

ENGLISH SUMMARIES

The Novel and the "Genius Loci"

A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS

The essays collected in this volume examine a complex relationship between "the region" and "regionalism" in a number of European and American novels published from the turn of the century to the beginning of the forties. While the *regional* aspects, namely the representations of a specific region and its topography, are typical of almost every work of fiction, *regionalism* in twentieth-century literature can be understood as a manifestation of a specific value pattern and an expression of a distinct creative attitude which, instead of being absorbed in the details of provincial, suburban or village life, aims to recreate the region in the form of a myth, and as an autonomous, aesthetic reality.

This development also changes the meaning of the *regional* features of twentieth-century novel. *Regional* begins to imply singularity and fullness, and signals the existence of an independent centre which may become an origin of *another*, alternative, universal perspective and value pattern. Such notions of cultural region and fictional space differ from the traditional ones in the absence of a single centre as a source of civilization and culture. The events laden with central and universal meaning may occur everywhere, even on the periphery. Therefore the words "influence" or "impact" typical of the centralist approach have been replaced by the concept of *event* signifying the permanence of meaning and its permeating through fictional world. These are a few general features of the following essays whose common purpose is to study the links between *local* and *spi-*

ritual regions in selected novels.

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Vladimír Svatoň

"THE NOVEL OF THE TURNING POINT IN LIFE" IN RUSSIAN TRADITION

A.M.REMIZOV'S *SISTERS IN THE CROSS*

In classical theories of the novel (Blanckenburg, Schelling, Hegel), basic structural principles of fictional form were related to patterns of modern (middle class) society. Therefore also during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the novel of adventure and the *Bildungsroman* became dominant genres formulating the hero's circumstances as a problem to be solved by means of his abilities and because of his readiness to act. During the nineteenth century the limitations of this concept became apparent in three respects: first, to the rationally uncontrollable spheres of life discovered already in the classical novel; second, to the unexpected chance affecting the hero's life and destroying his plans, and, third, to the dissipation of the hero's activity in the emotional turmoil described already in sentimentalist fiction.

A different type of novel emerging in Russian literature can be named "the novel of the turning point in life," because of the centrality of the hero's sudden discovery that rational, daily activities happen on the surface of the "mighty stream of life" whose pull, though it can impede his own career, may also offer him realistic and valuable possibilities. In this new light, many of the standard motifs of the traditional (classical) novel are transformed. Thus, the constant drifting of the hero is replaced by the magic of an intimate relationship with a specific place; everydayness and periphery become more important than history or centres, and the failure of the hero's designs opens the way to new and more worthwhile chances.

These features are typical of A.M.Remizov's novel *Sisters in the Cross* distinguished by the grotesque nature

of the mythic world underlying everyday reality. At times, Remizov's grotesque becomes transparent and reveals an unknown order of being behind the events of daily life.

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Zdeněk Hrbata

PARTICULARITY, PERMANENCE AND POETRY
LITERARY REGIONALISM OF RAMUZ AND GIONO

Between the wars, Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz and Jean Giono published a number of major regionalist novels in French language. Their common characteristic is the elevation of a local tale to a universal message. In spite of their concentration on particular regions (Swiss cantons Vaud and Valais in Ramuz and the Provençe in Giono), they describe general aspects of human nature. Conversely, the focus on a particular region protects their generalizations from abstraction.

Under these circumstances, the regionalist novel changes from a mere depiction of the *couleur locale* to a profound creative vision of the nature of things and of the universe. This vision transmutes the time as well as the space. Both of them become elementarized: narrative time is replaced by the time of nature and the rhythm of a landscape, and fictional space is segmented into several basic configurations (mountains - lowlands, river - pasture, village - city). The elementary spatio-temporal patterns make up a specific continuum which can be called a parabolical chronotope because it transforms every story into a parable.

Thus, the general meaning, namely the universal rhythm of nature and human life, is grasped and communicated. Even the characters, similar to mountains, trees, &c., are integrated into an eternal time. If everything in the fictional world is subject to a universal rhythm, this rhythm must be permanent: natural processes as well as human activities are repeated but each time they begin anew.

In the novels of Ramuz and Giono, thematic, motivic and structural aspects of the elementarization of space and time

and of the corresponding universalization of meaning are studied. Special attention is paid to the lyrical representations of the harmony between natural and human world (in Giono's fiction) and to the expressions of the general rhythm of the universe. The aim of the elementarization of space and time and of the universalization of meaning is to create a "permanent" and "intense" fictional world which is integral as well as anchored. Both these processes are also shaping the main characters who ask about the possibility of permanent human joy and happiness, strive to overcome barriers of loneliness and to create a network of almost mystical collective relationships based on the poetry of life (Giono).

The chief feature of Ramuz's novels is the emphasis on essential aspects of human nature and life. This implies that the individual has to be *situé* and cannot live uprooted from her place and community. Rather than invoking a traditionalist percept of the "return to the roots," this theme marks a rediscovery of the essence of life and a plunge into the depths of the soul which includes the idea of the Absolute.

