism. (RCS)

The Forces of Life and Death in Roch Carrier's Fiction.

David J. Bond 59

Abstract. Carrier's fiction is based on exaggeration and the grotesque, but it also deals with serious questions: the forces of life and death in the lives of his characters. Death is the subject of *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* and of several short stories, and it is symbolically present in certain other works. In *Le Deux-millième étage* and *Il est par là, le soleil*, life in the city is equated with death. None of Carrier's characters live happy lives, and their religion is one of death and sin. As French-Canadians, they are threatened with destruction by the English-speaking world and by American capitalism. Yet they affirm their will to live by clinging to life; they react against their religion of death by blaspheming, and, in some cases, by openly rejecting it. They express their will to live through their sexual activity and by their humour. As a community, they show their will to survive by remembering their past. Jean-Thomas in *Il n'y a pas de pays sans grand-père*, by talking of the past, keeps it alive and passes on to his grandson the will to survive as a French-Canadian. Telling stories which others will remember is thus a way of cheating death. (DJB)

Du *Scorpion* au *Désert*, Albert Memmi revisited.

Isaac Yetiv 77

Abstract. Albert Memmi's literary work of the last three decades is pervaded by a fundamental pessimism on life and the human condition. It is a long, never-ending investigation of the dynamics of conflict, its causes and its disastrous consequences: hatred, violence, death.

In the last decade, with the publication of *Le Scorpion* (1969), and *Le Désert* (1977), Memmi seems to have reached his long-proclaimed goal, "the extrapolation of a personal experience to universal dimensions." These two novels do not reveal a radical departure from the young Memmi's outlook on life. Their innovation lies in the originality of their structure, composition and style, and in the abundant use of technical devices. There is almost no plot in *Le Scorpion* and *Le Désert*. Autobiographical elements, preponderant in his early novels, are buried in an incoherent narrative loosely anchored in a nebulous context of time and space. The "story" does not follow a linear development. Chronology and geography are manipulated at will in imaginary settings. The characters evolve in imaginary spaces and, as in a *conte fantastique*, the narration of their exploits and perilous adventures serves the only purpose of sustaining and illustrating the author's philosophical ideas. In *Le Scorpion*, the author's multifaceted personality is represented by different characters who take part in the dialogues and contribute to the elaboration of the author's philosophy. (IY)

Zamyatin's *We* and the Idea of the Dystopic.

Margaret Lael Mikesell and Jon Christian Suggs 89

Abstract. An examination of *We* clarifies conventions for the dystopic novel even as it reveals that *We* transcends those conventions. Under the surface text, which presents a narrative of political and "romantic" struggle, lie subtexts exploring the personal and ideological implications of the conflict between reason and emotion. Analysis of these texts, seen in a New Comedy framework informed by elements of irony and romance, demonstrates that on every level the novel fails to reach comic resolution. Moreover, it is this very failure that marks the departure of *We* from the conventions of the dystopic novel. Like *Brave New World* and *1984*, *We* contains satire and an obvious dystopia. However, it does not contain the other convention defining the genre—a recognizable and accessible moral norm. Rather, it depicts two dysfunctional utopian systems in conflict. In transcending the conventions of the dystopic novel and in offering only partial resolution outside of its own flawed and mutually exclusive worlds, *We* explores the contradictions of the "modern" experience.