

Marija Knežević and Aleksandra Nikčević Batričević (eds.), *The Face of the Other in Anglo-American Literature*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, pp. 262.

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“The Face of the Other in Anglo-American Literature” is a collection of essays which examine the attempts to face the other in the context of Anglo-American studies in the postmodern world. These papers were presented at the conference “Facing the Other in the Absence of Theory” held at the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić in 2010. Marija Knežević and Aleksandra Nikčević Batričević organized the conference and came up with this very inspiring and provocative conference title, encouraging the participants to write excellent papers which tackle the question of the other from many different angles. The collection was edited by Marija Knežević and Aleksandra Nikčević Batričević and was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2011.

It appears that any attempt to face the other reveals our cultural being and Edward Said is right when he claims that no one today is purely one thing. It is rewarding and difficult at the same time not to think only about ‘us’, but to think about others, to think about multilayered otherness in us rather than monolithic us. These essays aim at reassessing the paradoxical concept of the other, examining the ways in which we know the other, and considering the possible approaches to the other without any preconception.

Adrian Frazer in his key-note lecture titled “Theory and Biography: The Other as Somebody”, criticizes over-intellectualism and he argues for the primal face-to-face encounter of self and other. Frazer says that an attempt to tell the truth about one’s own experience and to learn more about somebody else is to take a step forward towards gaining a fuller knowledge of life on earth. He discusses two theorists, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, who propose a narrative concept of the self and whose pragmatic criticism tries to locate autonomy, seriousness, and responsibility within the person.

In her paper on the archetypal reflection on the Bronte Sisters’ heroines, Milica Nenezić calls her approach non-theoretical because the text stands alone for her as reader. Simon de Beauvoir thought that female selfness had always tried to define otherness in order to define itself as Subject. De Beauvoir suggested that no man had been deprived of having the freedom of choice and establishing himself as the Subject, thus disclosing women under the veil of consequence and the Other. Through times, when considering otherness as Subject, Nenezić concludes that it had become the face the female authors kept seeing in the mirror.

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Ana Vlasisavljević looks into the linguistic domination of European languages in former colonies through the prism of both the colonial past and neo-colonial hegemony of the imperial Centre. By drawing parallels between the colonial and postcolonial contexts, her paper focuses on the three forms of linguistic power of dominant languages: pragmatic, symbolic and signitive.

Sandra Josipović's paper titled "A Chinese Immigrant Family facing the Otherness of its Emerging American self in the Work of Gish Jen" observes that the twentieth century has produced more migrants, refugees, displaced persons and exiles than ever before in history, most of them the result of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts and of changes in economic and political situations and the balance of power. As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness and inability to conform to that existing social order. These people exist in a "no-man's land" between the old and the new, between the old empire and their ancestral heritage and the new state and new rules and conventions; their condition thus articulates tensions and contraictions. No one can deny the persisting contuinuties of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems to be no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separateness and distinctiveness, as if that could explain all of human life. Surviving and living are all about connections. Gish Jen advocates this point, thinking that no one should be seen strictly in terms of groupings, colours and classifications, and that multiculturalism and multiethnicity mean that a person has much vaster experience to draw on when solving problems in life.

Tanja Obradović argues that a number of modern Anglo-American writers insist on the prolonged effects of imperialism in the modern world, in which violence and hatred aimed at the Other prove that the modern world still cannot approach the Other without bigotry. Her paper deals with the following works: *Savages* (1974) written by Christopher Hampton, *Venus* (1996) written by Suzan Lori-Parks and *Maria Kizito* (2003) written by Erik Ehn. These literary examples of violent historical events date from different periods and different parts of the world, most often former colonies and they lead to the conclusion that they weren't just ruptures but logical outcomes of the centuries-long violent practices against the Other.

Faruk Barjaktarević addresses the self as other in Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*, which also directly attacks religious fundamentalism. He thinks that there is nothing inherent in Muslim/Pakistani identity that justifies isolation or violence and rather sees those problems as defined in a complex web of socio-political relations between the host society and immigrant groups. His paper further argues that the practices of constructing the other in the host society and the immigrant community portrayed in Aslam's novel do not differ and are both founded on fear of destabilization in the face of diasporic encounters and exchanges, leading some individuals to undertake extreme measures to prevent the other from crossing the borders separating it from the world of the self.

Jeanine Belgodere tried to demonstrate how through keen observation, intuitive perception, poetic sensitivity and immersion in the rituals, a sympathetic observer can come close to the essence of Pueblo dance and culture in ways that at once

depart from and meet indigenous conceptual and ethical frameworks. In her opinion the understanding of Pueblo culture would be incomplete without well-informed scholarship, and insightful statements of cultural informants also contribute to a better comprehension of the cultural otherness.

