

explorations



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A note from the editors

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This fifth issue of *Explorations* deals with literary matters mainly, and it is focused on cultural and ideological matters as expressed and interpreted (or reinterpreted) in the contemporary prose fiction. It includes six essays whose topics range from feminism and ecological criticism to analyses of the social and ideological contexts of the post-war America, with such issues as the probing of national/cultural identity, dilemmas of artistic representation, and paradoxes arising from the uneasy encounter of different interpretive communities, their vocabularies and narratives.

We have two articles that attempt to describe and explore the American psyche after the Second World War, in particular at the time of the Cold War. Patrycja Antoszek sees in Shirley Jackson's *The Road Through the Wall* (1948) a novel about the middle-class (suburban) drama of alienation and anxiety – it would not be an exaggeration to say that in Jackson's story we find a reliable anatomy of the American society at its most disquieting. Katarzyna Hauzer provides us with an engaging reading of John Steinbeck's *A Russian Journal* (1948; the book was co-authored by the photojournalist Robert Capa), the work which is a „unique account of two countries trapped in the rigidities of the Cold War miscommunication patterns,” as Hauzer herself puts it.

There are two essays coping with the troubled narratives of the contemporary New Zealand. First, Ewa Kroplewska uses the postcolonial perspective to demonstrate how the representation of land becomes an important element of communal identity, taking into account the novels of such native New Zealand writers as Keri Hulme, Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace. And Anna Orzechowska provides us with an interpretation of *Rest for the Wicked* by Marilyn Duckworth, a XX-century New Zealand novelist (also poet and short story writer) who explored in her novel the issues of patriarchy, female identity and constraining social norms and conventions.

Also included are thought-provoking investigations into Miranda Glover's *Masterpiece* and Gabriel Josipovici's *Hotel Andromeda*, published in 2005 and 2014 respectively, two novels in which the world of artistic imagination (contemporary art scene in Glover and Joseph Cornell's mysterious collages in Josipovici) clashes with the present-day reality of post-truth politics, selfie obsession and celebrity culture. Both Dominika Bugno-Narecka's depiction of what she calls Neobaroque performance in *Masterpiece* and Magdalena Sawa's analysis of the philosophy of affect in *Hotel Andromeda* tell us a lot about the deadlocks and dilemmas of our postmodern world.

We are genuinely happy to open this issue with a conversation with Henri Cole, one of the most significant American poets of the present day. An heir to the Modernist vision

of the poem as an artistic gesture which is both formal and unsettling, Cole wrote in one of his *Orphic Paris* entries: “I want my poems to seem rebellious but also to be the servant of order. I want them to be definite, self-sufficient, and true in what they represent” (*The New Yorker*, August 2, 2016). Such dicta are rare today but Cole is an exceptional poet, a modest and indeed selfless artificer of meticulously wrought poetic texts which leave the reader with the strong impression that serious art is not a lost cause.

We have a few interesting reviews appearing at the end of the issue. As usual, we will be glad to hear from you and have your comments. Please feel free to contact us at explorations@uni.opole.pl on the papers as well as share your thoughts or ask the author a question.