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Anna Housková

IDYLIC REGION AND THE SEARCH FOR THE ROOTS

In twentieth-century Latin American novel, the attribute "regionalist" does not imply marginality. The environment in which the story takes place is by no means conceived as a periphery of the civilized world: the pampas, forests, mountains, &c., have a representative, Pan-American meaning, as if the region included the whole continent.

There are at least two distinct types of Latin American regionalist novel:

The first can be called the *novel of continuity*. It is mainly represented by idyllic novels whose stories take place in remote, isolated parts of the country, in a fully autonomous world with its own stable order. The idyllic no-

vel develops in the long span of time, from Jorge Isaacs to García Márquez. In this development, four idyllic loci are identified and studied in the relation to temporality in various narratives. They include the farm in Isaacs's novel *María*, the pampas in *Don Segundo Sombra* by Ricardo Güiraldes, the village remote from the world in *Zurzulita* by Mariano Latorre and the suburb in *La sangre e la esperanza* by Nicomedes Guzmán. The oppositions between nature and civilization, home and alien world or between epic community and prosaic society inherent in all these loci are idyllic and have an axiological meaning: the authentic world, which is happy due to its meaningful nature and binding values, is contrasted with a realm of emptiness and alienation. The need to belong in the former world and to experience its wholeness is also expressed in the tension between the pensive nostalgia of the narrator and the naive purity of the represented world.

The second type has been named the *novel of the encounter and clash of cultures*. It is characterized by the hero's travel into the interior of the continent in search of primitive life, of the roots. Foundations of this type, anticipated in *Facundo* by D.F.Sarmiento, were laid by Rivera's novel *La vorágine*. The characters of the latter plunge into an unknown, disharmonious environment: similar to other novels of this type, the hero, having crossed the boundary between different worlds cannot belong in neither of them. The forest in Rivera's book is characterized by two kinds of "otherness." Impenetrable as a whole, it offers the hero a possibility of penetration into its heart and understanding cosmic order. An interesting variety of this type is represented by J.M.Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos*. Contrary to the usual pattern, the image of the centre does not appear at the end of the search but it is introduced at the very beginning of the narrative. The hero is marginalized and remains in a disparate, heterogeneous world. Even at this level, the periphery achieves a central meaning, for the weak, uprooted hero now stands in the centre of the fictional world and of its value structure. And the chief values of the hero's character - his sensitivity and unders-

tanding towards another - become manifest due to his intermediate position between diverse social groups.

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Martin Procházka

REGIONALIST AND MODERNIST NOVEL

VALUE PATTERNS AND COMMUNAL LIFE IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH FICTION AND IN JAMES JOYCE

The spatio-temporal and value patterns typical of the regionalist novel in Scotland, are studied in the so-called *kailyard* novels (Barrie, Maclaren and others) popular at the turn of the century. The discussion of the *kailyard* is extended to comprise the reactions to its idyllism and nostalgia in the works of contemporary Scottish authors (*The House with the Green Shutters* by George Douglas Brown and *Gillespie* by John MacDougall Hay) and the attempt at a synthesis of these divergent tendencies in *A Scots Quair* by L.G.Gibbon. In spite of some remarkable differences (the homology of chronotopic and value structure in the central emblem of a house, the identification of the otherness of the unconscious with the alienation caused by economic factors), the last mentioned works are still found to have a compatible figurative framework where the characteristic features of the *kailyard*, namely the metonymic identification of a universally relevant way of life (prescribed by evangelical Christianity) with the life of a particular region and community, are not subject to fundamental transformations. This is true even if the metonymic identification typical of the *kailyard* is replaced by ironical distancing in the works of Brown and Hay or by an attempt in *A Scots Quair* to mediate between the universalism of values founded on myth and historical determinism.

Similar patterns and transformations are also traced in *Dubliners* by James Joyce and may even be said to have informed the structure of his later works, especially of *Ulysses*. Their common root is seen in the spatio-temporal and value structure described by Bakhtin as the *idyllic*

chronotope. But in contrast to Bakhtin, the idyllic chronotope in the regionalist novel is perceived as a structure emphasizing -- apart from customs and tradition -- *historicity* as the chief value of the communal life. This paradox can be explained as a result of the resistance of provincial communities to the power and culture of the "centre" and to the official versions of history.

The violent assertion of historicity in provincial life, which in the Scottish culture culminates by the grim determinism of *A Scots Quair*, is evaded in Joyce's work. To explain the conditions and outcomes of this evasion, the phenomenological notion of historicity has to be rewritten in a different key using the conclusions of Hayden White (in *Metahistory* and *Tropics of Discourse*) and defining historicity as a quality of discourse produced by rhetorical figures.

