Alexandra Ganser

Roads of Her Own

Gendered Space and Mobility in American Women's Road Narratives, 1970-2000

8

Roads of Her Own

Spatial Practices

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8

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Gendered Space and Mobility in American Women's Road Narratives, 1970-2000

Alexandra Ganser

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The *Spatial Practices* Series

The series *Spatial Practices* belongs to the topographical turn in cultural studies and aims to publish new work in the study of spaces and places which have been appropriated for cultural meanings: symbolic landscapes and urban places which have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain, and circulate myths of a unified national or regional culture and their histories, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths. Taking up the lessons of the new cultural geography, papers are invited which attempt to build bridges between the disciplines of cultural history, literary and cultural studies, and geography.

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Robert Burden
Stephan Kohl

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Erlangen, Dezember 2008 A.G.

i got pulled over in west Texas
so they could look inside my car
he said are you an american citizen
i said
yes sir
so far
they made sure i wasn't smuggling
someone in from Mexico
someone willing to settle for america
'cause there's nowhere else to go

and every state line
there's a new set of laws
and every police man
comes equipped with extended claws
there's a thousand shades of white
and a thousand shades of black
but the same rule always applies
smile pretty and watch your back

i broke down in Louisiana
and I had to thumb a ride
got in the first car that pulled over
you can't be picky in the middle of the night
he said
baby, do you like to fool around
baby, do you like to be touched
i said
maybe some other time
fuck you very much
[…]
a little town in Pennsylvania
there was snow on the ground
parked in an empty lot
where there was no one else around
but i guess i was taking up too much space
as i was trying to get some sleep
'cause an officer came by anyway
and told me to leave

Ani DiFranco, "Every State Line"

Abstract*: On the Road + A Room of One's Own = Thelma & Louise?*

Reading Jack Kerouac's classic *On the Road* through Virginia Woolf's canonical *A Room of One's Own*, as this book demonstrates, has produced an entire literary subgenre in North America, that of women's road narratives. Through a Woolfian lens on geographical and social mobility, the study shows how women's literature has inscribed itself into the discourse of the Whitmanesque "open road", or, more generally, the "freedom of the road". Such a reading highlights how women's writing has participated in a powerful American myth, yet at the same time also has rejected that myth, to various degrees, as fundamentally based on gendered and racial/ethnic hierarchies and power structures. Transdifference, a category of analysis to describe the dissonant plurality of social and cultural affiliations as well as the narrative tensions produced by such pluralities, is introduced in this study to better understand the textual results of women's multiple belongings as they are present in these writings. The book analyzes stories about female runaways, outlaws, questers, adventurers, kidnappees, biker chicks, travelling saleswomen, and picaras and makes theoretical observations on the debates regarding discourses of spatiality and mobility, debates which have defined the so-called spatial turn in the humanities. *Roads of Her Own* is thus not only situated in the broader context of a constructivist cultural studies, but also, by discussing narrative mobility under the sign of gender, combines insights from social theory and philosophy, feminist cultural geography, and literary studies.

Key names and concepts: Doreen Massey - Rosi Braidotti - Literary Studies - Spatial Turn - Gendered Space and Mobility - Nomadism - Road writing - Transdifference - American Culture - Popular Culture - Women's Literature after the Second Wave - Quest - Picara.

1. Points of Departure

In an essay from the 1980s, French feminist critic Hélène Cixous reads the fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" as an early story of a feminine venturing into unknown spaces (cf. "Castration or Decapitation"). Even though the protagonist is eventually punished for her detour, Cixous applauds Little Red Riding Hood's adventurousness and transgression, interpreting the story as a journey of sexual self-discovery:

> [In spite of being sent out] not to go into the big world but to go from one house to another by the shortest route possible, […] from the mother to the other […], Little Red Riding Hood makes her little detour, does what women should never do, travels through her own forest. She allows herself the forbidden … and pays dearly for it. (1981: 43-4)

Little Red Riding Hood's defiance of the proscribed trajectory creates, in Cixous' reading of the tale, a space in which the girl explores "her own forest" and "the forbidden". As Cixous asserts, the girl's final punishment suggests the fairy tale's advocation of a normative spatial behavior dictated by prevalent gender roles; this is reflected in a didacticism suggesting that girls need to safeguard themselves when they step out of the home. This fairy tale exists in various pre-Grimmian versions, some of which had Little Red Riding Hood beat the wolf and thus emphasize female agency, intelligence, and action (cf. Zipes' introduction, 1993). In any case, the tale is an early example of a road narrative that familiarizes the protagonist not only with the effects of the patriarchal spatial and symbolic orders on the gendered individual as well as with the resulting limitations of agency, but also, if the tale is re-read from a feminist perspective like Cixous', with the potential pleasures of transgressive mobility.

In the context of anglophone American literature, women's road narratives take up this hidden suggestion of a possibility of escape confining spatial structures through physical movement. Framed by

specific social and cultural developments, particularly the impact of second-wave feminism and the literary practice of feminist rewriting, contemporary American women's writers have told cross-country journeys as pleasurable and empowering, as a chance for personal discovery and exploration, and as cultural critique. In my study, I investigate how such narratives, from the 1970s to the present, have emplotted the journey as a textual intervention into normative spatialities.

In what follows, I focus on interactions of gender, space, and mobility in order to query the ways in which women writers from various cultural and social backgrounds have used the matrix and the formula of the road narrative to challenge dominant literary and spatial formations by means of engaging multiple cultural differences – differences not only of gender, but also of ethnicity, class, age, religion, sexual identity, or (sub-)cultural identification. Drawing on new approaches in cultural geography, I argue that women's literary texts rewrite the mythical 'open road' as a textual space in which powerful regimes of gender, cultural and social difference are destabilized. In women's road stories, the American highway's mythical, iconic status, signifying the heroic quest for freedom – reproduced time and again by the adventurous hero's literary flight from domesticity – is questioned and challenged, rejected and revised in manifold ways.

1.1. American Mobilities and Their Discontents

In a recently published monograph, Deborah Paes de Barros highlights the central importance of the literature of the road in a North American cultural context:

> The literature of the road is one of the most pre-eminent American literary tropes. From early frontier narratives to late postmodern literature, the road story has figured significantly. In a sense, to be "on the road," is concurrent with notions of Manifest Destiny and the Puritan "errand into the wilderness". The road is resonant within the concept of nation building; it concerns evolution and becoming and is consequently compatible with the Enlightenment idea of progress […]. The road story, then, is almost a manifesto of American cultural consciousness; it is the mythic representation of history and ideology. (2004: 2)

Throughout American history, geographical as well as social mobility, as allegedly interdependent sides of the same coin, have played a crucial role in conceptualizations of both the nation-state and its subjects; thus, as Neil Campbell argues, "[j]ourneys have been fundamental to the formation of the United States" (2001: 285). The specific dimension of North American ideas of mobility results from the foundational significance of a colonial settler mentality and a variety of journeys, migrations, and displacements: "Pilgrims, pioneers, immigrants, expatriates, Okies, Arkies" as well as slaves and fugitive slaves – American has been portrayed as a "nation on the move" (Wesley 1999: xii). As a consequence, geographical mobility, tied to social ascent, has always had a high symbolic value, shaping distinctly American idea(l)s of freedom and national identity, and supposedly distinguishing Americans from Europeans: "As Europeans moved west, the argument [of the frontier thesis] went, they confronted savagery and were converted into Americans in the process" (Cresswell 2001: 19); freedom of movement thus also became an important element in discourses of American exceptionalism (cf. Hilton/Van Minnen 2002: 3, Laderman 2002: 22).[1] The mythology of American mobility and freedom has produced powerful ideological and discursive structures, relying on and (re-)producing a vast array of texts that consolidate a rhetoric of territorial expansion linked to the American Dream of upward social mobility (cf. also Moen 2002).[2] Moving into the 20th century, a number of scholars indeed regard the significance of automobility in the United States, with the car the "chief carrier of the American Dream of freedom and plenitude" (Sanford 1983: 137), as an *extension* of the frontier experience, whose doctrine of Manifest Destiny functioned as a unifying power in forming a seemingly coherent national identity (cf. ibid.; Campbell 2001; Hilton/Van Minnen 2002: 8 & 12; Primeau 1996: 7).

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1 Cresswell argues that "Jeffersonian imagery of America as a garden suggested that space might replace time as the central location for development in American life. While Europe had developed through time and in a limited space that had thus become overcrowded and despotic, America could simply keep expanding west. This would ensure morally upright and democratic citizens" (2001: 19).

2 Such a rhetoric of expansion can be found, for instance, in exploration documents or the early Western, which Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975) explores for their gendered metaphoricity.

It comes as no surprise that (auto)mobility and its promised liberties have shaped the cultural imagination, the literatures, films, and music of the United States and, to a minor extent, of Canada. Myths of mobility have been continually enacted in the road genre, which only at first sight seems to consolidate the idea that America offers more space and freedom than other nations, and with it, an unparalleled social and geographical mobility. Indeed, as Tim Cresswell believes, "[f]ew modern nations are so thoroughly infused with stories of wandering, of heroic migrancy and pilgrimage as are the Americans" (2001: 20). American myths of mobility, however, largely reflect the historic perspective of the White (male) Anglo-Saxon Protestant, and rest on a construction of alterity and hegemonic spatial politics which, for a number of Americans, has produced territorial confinement: the slave quarter, the Native American reservation, the internment camps for Japanese-Americans.[3] By and large, critical responses to the deceptive rhetoric of 'mobility for all' have therefore come from cultural minority groups – groups discursively or institutionally denied access to either social ascent or self-determined geographical mobility. In fact, one could argue that the increase in mobility of the dominant social strata has largely been predicated upon forms of exclusion from mobility of others on the basis of difference and alterity. Social power relations have thus clearly shaped (auto)mobility as much as any other social practice. Conventional canonical definitions of the travel narrative obliterate the historical fact that some American journeys – such as the Middle Passage, the Trail of Tears, or forced relocations like the steerage of indentured servants – are results of imperialism and racism and usually have no relation to social ascent whatsoever. As bell hooks and others have argued, any liberatory theorization of travel thus needs to take into account the diversity of the travel experience (hooks 1992: 343); any other, less differentiated conception of travel and travel writing would necessarily reproduce imperialistic epistemologies. To get the full picture, then, "[t]he story of mobility in America needs to include less central stories, often untold: tales of marginality and exclusion, which cast a different light on the grand narratives of nationhood, of progress, of democracy and of modernity"

[3] More examples of institutionalized restrictions of mobility in an American context can be found in Hilton/Van Minnen (2002: 13).

