

Civilization and Barbarism in American Literature
Vadon, Lehel, ed. *To the Memory of Sarolta Kretzoi.*
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This volume is a collection of essays on American literature and culture dedicated to the memory of the outstanding Hungarian Americanist, Sarolta Kretzoi, who died in 2008. Some of the authors of the essays were her former students who remember her thought-provoking and innovative courses and outstanding organizing activity at the Departments of English and American Literature of various Hungarian universities, in Debrecen, Miskolc, Szeged and Budapest. The first essay recounts her biography and scientific achievements as a university professor and researcher. This is followed by a detailed and complete bibliography of Professor Kretzoi's monographies and essays.

The essays of the volume cover different areas of American Studies; however, the majority can be grouped into the concept of the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism. In the volume there are studies which investigate Hungarian-American cultural relationships, such as "Joseph Pulitzer and the Hungarians" by András Csillag, Zoltán Peterecz's essay on a Jewish American banker in Hungary, "The Reception of Harriet Beecher Stowe in Hungary" by Lehel Vadon and the essay about the participation of Hungarian soldiers in the American Civil War by István Kornél Vida.

Issues of contemporary literary theory, like Zsolt Virágos's essay "On the Literary Possibilities of M2-Type Configurations," are also addressed in the volume. An analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), is presented by Donald E. Morse. Among the scholarly papers there is one essay about poetry and one about drama as well. Thomas Cooper discusses the different aspects of meaning in the translations of the poems of Ezra Pound and Lenke Mária Németh offers a stylistic analysis of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*.

Colonial reflections on native American culture and the concepts of civilization are discussed by Zsófia Bán, a former student of Sarolta Kretzoi, in her analysis of captivity narratives. She assumes that captivity narratives constitute the first indigenous American literary genre; they recount the crossing over from one culture to another. A further unique feature is that a great number of them are told by women, whereby captivity narratives portray also the gender perspective of the female captives. According to the authors of these narratives, the natives are part of the wilderness and they are defined as the European, civilized Christian's Other. Cruelty of the native tribes was an alleged reason to justify the slaughter of the natives as well as a challenge to the national self-image. Zsófia Bán focuses mainly on the graphic elements of the descriptions in the captivity narratives. András Tarnóc explores the male captivity narrative of Robert Eastburn's *Faithful Narrative* (1758). Eastburn

went through a one-year captivity among the Indians in Canada. Apart from the staple elements of the genre, Tarnóc detects certain differences and unique features in the story. One of the differences from the female captivity narratives is the manner of his capture, namely that he was not attacked in his home by the natives, like the other, female narrators, but during his military service in the colonial war zone. The principal function of captivity narratives is the protection of Puritan faith and the promotion of piety. Additionally, Eastburn criticizes the spread of Catholicism during the French Indian War. András Tarnóc asserts that Eastburn's narrative also promotes national and geographical goals, whereby the cultural task of the narrative is not merely the conversion and assurance of the individual but the interests of a community, of a new nation.

Judit Szathmári investigates the concept of Indian territory from a historical perspective. In the nineteenth century Native Americans and US policy makers had different ideas about the various aspects of Indian territory and the rights and demands of Native Americans. These are closely linked to the concepts of sovereignty, the definition of the geographical location and that of its citizens. Katalin Bíró Nagy writes about the Native American discovery narrative, and analyzes a work of contemporary literature, *Columbus in the Americas* (2002) by William Least Heat-Moon. This is a piece of pseudo-historical fiction which recounts the four voyages of Columbus. Bíró Nagy detects a composition combining history and popular myths and an interaction of fictionalizing and demythicizing modes. She asserts that the story of the book contains elements of Native American oral histories, and it includes Columbus' prejudiced reflections on the indigenous population. The narrator is a Native American who wears an ironic mask and pretends a detachment from historiography. This feature of the narration qualifies the work as historiographic metafiction.

Gabriella Vöö's essay discusses the topic of racial encounter and cannibalism in Melville's works, in particular in *Moby Dick*. Melville seeks to challenge the early nineteenth-century popular phantasy about racial encounter and the concepts of empire building in the USA. The strategies in his works addressing the issue of cannibalism are horror and humor, which are applied in order to question the validity of the cultural processes characteristic of nineteenth-century American society. Melville is interested in cultural otherness and the concepts of the racially alien, the figure of the cannibal. The essay also discusses narrative techniques and narrative voice in *Moby Dick*, which bear the characteristics of the oral folk tradition of the frontier tall tale. The narrator is the tall talker and the reader is the listener amused by the jokes and comic sketches applied in the narration. Ted Bailey's essay "The Servant in the Wilderness" links the topic of wilderness and race based on biblical configurations and the genre of the works of African American literature in the nineteenth century. When African Americans adopted Christianity they drew parallels between Biblical configurations and their lives, like the similarity of the fate of the children of Israel with the black experience in North America. Certain slave spirituals are adaptations of songs in the

Bible; moreover, the author assumes that slave narratives and domestic novels also contain elements of the Biblical stories.

Zoltán Abádi Nagy's essay is a case study regarding the cultural potential of narrative technique in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*. He states that race and gender have a deep impact on the characters in the novel, and that these categories are culturally referential and predictable. The frame of reference in *Jazz* is wholly racialized and genderized; the characters are constructed by race and gender oppositions. They are victims of ideological determination and this ideology pervades aspects of their character traits. According to Abádi Nagy, Toni Morrison presents the construction of the identity of her African American protagonists as deformed and confused by the destructive ideology of racism. Abádi Nagy also examines the narrative transformation from fabula to story due to the culturally propelled narrative technique deployed in *Jazz*.

Éva Federmayer in her essay "The Race Movie and the Iconography of the New Negro woman, Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1920)," addresses the challenge of the dominance of white male culture in American movies. This film, directed by Micheaux, requires canon revisions of the Modern era and can be classified as pertaining to the genre of black revisionary narrative. The movie can be interpreted as a reaction to Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* which proclaims the supremacy of whiteness. In Griffith's film a parallel is drawn between whiteness and civilization, as it portrays black people as a threat to civilization by their innate barbarism. Federmayer asserts that "contrary to Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* . . . Oscar Micheaux offers a rich tapestry of diversified black society with characters from all walks of life" (147).

Enikő Bollobás investigates the constructions of gender through the costuming of the body in the works of James, Chopin and Wharton. In her essay she rereads American canonical texts "from the perspective of how womanhood is shown to be made through the inscriptions of costume on the body" (85). She cites Michel Foucault's theory on power exerted on the human body in the modern era, and the maintenance of power relations between the sexes. According to Bollobás, costume is the obvious form of normative stylization, and clothes are expressions of identities. Through dressing, female protagonists construct themselves and dress codes represent a certain ideal of womanhood, wherefore many of the women characters are victims of the pressing norms of their society.

On the whole, the essays of the book offer a wide perspective on the most recent research topics and issues of American Studies in Hungary. Altogether, emphasis is placed on the questions of race and gender. These scholarly approaches to American literature and culture contribute to the re-interpretation of certain canonical works according to the new trends and fields within American Studies.