In the new perspective, the relationship between the traditional regionalist novel and the founding works of modernism produced by Joyce appears as the supersession of the metaphorical and metonymical figures typical of the Scottish regionalism by the tropes of irony and synecdoche in Joyce's writing, where epiphany can be interpreted as a synecdochic structure. This shift is paralleled by the transformation of the figures of the Other (in characters and space) into the otherness of the language.

Consequently, the mythical mode (or "counter-history") in *Ulysses* may be viewed in the post-structuralist and post-modernist context rather than as a result of a modernist synthesis. The concretization of the spatio-temporal and value patterns typical of a narrow and subdued parochial culture leads to the disintegration of a totalizing modernist vision in Joyce's language, and anticipates the deconstructionist notions of structure and meaning implied in the concepts of *bricolage* and *différance*.

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THE SOUTHERN MYTH OF THE FALL

WILLIAM FAULKNER: *ABSLOM, ABSLOM!*

There is a remarkable discrepancy between the world-scale modernist achievement and the exclusive South-centredness of William Faulkner's "Yoknapatawpha series." This divergence can be at least partially explained by the connection of the author's literary beginnings with the Southern Renaissance in the nineteen-twenties. It was this self-centred and self-conscious artistic emancipation that gave local literature an impetus to overstep regional boundaries.

In this general framework, the spatio-temporal dimension of the Yoknapatawpha novels is studied. At one level, a complex pattern of meanings is considered, which is common to all novels irrespective of their chronology. This pattern is generated by the repetition of historical events and recurrent existential situations. Another view is focused on individual stories nourished by events within a long span of Southern history. At both levels, the same temporal effect is observed: rather than by the lapse of time, the South is characterized by the persistence of its own past laden with evil and guilt and imposed on the ordinary, everyday life of a country town.

The polarity between the realistic regional setting and the burden of this mythical past generates a tension in the stories that often bursts into violence -- a symbolic Southern legacy -- and is always perceptible as pervading the lives of the characters and their relationships through their consciousness as well as the subconscious. In *Absolom, Absolom!* the complex aim of Faulkner's inward orientated narrative techniques penetrating the minds of several generations in succession is found in a specific narrative "hypertrophy" which causes the transformation of the story into a living myth. Due to the universal impact of its message, this living myth is also a myth-to-live.

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Lenka Vachalovská

HALFWAY BETWEEN THE LEGEND AND THE ANECDOTE
EHRENBURG'S *STORMY LIFE OF LAZIK ROITSCHUVENZ*

The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschvuenz is an almost unknown novel by Ilya Ehrenburg. Written in the twenties, it remained unpublished until the end of the eighties when it appeared in a Soviet literary journal.

The essay opens with a question about the meaning of Jewishness for the author and about its representations in the story. Ehrenburg's reflections about Jewishness have always a socially critical undertone: for him, Jewishness is synonymous with "being hounded" in social terms, both on the global, supra-national scale and in a specific place and community (as a member of a Jewish minority in a provincial Russian town).

Jewishness is also implied in the hero's loneliness and drifting. In this context, the relationship of Ehrenburg's book to the picaresque novel becomes evident. But Ehrenburg's hero, apart from being only a parasitic *pícaro* who can make the most of any situation, is also a philosopher voicing the author's opinion.

This dual nature of the principal character is reflected on two basic levels of Ehrenburg's narrative. Apart from Roitschvuenz's adventures, a number of parables called "holy anecdotes" are told by the hero. These anecdotes are Hasidic and represent a plebeian faith functioning as a corrective to religious orthodoxy and traditional legends. A similar approach characterizes the comparison of the hero with the Wandering Jew.

Another major theme of Ehrenburg's novel is the relationship of the individual and the social whole. The protagonist is an unimportant, "little man", but his action, attitudes and mere existence cast doubt on contemporary simplistic notions of collectivism. The relationship of the individual to the absurdity of the "great world" is projected into the thematic structure, narrative strategies and over-

all form of the novel which has many parallels both in the works of Ehrenburg's contemporaries and in the Soviet fiction of the seventies and eighties.

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Gabriela Veselá

THE OTHER SIDE

FANTASTIC NOVELS OF ALFRED KUBIN AND GUSTAV MEYRINK

In the fiction written in German, *Der Golem* (1915) by Gustav Meyrink and *Die andere Seite* (1909) by Alfred Kubin represent the genre of fantastic novel popular in the time of the First World War. Both works are similar in many respects. A specific framing of first-person narratives contributes to the vagueness of the distinction between the real and the imaginary. Apart from the themes of a dream, vision or hallucination, both novels are characterized by the motifs of eyes, sight, hypnotism and blindness whose meanings are also symbolic. The impenetrable, enigmatic world is also evoked by the motifs of fear and anxiety. The ambiguity in the depiction of the environment corresponds to the ambivalence of the whole structure. In both novels, the site of the story is eventually destroyed. Though the deciphering of mysterious symbolic references runs parallel with gradual unravelling of the structure of fantastic worlds accomplished by the heroes, the ambivalent nature of the stories taking place between the real and the supernatural remains unchanged.