(Cresswell 2001: 20). In such stories, 'American mobility' unfolds into a myriad of mobilities that can confirm as well as challenge the dominant ideology. As Hilton and Van Minnen emphasize, movement must thus be seen in its double function as affirmation and resistance – not to be understood as polar opposites, but as a continuum that is inscribed in the literary text (2002: 4).

Women's road narratives form one strand of such tales of marginality and exclusion, as the mythology of mobility has been marked by a distinct genderedness, built on the ideological division of spheres into the private, domestic, and feminine and the public, outward-bound, and masculine (cf. also Eric Leed's thesis in *The Mind of the Traveller*, 1991). In the context of this gendered mythology, Virginia Scharff demonstrates how perceptions about gender have continually shaped American attitudes toward cars and their use, creating an imagery of flighty women drivers that collided with Victorian notions of woman's nature and abilities. In a study on gender and mobility at the onset of the motor age, Scharff shows how "the auto has been identified with masculinity and male mobility", and how "women's right and ability to use cars has been disputed. […] [S]ex has always outdistanced […] other social factors as a focus of public debate" (1991: 166). As late as 1910, laws like the Mann Act,[4] for instance, were aimed against the interstate transport of women 'for immoral purposes', reflecting growing concerns about female mobility (Hilton/Van Minnen 2002: 13).

Studies of women's travel writing and theories of female subjectivity have started to raise important questions about the complexities of both fixity and mobility as gendered – and gendering – cultural and social conditions, such as "how the culture of automobility has always been organized around and through a complex set of gender relations and identities" (Smith 2001: 171). It is against this backdrop that I will examine the specific representations of space and mobility in North American women's road narratives from the 1970s to the end of the twentieth century, analyzing how gendered spatialities are arti-

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[4] The Mann Act, actually The United States White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910, prohibited so-called white slavery; its primary stated intent was to address prostitution and immorality. It is better known as the Mann Act, after James Robert Mann, an American lawmaker.

culated in these texts and how these spatialities are crucial to the narratives' cultural significance.

The spatial regimes produced *by* and produc*ing* cultures, societies, and subjectivities have been much debated in culture studies over the last decade and have brought forth what is now called the 'spatial' or 'topographical turn' (Weigel 2004) in the humanities. For women's cultural production, these socio-spatial orders have traditionally been a major concern; the tensions experienced by women between the public and the private realms, for instance, have been negotiated in women's literatures for centuries, one site of discursive intervention in exclusionary socio-spatial structures.

Thus, the aim of my analyses is to show how the hegemonic construction of gendered space is both reflected and challenged in contemporary women's literatures. Cultural investigations into spatial(ized) systems of power (as key constituents of the social sphere at large) create an awareness of the spatial limitations, regulations, and restrictions at work whenever women – understood here as subjects 'perceived-as-female'[5] by their environs – leave the realm of domesticity. Thus, I am also asserting the importance of integrating spatial analyses into the agenda of literary and cultural studies.[6]

Like their male counterparts, female protagonists react to the lure of the road and envision cross-country travel as a way to overcome what they experience as spatial confinement. However, female protagonists in these texts, once on the road, often find themselves "prisoners of the white lines of the freeway" (as Joni Mitchell puts it in the famous road-song "Coyote", 1976), and as such are not libe-

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5 This definition relies on a classical phenomenological division of the body, such as by Helmuth Plessner or Hermann Schmitz, into the objectified body (the German *Körper*) – its visible, concrete gestalt – and the living body (the German *Leib*). In Gesa Lindemann's conception, the living body or *Leib* can further be distinguished into an *experiencing* dimension through which the body perceives its environment, and an *experienced* dimension, referring to the perception of one's own body (1996: 349).

6 One of the earliest demands for the integration of a spatial perspective into cultural analyses was made by Foucault (1995) in the 1970s. In the specific context of the field of American studies, the recently published 800-page collection of essays *Space in America: Theory – History – Culture*, edited by Klaus Benesch and Kerstin Schmidt, is a major step in this direction.

rated by motion but confronted with spatial limitations not entirely different from those at the hearth. This is not to say that men's experiences on the road and the literary representations thereof are unrestrained and untroubled; on the contrary: socio-economic, ethnic and other factors have always shaped access and representations of the road adventure and continue to do so, as most studies on American road narratives acknowledge (cf. e.g. Primeau 1996 or Lackey 1997).[7] Nonetheless, women's textual road adventures demonstrate that gendered constructions of space and mobility impede and complicate any movement that transgresses discursively assigned spheres. The protagonists' "lines of flight", to use a Deleuzian term, are thus characterized by what I am calling 'confined mobility'. It is exactly this limitation of the freedom of movement that acts as a major incentive for female-authored re-figurations of the road genre, as the probing of limitations relies, by implication, on the very boundaries experienced as confining. From this perspective, women's road literature is indicative of the fact that prevailing socio-spatial structures are not gender-neutral and that they need to be questioned and challenged.

1.2. Articulation, Women's Literature, and Transdifference

My interdisciplinary approach suggests the basic socio-political relevance of symbolic forms in general and of literature in particular. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I understand symbolic systems as one arena of social struggle; accordingly, social space always also entails symbolic space, for society is structured via symbolic forms of classification and perception.[8] Literary discourse, then, is socially significant as

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[7] Cf. for instance the narratives of fugitive slaves in the 19th century, Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* in the 1930s, or contemporary road movies by and about Native Americans (e.g. *Powwow Highway*, 1989).

[8] Cf. Gerhard Göhler and Rudolf Speth's explication of Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power: "Soziale Kämpfe werden vornehmlich auf der symbolischen Ebene ausgetragen, weil der soziale Raum ein symbolischer Raum ist und weil sich erst über die symbolischen Formen, d.h. die Formen der Klassifizierung und Wahrnehmung, soziale Welt strukturiert" (1998: 47). Tr.: "Social conflicts are primarily played out on the symbolic level because social space is a symbolic space and, further, because it is only through symbolical forms,

it translates, and thereby (re)creates, reality in terms of "nationally specific cultural symbologies and conclusive narratives […]", "mediat[ing] a cultural imaginary of a different kind" (Sielke 2002: 6-7).[9]

It is one of the basic tenets of the cultural studies approach I am taking that culture is continuously articulated through symbolic forms like literature, and that literary representation is thus intricately tied to a social context not exterior to representation but deeply ingrained as a constitutive part thereof. A central concern of such a cultural studies approach investigates how discursively constructed and articulated meanings, in the course of history, do or do not acquire cultural significance and symbolic power, how they are anchored in webs of power relations, and how these power relations can be questioned, challenged, and transformed by way of social and textual articulation. Hegemony, understood as the 'consensus culture' that turns the particular into the general, needs continuous defense, renewal, and reproduction in order to retain structural authority over meaning making. Resistant or marginal acts of signification may potentially intervene in hegemonic discursive formations, and, further, due to the basic dialectical relation between materiality and discourse, a change in discourse is conditional for social practices to change. The basic materiality of discursive formations should not go unacknowledged here; discourse, in cultural studies, is understood not only as a set of signifying practices that determine the way in which society talks about social issues, but also as constitutive of these very issues. The way in which gender relations are expressed in the media, for instance, not only reflects social structures, but also creates and reproduces these relations that then affect the material lives of social subjects. One main focus of this study is thus to explore women's road literature in terms of its intervention in and disruption of dominant discourses of literary (auto)mobility and gendered space.

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i.e. forms of classification and perception, that the social world is constructed", AG.

9 Sielke's notion of the imaginary relies on Winfried Fluck's definition, according to which the imaginary is "a set of meanings that a culture thrives to articulate"; "[t]he fund of images, affects, and desires generated in the process in turn stimulates the individual imagination anew, thus driving a process of cultural symbology that continuously challenges our sense of reality" (qtd. in Sielke 2002: 7-8).

In the context of my study, gender, too, is understood as a discursive formation structuring the social – including the spatial – significance of sexual difference. Thus, when I speak of women's (road) literature, I am not referring to a basic, essential gender identity shared by women writers who then produce literary texts in which they voice, on common grounds, their femininity or express the spatial concerns of 'women' as a subject category. I believe that the persistence of material (e.g. economic) and social gender inequalities, i.e. the consequences of 'man' and 'woman' as political categories of subjectivity, prove perhaps not a shared *essence*, but a shared *consequence* of a body that is gendered socially, even as these limitations concern various women to varying degrees. Although material differences are thus by no means 'essential' or 'stable', but rather fluctuating and dynamic, both social and physical realities are clearly not gender-blind. Thus, the disposal of essentialisms does not preclude the persistence of power structures which regulate the spatial realm in such a way that a normative femininity is associated with home and hearth, and are responsible for what is designated and devalued, in dominant discourse, as the private realm of the family. If this ideal is disregarded, women continue to get reprimanded for their transgressions, materially and symbolically. Women on the road exemplify such a transgression and consequently are met by obstacles generated by the gendered construction of space; this is the very reason for what one could call my critical separatism, my specific critical interest in *women's* road narratives.