Using Derridean deconstructionist breaching and re-examining of any binary opposition, Mirjana Daničić analyzes the most recent of Toni Morrison's novels, *A Mercy*. According to Jacques Derrida, the concept of opposition should be questioned because the preference for one always excludes the (subordinate) other. As a postmodernist writer, Morrison questions, even annuls the binary oppositions. She creates characters with such personal traits and histories that they can be easily seen through Derrida's conception of alterity beyond any dialectic. In her prose, Toni Morrison, like Derrida, defers the alterity of the other and tends to insist that the other is somehow always within the self.

Jelena Basta discusses female identity in the novel *The Orchard* by Drusilla Modjeska. Australia was first inhabited by the Aborigines and then colonized by the English. Since the first colonizers were exclusively men, the idea of women as other was imposed as the fundamental social norm. In such a social milieu, women were encouraged to find their identity in the reflection of another, i.e. to see themselves as others see them.

In the paper "Paired Characters in Samuel Beckett's Plays", Loran Gorami develops the argument that by enclosing his characters within themselves and distancing them from the influence of their surroundings, Beckett observes them with a solipsistic eye, the self within the self. Gami also states that the characters in Beckett's plays are faced with unknown realities that confront them with relentless indifference.

In their co-authored paper, Milan Marković and Tijana Parezanović explore the versatile identities of Joyce Carol Oates' characters. Both Kelly Kelleher and Quentin are characterized by distorted perspectives on reality, reflected in impairments to their literal vision. Kelly's condition of strabismus and her binary focus are reflected in the confusion about her stereotypically imposed self and the true self, while Quentin's astigmatism reflects his inward-directed point of view and a personality which is radically self-centered. Both characters try to overcome the claustrophobia of their existences by affirming their individuality, yet struggle results in actions which are either deservedly punishable or undeservedly punished.

To the group of the socially marginalized belongs Jake Donaghue, the protagonist of Iris Murdoch's novel *Under the Net*, discussed by Peter Preston in the paper "The Quarrel with Theory in Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*". According to this analysis, nothing is said of Jake Donaghue's parentage, family or social background, although he is clearly educated. Yet his lifestyle doesn't conform to that of an educated man with literary interests. He remains an outsider to settled bourgeois society, rootless, unsettled, classless. As he searches for truth, understanding and authenticity, he finds it difficult to identify the place he might occupy in Britain's postwar social order.

While Peter Preston demonstrates how new fictive modes fight against the imposed generic conventions, Marina S. Ragachewskaya argues that theory is an integral part of any work of fiction. As they examine issues and mysteries of human nature, a number of British writers today demonstrate a talent for not only creating or re-making their own tales, but also for philosophy and theory.

Ljerka Jeftić develops the idea of textual otherness. Her thesis is that literary texts involve both the text producer and text receiver as social and cognitive agents, that is whole human beings within a cultural setting who engage in discourse interaction. Her paper explores the ways the other is seen in the discourse of Salinger's Glass family.

The last three papers have as their subject the phenomenon of the other in literature written in Serbian and that literature's relation to various literary models of the west. Tatjana Bjelić argues that readers who advocate linguistic postmodernism in contemporary poetic expression still seem to view authenticity as a traditional notion built upon the old Greek word *authentēs*, which means a 'master' or 'perpetrator'. Critics tend to view postmodernism from socio-historical perspectives, and poets themselves sense the necessity of adapting the meaning of authenticity to the realities of everyday living. In a brief reference to diversity of voices now present in two rather different poetic scenes, Bosnia and Great Britain, Bjelić attempts to offer a new definition of authenticity in relation to the notion of otherness. Dubravka Đurić examines the connections between feminism and globalism in the geopolitical space of Serbia. Vesna Lopičić and Milena Kostić attempt to clarify identity confusions deepened by disjointed times in Serbian novelist and playwright Svetislav Basara's re-working of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Contemporary Serbian Hamlet is a gloomy fatalist who does not have a moral dilemma about how to take action in a corrupt world without contaminating himself. In his opinion, the contagion of the world cannot be healed by moral deeds and to him not only Denmark but the whole world is a prison and he constantly receives the news on the rotten state of various countries.

The papers collected in this book approach the topic of the other from diverse cultural, ethnic, gender, psychological and textual perspectives and they contribute to the on-going discussion of the ambiguities inherent in the concept of the other.