As a social category, 'woman' thus continues to exist. I am suggesting a conception of the female protagonist on the road as defined primarily by her fictionalized physical presence, by a narrativized being-perceived-as-female (a definition that thus might include transgender and transvestite subjects). It is this embodied presence that is constitutive of the female subject in what I call, with Louis Althusser, her public interpellation as a gendered being: the public recognition of her genderedness as constitutive of woman's place in the social and symbolic orders. In her recently published monograph *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (2006), philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff puts forth a similar notion of gender and racial identity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the gendered (and racially marked) body, visibility, and social interpretations of gender without fixing the body into an unchangeable essence:

> In these [gendered and racially marked] identities, that material tie operates through our very physical and visible embodiment […], but [...] the meanings and implications of even these visible identities will be determined largely by how the historical events and social structures that demarcate identities are interpreted and understood. This is an ongoing, active process involving both individual and collective agency. Individuals cannot transform the public meanings, effects, and implications of their identities by a sheer act of will, but collective acts of creative expression and resistance constantly contest and transform the meanings, implications, and political effects of such identity markers as skin color, body shape, language use, and role in reproduction. (288)

Alcoff, arguing from a perspective that tries to combine hermeneutic and phenomenological philosophical traditions, distinguishes "public identity" (92; this would correspond to Schmitz's [1965] "objectified body") from "lived subjectivity" (93; Schmitz's "living body", cf. footnote 6). She does not naively repeat the traditional exterior/interior or public/private binarism in this distinction, but rather argues for an analysis of the interdependence of the two:

> The philosophical project today […] is to rearticulate the picture of the "inner" self in such a way as to maintain [...] that these disparate aspects of the self are not always perfectly mapped onto each other in our lived experience [...] while simultaneously critiquing the traditional binary form of the description that ossified the distinction into totally separate and mutually exclusive oppositions [...]. Accordingly we need also to explore the ways in which the substantive and particular nature of a given subjectivity is constituted through its publicly recognized identity. (93-4)

A deep dissatisfaction with the 'disembodiedness' of theory has brought about a turn toward the material dimensions of gender in feminist philosophies such as Alcoff's; in a different tradition, i.e. that of difference philosophy, Rosi Braidotti and others have attempted "to redefine a transmobile materialist theory of feminist subjectivity that is committed to working within the parameters of the postmodern predicament […]" (1994a: 2). Indeed, Braidotti's monograph *Metamorphoses: Toward a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002), is devoted in its entirety to that project. Arguing against a separation of the symbolic and discursive from the empirical, material, and historical dimensions of subjectivity, Braidotti asserts that "enfleshed" (20), the subject is both non-unitary and embodied/embedded in power rela-

tions, with the body understood as "the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces; […] not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces, a surface of intensities" (2002: 17).[10]

The visible, public surface of the gendered, ethnically or socially marked body is pivotal for a discussion of women's road literature in terms of gendered space. First, I would argue that the concept of gendered space, to come into effect, must necessarily rely on the subject's gendered interpellation through the symbolic system. Gendered subjects can only be perceived as 'in place' or 'out of place' via the visibility and public perception of their genderedness (regardless of whether this visibility is purely performative or relies on biological gender difference). Second, as Gesa Lindemann has repeatedly argued, gender construction is not only a temporal, performative process of reproduction and citationality (as held by Judith Butler in both *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*), but in its visible embodiment also a spatial phenomenon (Lindemann 1996: 358 & 1994).[11] The gendered body perceived by and visible for others should be understood here as complementary to the dimension of the living body (the experienced and experiencing embodiedness of subjectivity); Lindemann in fact emphasizes the interrelationship between these dimensions:

> As the modern living body clicks into a reflexive meaning relationship with the objectified body, the objectified body becomes a vivid, exemplary programme that regulates how the experienced body is felt

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10 As Braidotti further explains, the embodied subject is thus understood as a "process of intersecting forces (affects) and spatio-temporal variables (connections)" (2002: 21), "an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces […] where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed" (25). In the wider philosophical context, *Metamorphoses* sets out to rediscover the "materialism of the flesh"-school, a non-metaphysical, anti-logocentric tradition of Western philosophy which began in the 18th century and includes Friedrich Nietzsche, Gaston Bachelard, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, and Gilles Deleuze.

11 In "The Body of Gender Difference" Lindemann cites Teresa de Lauretis' *Technologies of Gender* as an early call for the necessity to include the body as a spatial phenomenon in her analysis of gender construction, but claims that de Lauretis "did not offer any specific suggestions as to what that would entail" (1996: 360, fn. 13).

> and is separate from its environment, and how the experiencing body centres its experiential space, perceives and acts. (1996: 359)

In other words, “I am a gender in that I am one for others” and “I am a gender in that others are one for me” (ibid. 355). Perception itself is gendered, as in the experience of being perceived, the felt region of the experienced body enters a signifying relationship with the objectified body (cf. 354), depending always, of course, on the “spatial referential context” (ibid.). In women’s road narratives, the road is the spatial referential context, the symbolic or discursive social arena of visibility and experience in which *multiple* differences collide, are contested and/or negotiated.

A further basic tenet of contemporary gender studies is an understanding of gender as inseparable from other categories of identity such as ethnicity, class, sexual identity, or age, which are also ‘visible’ (present) in the public space the narrative creates as well as narratively inscribed in the protagonists’ narrated perception. In the texts I am going to analyze, the road experience is created also as a space in which the protagonists’ public identities and lived subjectivities are in a dialogic and dialectical relation, interacting and counteracting in the narratives. These multiple differences thus produce a variety of relationships between the two dimensions of female embodiment, *Körper* and *Leib*, discursive and experienced body.

Like many literary texts with multicultural or (cultural) minority backgrounds, contemporary women’s road narratives, due to their focus on the road as a social space, enact an often conflicting synchronicity of multiple differences. The multiple, intersecting, and contradictory lines of difference encountered in these texts call the reader to acknowledge the constructed, fragmentary, dissonant, polyphonous, and processual nature as well as the performativ aspectsof gender and ethnic identity.[12] The heuristic concept of transdifference allows me to

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[12] See, for example, the work of Chicano artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, or the performance of hip-hop artists. Judith Butler’s conceptualization of performativity has also been applied to studies on racial identity, e.g. in Sarah Susannah Willie’s sociological study *Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race* (2003) or Ana Y. Ramos Zayas’ *National Performances: the Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (2003).

analyze and understand narrative tensions, contradictions, and decisions created by the collision of differences. Reconsidering difference categories not only in terms of their historical (i.e., temporal) instability but also in terms of their specific spatial structuralizations, narrated subjectivity as it appears in these works is understood as both *transdifferent* – interrupted in its alleged unity by a dissonance of narrative and narrated voices (Walz 2005) – and *transient* – variously reconfigurable in changing spatial settings.

Transiency, from the Latin *transire* – to go across, to pass – highlights the simultaneity of the spatial and the temporal dimension in narrative subject formations. On the temporal level, it emphasizes the fact that identity is always already in transition, a constant process, and historically contingent; as a consequence, this relativity dismantles essentialisms and 'being-s' by pointing to the performative aspects of identity and embodiment – as constant *becoming*. As a gendered and racial(ized) subject, then, any person is also always acting out, performing, or even simulating embodied surfaces – surfaces often taken as the materialization of some inner nature and essence of gender and ethnicity. At the same time, transiency also calls attention to the spatial dynamics in which identities are enmeshed, to shifting borders and territorialities or the transgression of spatial and categorical boundaries. The notion of transient identities and differences can therefore also figure as an instance of transgressing categorization: in other words, identity is not identifiable on ontological grounds. Identity assumes an infinite state of becoming, for it cannot be located or pinned down but for that minimal moment in time before such locations start to slide again.

This infinity of becoming, however, is neither a linear nor an uncomplicated process, which becomes evident in moments when differences collide, which at once stall categorical differences (thus interrupting the ever-sliding signifier of Derridean *différance*) and bring these categorizations in a position in which their binary structure starts to oscillate, to become unstable (which is in fact the very condition for constant 'becoming'). The notion of transdifference, coined at the German Research Foundation's interdisciplinary doctoral program "Cultural Hermeneutics: Reflections of Difference and Transdifference" at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, in the context of which I have developed this study, accounts for such moments of collision. As "the difference of differences" (Breinig/Lösch 2002: 22),

the term transdifference aims to analyze and describe all sorts of cultural and textual phenomena that are incomprehensible via binary models of difference (Lösch 2005: 26):

> The term *transdifference* refers to phenomena of a co-presence of different or even oppositional properties, affiliations or elements of semantic and epistemological meaning construction, where this copresence is regarded or experienced as cognitively or affectively dissonant, full of tension, and undissolvable. Phenomena of transdifference, for instance socio-cultural affiliations, personality components or linguistic and other symbolic predications, are encountered by individuals and groups and negotiated in their respective symbolic order. As a descriptive term transdifference allows the presentation and analysis of such phenomena in the context of the production of meaning that transcend the range of models of binary difference. (Breinig/Lösch 2006: 105)

Especially in multicultural settings, binary difference alone "can never be adequate for defining the identity positions of individuals and groups in the face of multiple affiliations" (Breinig/Lösch 2002: 21). As a heuristic analytical tool, transdifference emphasizes the simultaneity of conflicting positions, loyalties, and affiliations of the subject without categorically aiming at or presupposing a subsequent synthesis or hybridization.[13] It is thus complementary to – rather than going beyond – difference: transdifferent tension

> […] does not do away with the original binary inscription of difference, but rather causes it to oscillate or suspends it whether for an epiphanic moment or for the duration of a life lived between the affiliational demands of, say, two ethnicities. Thus, the concept of transdifference interrogates the validity of binary constructions of difference without deconstructing them. This means that difference is simultaneously bracketed and retained as a point of reference. (Breinig/Lösch 2006: 108-9)

To think in terms of transdifference, then, requires the acceptance of uncertainty, incommensurability, doubt, and indecisiveness (cf. Lösch

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13 The term's prefix might be misleading at first sight, as transdifference does not emphasize the bridging of differences, but rather a multiplicity (or copresence) of differences and the tensions generated in the spaces between (cf. also Breinig 2006: 72).

2005: 28). In confrontational situations in which multiple differences collide, the conceptual borderlines of categories of social difference start to oscillate and become unstable, but are not necessarily unhinged.

One of the concept's main strengths is that, unlike more established terms such as hybridity or transculturation (see, for example, Welsch 1995), transdifference is open to any category of identity and difference. Its openness enables the critic to take racial and ethnic differences into account *simultaneously* with differences of gender, social background, age, global spatial positionings, and so forth. Multicultural feminisms, as a case in point, have shown how plural affiliations complicate political alliances and allegiances, and thus could be seen as an identity politics based on transdifferent subject-positions. Necessarily, such a politics also has to acknowledge that for ethnically and otherwise marginalized subjects, strategic essentialisms, as proposed repeatedly in the work of Gayatri Spivak, bell hooks, or Stuart Hall, may be a necessary basis for political action without abandoning anti-essentialist positions. Furthermore, transdifferential thought concedes that differences do not automatically dissolve via syncretism or hybridization, but may, in contrast, repeatedly and continually produce tension; intrasubjectively, transdifferences create what Norma Alarcón has termed "multi-voiced subjects" (1990: 364) who effect dissonance rather than harmony.

The notion of transdifference as a heuristic analytical tool is compatible with various subject theories currently theorized and debated. It can, for instance, be understood in association with Rosi Braidotti's conception of nomadic subjects, which recognizes the political advantage of collective identities based on difference categories, yet argues for an understanding of such identities as moveable alliances based on the fictitiousness of a common ground.[14] Believing in "the empowering force of […] political fictions" (1994a: 3), Braidotti finds "empowering in the practice of 'as if' […] precisely its potential for opening up, through successive repetitions and mimetic strategies, spaces where alternative forms of agency can be engendered" (1994a: 7). Thus, if women (migrants; ethnic others; the working class; …)

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[14] On the problematic implications of the nomadic in Braidotti, Deleuze, and others, cf. chapter four of this study.

conceive of themselves *as women* (as migrants; as ethnic others; as working class; …) while simultaneously (ac)know(ledg)ing that their collective basis is but a strategic assumption and using this understanding politically, this stance might indeed result in new alliances, in mobile subject positions and identity formations, and in political as well as personal agency. Thus implicitly, Braidotti recognizes incommensurable and/or conflicting differences, yet transcends this incommensurability by postulating transient moments of nomadic alliances.[15] From this perspective, Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity can be seen as a strategy for creating agency in response to phenomena of transdifference. In *Nomadic Subjects*, she argues for "a feminist nomadic project that allows for internal contradictions and attempts to negotiate between [these]" (1994a: 31).

In the context of an analysis of literature and other works of cultural production, transdifference can be examined as both a social/psychological and a textual phenomenon. The manifestation of the latter greatly varies according to the formal qualities of a narrative; popular, 'lowbrow' road novels articulate conflicting differences more often on the level of emplotment, while postmodern, 'highbrow' narratives or prose poems make use of a broader scope of aesthetic means to do so. In my readings, I am focusing on the ways these texts articulate transdifferential tension, keeping in mind the range of aesthetic means available to each. The main concern is to address how a text is troubled, polyphonic, or dissonant due to such tensions, how thus it might itself acquire a transdifferent quality, and how transdifferent narrative tension is resolved by diegetic or aesthetic solutions. In her conception of a transdifferential hermeneutics, Angela Walz argues that transdifference is useful for a literary analysis focusing on the "erzähltechnische […] Mittel […], mit denen Texte Ambivalenzen und Mehrdeutigkeit produzieren oder das Unsagbare im Sinne des

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15 Cf. Braidotti: "As a figuration of contemporary subjectivity, […] the nomad is a postmetaphysical, intensive, multiple entity, functioning in a net of interconnections. S/he cannot be reduced to a linear, teleological form of subjectivity but is rather the site of multiple connections. S/he is embodied, and therefore cultural; […] s/he is complex, endowed with multiple capacities for interconnectedness in the impersonal mode. […] One of her/his historical tasks is how to restore a sense of intersubjectivity that would allow for the recognition of differences to create a new kind of bonding" (1994a: 36).

kulturell Unterdrückten, Verworfenen erzählerisch zur Darstellung gelangt" (2005: 17).[16] Thus, a transdifferential hermeneutics sheds light onto "Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in narrativen Identitäten […], ohne zugleich – zugunsten der Kontinuität eines Textes – Leerstellen beseitigen, Widersprüche glätten oder Ambivalenzen durch feste Bedeutungen ersetzen zu müssen" (ibid.).[17] Although transdifferent textual tensions, expressing the cultural abject,[18] might equally lead to a resolution of tension and the suppression of difference, I agree with Walz that a narratology revised through the lens of transdifference helps locate suppressed elements and options in a text through its focus on discontinuities and dissonances (2005: 28-9). In this view, literary texts tend not to yield a unified interpretation that would characterize them as either subversive or affirmative – instead, both subversive and affirmative elements can occur side by side.[19] Further, transdifferent contradictions within the text produce or obstruct meaning-making significantly; rather than dismissing a work of fiction because of its inherent contradictions, any analysis drawing on transdifference focuses instead on identifying and accepting these contradictions as culturally meaningful.

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16 Tr.: "narrative means by which texts produce ambivalences and polysemy or [by which] the unspeakable in the sense of the culturally suppressed [or] abject comes to be represented in the narrative", AG.

17 Tr.: "fractures and inconsistencies in narrative identities […], without simultaneously – for the benefit of a text's continuity – having to efface gaps, smooth out contradictions, or replace ambivalences by fixed meanings", AG.

18 Walz emphasizes the expression of the cultural abject: "Mit einer narrativen Hermeneutik im Zeichen von Transdifferenz kommen dagegen jene Erzählstrategien in den Blick, mit denen die Ideologie konventioneller Erzählungen bewusst hintertrieben und dekonstruiert wird, folglich auch Verfahren, mit denen es gelingt, das Unsagbare, das sind Erfahrungen, die nicht in eine einheitliche Identität rückführbar sind, dennoch zur Darstellung zu bringen" (2005: 34). Tr.: "With a narrative hermeneutics characterized by transdifference, however, those narratological strategies come into view that deliberately thwart and deconstruct the ideology of conventional narrations, and consequently also methods with which it is possible to represent the unspeakable, experiences that cannot be integrated into a uniform identity", AG.

19 Cf. Walz (2005: 29): "Vielmehr ist die Pluralität von Diskursen bzw. von Stimmen untrennbar mit der Annahme einer Vielzahl von kulturellen und ideologischen (Erzähl-)Universen verbunden". Tr.: "Much rather, the plurality of discourses and voices is inextricably tied to the assumption of a multitude of cultural and ideological (narratological) universes", AG.

In women's road literature, female protagonists are usually characterized by and confronted with multiple differences, and the various texts create, handle, and resolve theses tensions in a variety of ways. First of all, as I have argued above, the gendered body's movement across the country places the literary subject in a public arena, in which different and dissimilar subjects potentially cross each other's trajectories; these encounters often bring multiple differences into dialogue. Second, however, the social space of the road and the roadside is not equally accessible and usable for everyone, and thus the fictional road itself is structured in a highly gendered, classed, and racialized way. As a space, the road is thus transdifferentially structured (e.g. according to region, demography, economic structure, historical markers, etc.), bringing certain categories of difference to the fore while suppressing others. Third, many protagonists in the road novels analyzed in the following come from multicultural settings that are further pluralized by their journeys, which lead them to encounter ever more 'Others' – identity groups, (sub)cultures, or individuals. In the diegesis, this situation can result in conflicts of loyalty as well as in contradictory perceptions, usages, and creations of textually created social space(s). When conflicting identifications and affiliations are precipitated by the textual setting of the road as a cultural crossroads, the narrated social space is produced in a similarly fragmented and transitory manner: the simultaneity of identifications in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, or religion, generates conflicting perceptions of self and other, of social and spatial relationality.

The texts discussed in this study articulate transdifferent tensions and ambiguities largely because of the multicultural, gendered setting of the American road(side) that acts as a catalyst for irresolvable differences and dissonances located within the narrating and/or narrated subjectivity of the female itinerant. As I will be arguing throughout this book, they probe discursive dichotomous boundaries pertaining to the gendered space of the road. Depending on geographical, ethnic, and social context, foundational territorial narratives of U.S.-American and, in one case, Canadian nationhood are questioned and unmasked as resting on the construction of gendered, ethnic, and social alterities. Diverging lines of gendered, sexual, ethnic, and/or social differences (precipitated by the traversal of a 'homeland' that is largely alien to the protagonist) clash, are negotiated and rewritten on fictional highways. The road as a fictional social space, articulated in

literary terms, thus becomes a social space contested on both narrative and formal as well as on diegetic-symbolic levels. The female vagrant is as much concerned with this contestation as the fictional social/geographical space. In this view, spatial agency refers not only to the extension of individual agency by way of mobility, but also to an intervention in dominant structures of socio-cultural spaces as, in Michel de Certeau's (1988) terms, a tactic of resistance.[20]

By way of transgressing such boundaries, the texts under discussion not only interrogate a normative separate sphere model of social space, but also show how this late 18th-century middle-class ideology (Hausen 1977) continues to impact the structure of social space and gender norms. By the very act of writing the female subject out of the home and onto the road, these narratives deterritorialize femininity and revise the discursively 'masculinized' road space (cf. chapter two); in this context, the car itself functions as a vehicle that blurs the very distinctions between feminine/domestic/private and masculine/public spaces. The confrontation with hegemonic normative spatial structures that attribute certain spaces to cultural minorities and exclude them from others produces dissonant voices that articulate painful feelings of exclusion, anger, and fear as well as a pleasurable defiance, transgression, and adventurousness. Yet transgressive resistance against normative structures of inclusion and exclusion, as they are variably articulated in these texts, is frequently interrupted by narrative strategies suppressing or regulating this endeavor, thus emphasizing that texts are never autonomous of hegemonic discourses. Aesthetically, for instance, the generic imprint of the masculine road novel and road movie, which has arguably turned these genres into "formula stories" (Cawelti 1976), often seems to limit the potential of *formal* transgression in women's road books. Yet if women's road narratives are considered parodies or even imitations in Linda Hutcheon's or Homi Bhabha's understanding, their function is necessarily subversive to some extent, for they repeat with a significant (gendered) difference this masculine imprint, thereby denying the mascu-

[20] I am aware of the problematic binary structure of de Certeau's (1988) argument of hegemonic strategies and subversive tactics, but I am using his thoughts on spatial intervention for his emphasis on the potential interruption in hegemonic structures inherent in common social practices (such as the American road trip).

line original its exclusive symbolic power. Indeed, women's road narratives make use of various generic formulae and literary registers, from the conventional quest to picaresque chick-lit. They often fuse or combine literary forms, thereby producing a deconstructive effect with regard to the masculine 'original'.

Thus aesthetically, one commonality of the selected road books is indeed what Hutcheon (1992) has called "double talking": women's road narratives repeat the dominant masculine model with a difference (which, in Hutcheon's conception of parody, is not necessarily humorous). For Hutcheon, "[p]arody is a weapon against marginalization: it literally works to incorporate that upon which it ironically comments" (1986: 226). However, there are limits to this subversiveness, for parody "can be both inside and outside the dominant discourse whose critique it embodies" (ibid.; cf. also her book *Theory of Parody*, 1985).

From this perspective, the function of women's road novels is twofold – as renewal and critique. The texts oscillate between these functions in a transdifferent manner that often results in ambivalent textual politics, contradictory endings, and brittle narratives. This transdifferent situation is not only due to formal limitations, however, but also to this literature's attempt at revising multiply encoded spatialities. The difficulty of imagining and, even more so, of maintaining imagined alternative spaces against social norms and power structures results in awkward textual practices such as unconvincing narrative closures, affirmative endings, or no closure at all.

1.3. Route Map/Travel Plan

In the chapter to follow, I will explore the gendered cultural history of the American road novel in the second half of the 20th century, followed by an overview of the relevant scholarship. The chapter addresses the discursive intertwinings of genre and gender as well as the socio-political context of the emergence of women's road narratives, such as second-wave feminism.

In chapter three, I move from literary spaces to social spaces, or, more specifically, to the concept of gendered space as it has been developed in feminist cultural geography. I argue that cultural texts ar-

ticulate and critique dominant gendered spatialities; therefore, it is this theoretical background that provides a lens through which I read the road texts discussed in chapters four to six. Arguing from this spatial perspective, I have identified three main tropes of mobility in women's road texts – tropes that structure women's road literature according to three distinct paradigms of movement. These tropes, defined by the specific narrative journey's motivation and by the text's specific conception of home, by and large determine not only the strategies used in the telling of a road story, but also the focus of their cultural critique.

First, the *quest narratives* discussed in chapter four are primarily motivated by the desire to arrive. This arrival may be linked to an *actual geographical* or to an *imaginary-metaphorical* location that represents the idea of a better, more meaningful, more liberated life. The question guiding this chapter is whether the quest in America, with its master narrative of the white masculine journey west and its implications of colonization and the subjugation of the land under an Anglo civilizatory paradigm, can be rewritten by women's literature to circumvent colonial and gendered mastery. While Doris Betts' *Heading West* (4.3.1.) and Sharlene Baker's *Finding Signs* (4.3.2.) both use the tradition of the romance and the westering tale to articulate their feminist quests for liberation, the former's Southern-conservative background tones down its feminist impulse and ultimately imposes on the text a narrative return to a rather conventional notion of domesticity. The latter escapes this closure by the text's suggestion of home as transitory and dynamic. The cultural baggage of westering narratives is even more apparent in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* (4.4.2.), even though these popular novels emphasize female community and nurturance as well as cultural diversity, and envision an alternative version of family, motherhood, and home. Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* and Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl* (4.4.3.) share this agenda with Kingsolver's texts, but exemplify more successful attempts to abandon both the heterosexual romance and the utopia of the American West in favor of mother-daughter plots that create the road as a dynamic space of familial connection. These four quest narratives turn from a search for a geographical destination to a search for community and understanding. The mother-daughter plot is also central to Anne Roiphe's Jewish-American road novel *Long Division* (4.5.), which I will discuss in an interstitial chapter as representa-

tive of a subversive appropriation of the quest by way of para-nomadism, focusing on cultural difference and the creation of alternative spatialities in a multicultural feminist context.

The second trope of mobility that is of structural importance for a wide array of women's road novels is thus that of *para-nomadism* (chapter five), a form of mobility that resembles nomadic wanderings. Para-nomadic journeys, in contradistinction to the current plethora of theories in which nomadic mobility is somewhat romanticized, are defined here as ongoing journeys motivated by economic or political necessity (rather than wanderlust and adventurousness). These journeys are frequently articulated in women's literatures in order to rewrite various historical legacies of coerced mobility as empowering; just how this can be done is the question guiding this chapter. Diane Glancy's *Claiming Breath* and various short stories from *The Voice That Was in Travel* (5.2.) parallel the Cherokee Trail of Tears with the lack of spatial agency predicted not only by a normative femininity, but also by economic hardship, motherhood and divorce, and the difficult legacy of mixed heritages. With a different ethnic background, Cynthia Kadohata's Japanese-American road novel *The Floating World* (5.3.) also appropriates a legacy of coerced mobility by transforming the historical experience of the *nisei* generation during World War II into a story of *sansei* empowerment and a home on the road. Taken together, these road texts voice a different experience of mobility often neglected in discussions of 'the road' in America. The last road text examined in chapter five, Joan Didion's *Play It as It Lays* (5.4.), may not be troubled with ethnic legacies of coerced mobility, yet also focus on involuntary movements of a *gendered* nature. Didion's book epitomizes the confined mobility of white women, depicting the protagonist's movements as unavoidable, but, at the same time, quest, escape, and self-determined adventure as impossible.

A third branch of women's road novels written since the 1970s is concerned with rewriting mobility as a pleasurable and empowering adventure. Harking back to the literary tradition of the *picaresque*, these texts emphasize women's wanderlust and recklessness, often with a distinct sense of postmodern playfulness. The ways in which this tradition is used and transformed by women's literature in order to rearticulate the road narrative in different cultural settings is the main focus of this chapter. Set in a Canadian context, Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address* (5.5.) presents picaresque mobility as a strategy for

survival on the one hand and a way to deconstruct, in postmodern fashion, traditional feminine spatialities on the other. As the picaresque journey was a common social practice in the counter-cultural context of the late 1960s, a second sub-group of women's picaresque road novels, exemplified here by Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home* (6.2.1.) and Katherine Dunn's *Truck* (6.2.2.), focuses on unmasking the unequal gender relations of this subcultural formation; both Carter and Dunn thus re-write 60s' *picarismo* from a young woman's perspective. The humorous quality of the picaresque tale, which conventionally has been used to alleviate the painful experiences of social subjects marginalized by in-betweenness – ethnic, sexual, or otherwise – is a significant feature in these road novels. Erika Lopez' illustrated road-novel *Flaming Iguanas* (6.3.) is exemplary not only for its humorous rewriting of the cross-country adventure, but also for its innovative formal transformation of the picaresque road text, fusing it with contemporary pop-cultural forms such as chick-lit and comic art.

The three narrative patterns of mobility are by no means 'pure', and the narrative and aesthetic diversity of road texts can by no means be reduced to these three tropes as distinct and separate. For this reason, interstitial chapters focus each on a narrative in which these tropes interact. In Anne Roiphe's *Long Division* (4.5.), as indicated above, both questing and para-nomadic mobilities are articulated as interrelated; Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address* (5.5.) demonstrates how nomadic and picaresque mobilities can be intertwined.

Each narrative's individual articulation of the quest, the para-nomadic, and the picaresque paradigms of mobility – informed by different cultural, ethnic, religious, and other contexts – structures the specific spatialities created in the text. While the quest is perhaps the most traditional form, resting on ideas of growing roots and finding the ideal home, the nomad inhabits a permanently transient space and dismantles the duality of home and away, private and public; the picaresque tale is arguably the most radical of the three by disdaining the necessity of home altogether. In my readings, I aim to analyze such literary spatialities in order to uncover and theorize socio-spatial power structures that shape contemporary North American women's imaginations of the road, spatialities which shape female agency and experience, in literature and beyond.

2. Contemporary American Women's Road Narratives: Genre and Gender

> The car is America and America is the car. The car is the myth and metaphor for America. […] Yet like everything else in this country that involves speed, power and a lot of reckless insanity, the car has always been associated with the male: he got drunk in it and usually wrecked it and miraculously survived (or didn't), he used it to augment and bolster a failed ego, he made it into a dangerous weapon, he transformed it into a substitute for the penis he wondered if he had (enough of), he used it to ensure upward mobility, he went on the road to escape in it, and he made time, and babies, with as many women as he could persuade to explore the back seat with him.
>
> - Lydia Simmons,
> "Not From the Back Seat"

2.1. The Road Narrative as Genre

As a literary genre, the road narrative was investigated as early as the 1930s. In Mikhail Bakhtin's long essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (1981/1937-38), he argues that chance meetings and other interpersonal encounters account for the dialogic quality of the road as a narrative space. In this essay, Bakhtin argues that the road has been so important for the history of the novel because it is privileged for chance encounters:

> On the road […], the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another. On the road the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the *collapse of social distances*. (ibid. 243; my emphasis)

The fact that social hierarchies are never completely suspended in the course of the journey is no concern of Bakhtin's essay. The argument that social distance is at stake and rendered precarious in cross-country travel is convincing, however, suggesting that "roadscapes provide vibrant cultural contact zones", as Neil Campbell paraphrases it (2001: 282). The material quality of the road as a "practiced place" (de Certeau 1988: 117) in which diverse social, sexual, and ethnic subjects meet and interact renders it both a dynamic space of mobility and a symbolic space continually filled with new meaning by a variety of spatial agents – filled not like an empty container, but articulated in being practiced. Thus, for instance, the 'road west' has been narrated in multifarious ways, often in contradistinction to the colonialist frontier doctrine of western expansion.

The road narrative's persistence and expansive nature certainly has to do with the road's chronotopic – i.e. temporal-spatial – quality as a site of encounter, from which its mythical status as allegedly "democratic, open to all and opposed to the closed" (Campbell 2001: 282) derives. Thus, the road text can be read as an articulation of the "philosophical capacity to shift views and destabilize assumptions" (ibid. 284) and has therefore attracted emergent articulations by marginal social groups. The genre offers what Katherine Mills has called "an excellent case study of how people at the margins play with the mobility of meaning" (1999: 24). The genre's attractiveness for writers with a socio-political agenda has to do with the fact that it has inherited from the picaresque a tradition that depicts the road as a privileged public space in which difference is negotiated and selves and others are brought into dialogue. Journey and chance encounter, as they are narrated in the road text, offer the potential to imagine a community based on communication and negotiation rather than on a bonding of homogeneous identities on common ground and soil, on uniformity and shared essences or roots. As Neil Campbell and Rowland A. Sherrill suggest,

> the "roadwork" of journey, encounter, alliance, interrelationship, and contestation might form some basis for living differently […], moving people beyond their established patterns of being to other perspectives so as to overcome "the problems of what to make of and how best to live in the pluriform human theater that is their country, indeed how to manage life in relation to their neighbors' stark othernesses". (Campbell 2001: 280, quoting Sherrill 2000: 171)

Venturing out from this perspective of plurality, I am hesitant to suggest a clear-cut definition of the road narrative, although the inclusion of certain generic elements seems obligatory. In order to define the road genre, according to Ronald Primeau's *Romance of the Road* (1996), classification must be descriptive and flexible, for the road narrative is in itself quite malleable and thus can be used for a variety of literary and non-literary purposes.[1] Perhaps the genre's expansiveness is one of its most distinct characteristics, as Neil Campbell argues (2001: 280), referring to Rowland A. Sherrill's observation that road texts often blur genres and transgress established forms (2000: 55-8).

Although road texts can appear in various cultural forms in film, music, and literature (such as novels, short stories, poetry, drama, or hybrids thereof),[2] they are sometimes perceived as "formulaic" (Primeau 1996: 8, Elliot 2000: 203), following certain patterns and displaying distinctive features. This tendency to formulaity has to be seen in connection with the fact that road narratives constitute an intentionally popular literary genre (Primeau 1996: 11). However, these formulaic features are few: specifically with regard to literature, perhaps the only common diegetic characteristic shared by all road novels

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1 The recent bulk of journalistic road narratives mark only one genre development that testifies to this malleability. It includes travel writing and adventure (e.g. Cameron Tuttle's *Bad Girl's Guide to the Open Road*, Irma Kurtz' *Great American Bus Ride*, Richard Grant's *American Nomads,* Martha J. Retallick's *Discovering America. Bicycle Adventures in All 50 States*, Melissa Holbrook-Pierson's *The Perfect Vehicle* or Mary Morris' *Angels & Aliens*), sports reports (e.g. Virginia Mudd Madden's *Across America on the Yellow Brick Road,* Cindy Ross' *A Woman's Journey*, or Jane Schnell's *Changing Gears*), or political journalism (e.g. Doris Haddock's *Granny D*). Despite the fact that this study is concerned mainly with literary road-narratives in a rather narrow sense of the term, it is also important to note that the road novel is a typical genre in which fiction and nonfiction overlap (cf. Primeau 1996: 9, Ette 2000: 37-8). Nonfictional traces – of autobiography, for example – of course affect aesthetic expression, narrative perspective, style, and register.

2 On the generic effects of medial differences between various forms of road texts, especially on film and television, cf. K. Mills (1999), whose main thesis is that road stories have always migrated between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' forms, "between rebellion and mainstream commodification, between old media and new" (cf. dissertation abstract, s.p.); she thus calls the road story a "fugitive genre" (6). A brilliant study of the road movie from a spatial perspective has been published by Amelie Soyka (2002).

is that the road is the major setting which informs the narrative plot. Yet, space in the road narrative functions not only as a passive background, a scene characters pass through, but emerges as a distinct narrated space as people and places interact (Primeau 1996: 3). Themes are often derived from a rich intertextual genre memory[3] and include the escape from hardship and constraint into a narrated space set off from the ordinary (Laird 1983: 248), and the search for liberty and the 'true self', or discovery and exploration, adventure and wanderlust. In fact, the fusion with other genres has led Neil Campbell to call the road novel a "transgenre" (2001: 279): the road narrative's generic legacy includes the picaresque, the pastoral, the travelogue, the *Bildungsroman*, the quest, and the story of initiation (Primeau 1996: IX & Lackey 1997: 8-10). The list of themes is inexhaustible, however, as new themes are continually introduced to the genre and older ones wane. The road novel, like the travel book, conventionally follows a tripartite structure of departure, actual journey, and arrival. Like the notion of the 'authentic self' to be found somewhere 'out there' and to be brought back from the journey, this structure has been repeatedly challenged in terms of its linear, teleological implications, especially in postmodern literature.

Though related, most discussions of the *road* text as genre tend to implicitly distinguish it from the *travel* narrative. They mostly imply that the *road* narrative seems to focus on travel within a certain geographical area and cultural context with which the protagonist is familiar, whereas *travel* literature emphasizes alienation and unfamiliarity by way of geographical distance. Correspondingly, criticism drawing on this distinction often focuses on the colonial implications of travel writing (e.g. S. Mills 1991) but leave such implications unexamined in the context of the road narrative (cf. e.g. Primeau 1996 & 1999, Lackey 1997). The two conventions are thus usually presented as two distinct literary genres. Mikhail Bakhtin, tracing the road text primarily back to the picaresque tradition, argued that "one crucial feature of the 'road' common to all the various types of novels [he has discussed]" is that "the road is always one that passes through familiar

3 The term, coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" (1986/1937-38) is also used by Primeau (1996).

territory, and not through some exotic alien world […]; it is the sociohistorical heterogeneity of one's own country that is revealed and depicted (and for this reason, if one may speak at all about the exotic here, then it can only be the 'social exotic')" (1981/1937-38: 245). This peculiarity of the road text serves to distinguish it from "that other line of development" present in "the novel of travel" (ibid.). However, one could argue against this definition that social differences render the distinction between 'one's own' and 'alien' territories or cultures highly problematic, a counter-argument in fact anticipated by Bakhtin's bracketed insertion. Also, the underlying notion of culture in his distinction between familiar and unfamiliar territories suggests a rather static, closed, and uniform conception of the term, thereby obscuring the heterogeneous nature of culture(s), their permeable boundaries and 'traveling' aspects (which James Clifford has famously emphasized in "Traveling Cultures", 1992). Taking these points into consideration, I do not suggest *not* to distinguish the road novel from the travel book at all, but propose instead an awareness of its fuzzy generic boundaries. Road texts can be thought of as one form of travel writing (cf. also Enevold 2004: 73); however, one must be aware that the road text itself is not uniform, ranging from narratives about adventure to stories about coerced movement. Often it is exactly the tension between adventurous travel and forced movement that inspires road literature of all variants (Liebs 1991: 263).[4]

I therefore suggest not dividing travel literature – which portrays a range of travel experiences – into fixed, circumscribed iterological categories, as Ottmar Ette (2000) or Michel Butor (1992) do. Butor, for instance, argues for eleven clear-cut categories of travel writing, a formalist-structuralist approach I find not only problematic regarding its contingency, but also because it is not necessarily enriching for the cultural criticism of travel and travel writing. As it becomes clear that the genre is variable, changing, and flexible, I am following Werner Reinhart's claim that generic affiliation should already be understood as an act of interpretation rather than mere classification (2001: 133). In a similar vein, my focus on road texts by women

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4 Especially in the context of women's and multiethnic travel writing, critics have increasingly called for the inclusion of narratives of involuntary travel into the study of travel literature (see e.g. Jedamski et al. 1993: 13).

is an interpretative choice; it is not based on the assumption that women's writing is self-evidently different from men's, that it shows common features, or that it is a uniform genre.

In the specific American context, Ronald Primeau's *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (1996) was one of the first monographs to analyze the significance of the road narrative in American culture. Following Raymond Williams' tripartition of dominant, residual, and emergent ideologies (cf. *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, 1982) that can be articulated in cultural texts, Primeau introduces road stories as narratives which, as a genre, express these values simultaneously and in interrelation:

> Road narratives might argue for the individual in a mass-dominated society [i.e., the dominant discourse, AG] by celebrating the residual values of the pioneers on the frontier. At the same time, the road is a popular and acceptable place to express new meanings and values that lie outside what is either dominant or residual. […] On the road, the emergent is most often manifest as escape, political protest, or social reform and may be particularly evident in road works by women and ethnic minorities. (1996: 4)

This threefold dimension of the road text is one major reason why the road narrative is a popular literary genre today. Since it has also been said to be a distinctly American genre (Campbell 2001: 279) or even "[a]n American Archetype" (Barbara Odabashian on the road movie, 1990: 50), one has to examine it, as Williams would have argued, in its specific cultural and historical context in order to understand, e.g., its contemporary transformations by cultural minorities.[5]

The hegemonic aspects of the myths of American mobility have already been outlined in my introduction. For the second half of the 20th century, it is important to add that the road story emerged, following the publication of Kerouac's *On the Road* in 1957, as celebratory of rebellion and as a prominent site of social criticism. Thus, Kerouac's novel, however conservative in terms of its portrayal of women, discursively paved the way for cultural minorities to adapt the ge-

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[5] This revision by cultural minorities is most apparent in the plethora of American road movies with a social concern produced since the late 1980s, such as *Powwow Highway* (1989) and *Boys on the Side* (1995) and, most recently, *TransAmerica* (2005) or *My Blueberry Nights* (2007).

nre to their own concerns. Partaking in the mythical American on-the-road experience, "non-dominant communities use their unique histories of difference to throw the lacunae of the past road stories into high relief" (Mills 1999: 10), a fact that has diversified the genre to a great extent.

The fact that genre and genre criticism are not detached from social contexts and values becomes evident when we review its gendered generic history as well as literary criticism on the American road narrative. Though sparse in itself, criticism has foregrounded male contributions to the genre until recently – despite the fact that the genre has also traditionally attracted other voices from the social and cultural margins of America as well. Genre and gender are to be conceived of as related discourses, and this is also true for the road narrative, as Lidia Curti contends: "genre is traversed by the discourse of sexual difference as if the vicinity of the two English words – genre and gender […] – recalled coincidence and dislocation, obedience and transgression at one and the same time." (qtd. in Enevold 2004: 73) "The literature of the American highway has been dominated for most of its history by the values and attitudes of white males", Ronald Primeau argues: "[w]hen women and minority authors take to the road, they bring a different perspective and experience to their travels and writing", and thus also possibly reshape certain genre conventions (1996: IX).[6] The obvious danger of reducing "the complexity of the text to one main parameter" (S. Mills 1991: 29) – in this case gender – is taken into consideration by my use of transdifference as an analytical category throughout my readings. This in mind, what Sara Mills has called the "double-voiced quality of women's writing" (1991: 44) should turn into an awareness of its "multiply-voiced quality".[7]

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6 Related arguments put forth in Primeau's study are less convincing. Not only does the author erroneously introduce autobiography as a defining feature of the genre, he also neglects the interplay of generic and social difference by defining "American road narratives" as fiction and nonfiction books "by Americans who travel by car throughout the country either on a quest or simply to get away" (1996: 1). Limiting transportation to driving a car alone for reasons unclear, Primeau also excludes road novels by non-American citizens, as well as stories of non-voluntary cross-country journeys.

7 Cf. also Ulla Siebert, who calls for an analysis of the cross-sections of gender, race, class, sexual identity, and nationality in terms of power structures and ideological reproduction in women's travel literature (1993: 150).

2.2. The Masculine Legacy

Neil Campbell ends his essay "Road Narratives and Western Identity" (2001) by expressing his dissatisfaction that despite the road's symbolic textual potential, road books "could go further" than just to the point where they shift between memoir and fiction, travelogue, history, and myth:

> The journeys in road literature must reflect the mobile sensibility evident in so much western writing, the persistence of 'routes' as much as 'roots' as a determinant of identity and belonging, the attention to hybridity and exile, and the possibilities of contact. (287)

This claim is understandable if, as is the unfortunate case in Campbell's critique, road narratives by cultural minorities are neglected. Reviewing the genre's history since the mid-20th century, however, Campbell's oversight is by no means an exception.

Critics agree that the history of the American road narrative in the second half of the 20th century begins with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), which has arguably shaped the genre and its associative characteristics like no other text. According to Primeau, Kerouac's book "brought formal recognition of the cultural ritual [of going on the road], and the genre began to accumulate its own distinctive features" (1996: 8). He continues that "as readers got used to certain road genre conventions, authors were both restrained to follow those paths and freed to modify the form" (ibid.). Not only has *On the Road* been a best-selling novel with continuing popularity ever since its publication, especially among younger readers, it is also the work that appears most often as an explicit or implicit intertext in contemporary road narratives.

Rereadings of the countercultural literature of the beat generation in terms of its portrayal of both femininity and masculinity would draw attention to the 'all-male community' that *On the Road* attempts to counterpose against prevailing norms domesticity and the breadwinning ethic of the 1950s (Ehrenreich 1983, esp. 52-67). As Sidonie Smith has put it, women in the novel are silent passengers whose stasis, if at all, is only momentarily interrupted for the men's sake: "[t]hey are momentary points of sessility that bracket mobility, or they are pawns to be maneuvered in the game of male bonding, a bonding

central to renegade masculinity." (2001: 178; cf. also 176-83) The first sentence of *On the Road* is programmatic from this angle as it establishes the relationship between Sal Paradise, its narrator, and Dean Moriarty, its mythical hero, as predicated on the absence of women: "I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up." (1) Throughout the book, Dean's and Sal's masculinity is redefined by their communal "auto-mobility",[8] the performance of what they perceive to be the "one and noble function of the time" (134): being on the road. Throughout the novel, Sal and Dean's mobility is threatened by the presence of women who are not satisfied with either staying at home ('the beaten wives') or brief stints in the backseat ('the beat chicks'). The "holy road" (139) is indeed envisioned as open; why, Sal asks himself, think about unhappy relationships "when all the golden land's ahead of you and all kinds of unforeseen events wait lurking to surprise you and make you glad you're alive to see"? (135).[9] At one point, Dean takes the image of a woman framed by a window – the antithesis of mobility – as an incentive to continue their runaway journey: "'that woman in that window up there, just looking down with her big breasts hanging from her nightgown, big wide eyes. Whee. Sal, we gotta go and never stop going…'" (240). This is only one of many misogynist images of women as static objects of either rejection or sexual desire in the novel; the housewives are bored (245), every other woman is a "whore". Dean advises Sal to be ready "to hook up with a real great girl if [he] can only find her and cultivate her and make her mind [his] soul as I have tried so hard with these damned women of mine" (187).

Although Sal's statement that "The truth of the matter is we don't understand our women; we blame on them [sic] and it's all our fault" (122) has often been quoted as if it were a corrective to the book's overall gender politics, Dean's response to Sal that "it isn't as

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8 A term used by Roger Casey to describe the coupling of ideologies of movement and individualism in an American context (1997: 3).

9 Of course, the tone of the novel is manic-depressive, swerving between exhilaration and a somber sadness that betrays the lack of alternatives in the rigid social conventions that shaped the 1950s in the United States, also with respect to the possibility of men living outside the nuclear family. In this brief discussion of *On the Road*, my focus is limited to the portrayal of women in the book.

simple as that" (ibid.) is significant. Thus, I do not want to suggest that the book's gender politics can be reduced to a misogynist dimension, although both fictional and historical accounts demonstrate that among the "sordid hipsters of America" (54), women were relegated to the roles of what Joyce Johnson has termed "minor characters" in her memoir. Neither am I arguing that *On the Road* is a conservative text, as it harshly criticizes normative, mainstream masculinity and profoundly questions the conformism and racism of the American 1950s. The novel gives voice to masculine insecurities, unacknowledged homosexuality (cf. esp. the narrator's feminization at the end of the book, when he is abandoned by Dean), and a desire for the ethnic Other (cf. the image of the *fellahin* and the overall portrayal of African-American and Mexican cultures) that were unspeakable in mainstream society. However, its countercultural subversiveness is also clearly predicated on a negative image of women; as such, the 'beat chick' functions, like cars and sex, as a prosthesis for a masculinity in crisis (i.e., 'threatened' both by its own fragility and by domestic confinement).

A controversial discussion among cultural geographers Linda McDowell, Tim Cresswell, and Simon Rycroft summarizes recent debates about *On the Road*'s construction of gendered mobility quite well. In 1996, the three authors responded to Cresswell's essay "Mobility as Resistance" (1993), in which he reads travel as rebellion in the social context of the 1950s but argues that *On the Road* reinforces hegemonic male/female and public/private dualisms. While McDowell's response follows Cresswell's argument that beat resistance through mobility was ambivalent in its relation to hegemonic values, she rejects what she calls "too simple a dualism between masculinity and femininity, and their respective associations with the road and the home" (McDowell 1996: 415). Drawing on Carolyn Cassady's memoir *Off the Road* (1991), McDowell sees Beat women's resistance in the alternative version of home Cassady held against the ideal of the nuclear family of the 1950s. She thereby counters the view that immobility offers no possibility for opposition (ibid. 414-5), an argument Janet Wolff (1992) and bell hooks (1990) brought forth: "contrary to the view of women as passive and immobile victims, suffering until their men returned, the wives and lovers of travelers also challenged conventional mores in their lives." (McDowell 1996: 415) Cresswell in turn responds with the relative obscurity of women's accounts of

the Beats such as Cassady's and Johnson's in comparison to *On the Road*'s status as a literary classic that presents women as mere caricatures (1993: 420), contending that the main gender difference seems to have been "that the women did not appear to have [had] the choice to take to the road" (422), a view that Johnson's and Cassady's books certainly confirm. Cresswell concludes with a hesitant response to hooks' "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance" (1990):

> There is an appeal to taking positions of marginality and affirming them as positions of resistance against the very asymmetrical power relations that so often produce spaces of marginality in the first place. hooks walks a careful line between the marginality that is imposed […] and that which is chosen and embraced as a site of resistance. Occasionally, sites may be both places of repression and resistance. Frankly, I am not sure where the marginality of the beat women falls. The space of home is a space that has historically been imposed by the oppressive structures of patriarchy, not one chosen as a site of radical openness. The dualism of imposed/chosen is itself permeable. Perhaps it is more realistic to speak of the subversion of imposed sites. (1993: 422)

In the context of my study, the debate between Cresswell and McDowell is emblematic not only because it highlights the danger that lies in positing the road vis-à-vis the home as a space of resistance, but also because it draws attention to the dilemma of the hegemony-agency dialectic. At this point, Cresswell's response is especially significant for its portrayal of the road as a *discursive formation*: a masculine terrain that both the continuing popularity of Kerouac's novel and the historical, gendered practice of the flight from domesticity have produced. Moving into the late 1960s, for instance, the road text "solidified its association with a countercultural movement that overtly rejected postwar domestic ideology and its prescriptions for male fulfillment" (Talbot 1999: 139), but again, the genderedness of this ideology went largely unexamined.

2.3. Women off & on the Road

Critical engagement with the masculine legacy of the beat generation's politics of gendered mobility began with the publication of Joyce Johnson's and Carolyn Cassady's memoirs in 1983 and 1990,

respectively, of excerpts of lesser known Beat narratives by women such as Brenda Frazer's *Troia*,[10] and with the seminal collection of essays edited by Ronna Johnson and Nancy M. Grace, *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation* in 2002. Although not a homogenous group of texts, Beat literature by women articulates their feelings of exclusion and the struggles against social and geographical confinements and normative domesticity. While Cassady may have expressed her rebellion in her unconventional life style, her book also articulates her dreams of leaving home, of joining Neal Cassady in Mexico, for instance, and the sobering reality of her responsibilities as a wife and mother: "When I was able to think clearly again, I knew for sure I'd never go to Mexico, never leave the children. But I'd have to wait for Neal's return to find a way out and not lose the ground I'd gained." (Cassady 1991: 202) Joyce Johnson, who received the 1983 National Book Critics Circle Award for her memoir *Minor Characters*, captures the beat generation's women writers' battles against speechlessness, the lack of serious acceptance as artists, and their status as decorative ornaments, "anonymous passengers on the big Greyhound bus of experience" (83). Such critical accounts of 'woman's place' in the beat generation were a first step toward what Jessica Enevold has identified as women's "appropriative turn in the evolution of the road narrative" (2004: 79).

These women's creative engagement with the post-Kerouac, masculinized genre began in the 1970s (Talbot 1999: 190), a decade in which second-wave feminism radically questioned the domestic ideals of the 1950s on a broader scale. Not entirely dissimilar to the first women's movement's political agenda, challenging spatial boundaries became part of the feminist demand of access to the public; "taking back the street" marches, for instance, are and continue to be manifestations of feminist theory put into spatial practice. This preoccupation with spatial categories such as the public and the private, domesticity and the nuclear family, resulted, in the field of literature, in a number of women's narratives of the road, both by Anglo and non-Anglo

[10] Though written in 1959, *Troia* has not been published except for excerpts like "Breaking Out of D.C." (in Peabody 1997: 60-4). Predating Peabody, Brenda Knight's anthology *Women of the Beat Generation: the Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution* (1996) made lesser-known texts by female Beat poets and writers accessible to the public.

women, which, on the one hand, affirm movement as a liberatory practice, but on the other hand emphasize that women's spatial limitations extend beyond those of hearth and home[11] as they are ingrained in all arenas of society (cf. chapter two). This double-bind is evident in the vast majority of women's road-stories and has indeed been used to criticize women's travel narratives as unable to break free from conventional patterns (see e.g. Jennings 2004: 114, in reference to Holland/Huggan 1998: 132). Yet from another perspective, the gendered tension between liberation and containment is exactly what has challenged the road formula:

> The female road trip […] constructs female identity as both mobile and situated, exercising agency and recognizing boundaries. In refusing to romanticize women on the road, […] women writers open up the space for women with cars to follow new paths that can re-shape gender and domesticity[,]

as Deborah Clarke asserts (2004: 124). Thus, these writings are attempts to drastically alter the genre in gendered terms; again in Clarke's words, "if western culture and western literature have been predicated upon the woman in the house, then the presence of women on the road radically unsettles assumptions of domesticity, gendered identity, and gendered literature" (101).

Despite the steady production of North American women's road literature since the late 1970s and 80s, women have remained 'off the

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[11] Due to historical reasons, contemporary African-American women's literature often envisions the home as empowering rather than as confining, as bell hooks argues in "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance" (1990). As private property, enslaved African-Americans, up to emancipation after the Civil War, were denied the right to privacy or a home; subsequently, the home has frequently provided the only shelter from a racist society (Rose 1993: 126, McDowell 1999: 89). However, mobility and migration is also central to African-American women's writing, as Carole Boyce Davies' chapter on "Mobility, Embodiment and Resistance" in *Black Women, Writing and Identity* asserts (1994: 148-50; on the topic of mobility in African-American literature in general, cf. Farah Jasmine Griffin, *"Who Set You Flowin'?" The African-American Migration Narrative*, 1995). In any case, I have not been able to locate an African-American woman's cross-country road novel written since the 1970s. Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1991/1942) could be considered an earlier road narrative fulfilling these criteria.

road' in literary criticism for much longer. Apart from a small number of recently published monographs and a number of unpublished dissertations,[12] women's road texts have experienced an incredibly poor history of critical reception, which again reflects that the genre has been constructed as predominantly masculine.[13] In tune with this discourse of the road as a manly terrain, women – writers and protagonists – have repeatedly appeared as either wholly absent or present only in terms of a negative difference in the majority of critical studies of the road narrative. Many of the road stories I analyze in this book were written by successful, productive, and at times award-winning authors; yet, in the few critical accounts of the road narrative as a genre, these books are usually treated as token texts. Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach's *In the Driver's Seat: The Automobile in American Literature and Culture* (1976), often seen as the first study of the genre, fails to examine even a single text by a female author; for all his helpful insights, Ronald Primeau's *Romance of the Road* groups women's re-mappings of the road experience into one (out of eight) sections, together with "other minorities" (1996: 107) like African-American and Native American (male) writers. Furthermore, Primeau's study sees women's road texts as a homogeneous group deviating from his own generic expectations (cf. Paes de Barros' criticism [2004: 3-4]), thereby reflecting the general tendency to overlook traditions like the feminine picaresque or early women's travel writing as possible sources and intertexts for, and as cultural kin to, women's road stories. Kris Lackey's *RoadFrames: The American Highway Narrative* (1997), another major study of the genre, mentions only a single contemporary road text by a female author, Katherine Dunn's *Truck*, and rarely addresses sexual difference.[14] This absence is blatant also in so

12 See Slettedahl Macpherson and Paes de Barros (2004); cf. Ph.D. theses by Lynn Jill Talbot (1999), Katherine Lawrie Mills (1999), or Lyn Elizabeth Elliot (2000).

13 One of the first collections that draws attention to women's road writings was Elinor Nauen's *Ladies, Start Your Engines* (1996), an anthology which hints at an abundance of material, beginning in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The book demonstrates that from the 1970s onwards, road adventures have been a major theme in cultural articulations by American women of diverse backgrounds.

14 At one point, Lackey states that "[s]haring most of the picaro's qualities, [the picara] may additionally use her sexual charms to get along in the world"

far as Lackey does not romanticize the open road at all; in the context of his reading of African-American road writings, he finds that "freedom on the road is not mainly a product of will and space but of privilege bestowed by race and class" (1997: 21).

Ronald Primeau himself tries to set the record straight in his 1999 essay "From Ma Joad to Elizabeth Berg: Women on the Road in America", an attempt to rescue female characters on the road from their assigned place in the back seat, as mere companions of the 'all-American hero'. In this essay, Primeau addresses the complex "history of women's involvement with automobile travel and the literature emerging from it" (1999: 138), at the same time lamenting the "postponement of women's rightful places in the shaping of our road literature" (ibid.). Among others, Primeau cites Janis Stout's and Dana A. Heller's studies of women's narratives of mobility for having analyzed women's critical reshaping of the literary highway in terms of structure and foundational mythology. While his commentary remains problematic as it compares women's to the 'standard' male road rules and makes essentialist assumptions ("women on the road revise the genre by slowing the pace and celebrating exploration over reaching a destination […]. [W]omen seek relationships over conquest", 145), Primeau was nonetheless one of the first to highlight critical engagement with the road genre by women writers, and their questioning of the cultural construction of the road as a masculine space.

More extensive studies on women's (sub-)versions of the genre were published after 2000 in monographs by Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson (*Women's Movement*, 2000), Sidonie Smith (*Moving Lives*, 2001), and Deborah Paes de Barros (*Fast Cars and Bad Girls*, 2004), works that will be important throughout my readings of contemporary women's road stories. Building on earlier accounts of women's literature of mobility by critics like Dana Heller (*The Feminization of Quest-Romance*, 1990) and Janis Stout (*Through the Window, Out the Door*, 1998), these studies counter the notion that women's literature of the road is an exception to the male rule and instead focus on women's (re)significations of the genre. Slettedahl Macpherson basically

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(1997: 8); at another, he argues that female road novelists "know that the sexual vulnerability of traveling women is *naturally* fascinating" (29; my emphasis).

reviews thirty years of women's narratives of escape by identifying characteristic patterns for each decade: the "runaway housewife" of the 1970s (2000: 20), the darker, fragmented stories in the context of the feminist backlash of the 1980s (ibid. 147), and the 1990s' "post-feminist pragmatism" that playfully re-enacts previous narratives of escape (ibid. 192). Furthermore, Slettedahl's study is one of the few to emphasize the need for a socio-spatial analysis of escape texts, as "[w]omen writers use the motif of escape […] to interrogate the feminine space and the choices made within that space" (ibid. 227). The book highlights the idea that gendered spatial regimes result in biased evaluations of escape: "When male characters leave relationships in order to embark on heroic quests, journey-making and desertion are naturalized and normalized; when female characters do the same, journey-making and desertion are seen as evidence of abnormality or malice" (ibid. 231).

Sidonie Smith's *Moving Lives: 20th-Century Women's Travel Writing* similarly questions "vehicular gender" (2001: IX) by demonstrating how the meanings identified with journeying have resulted from "itinerant masculinity" (ibid.) and "spermatic travel", a term coined in historian Eric J. Leed's *The Mind of the Traveller* (1991):

> Travellers affirm their masculinity through purposes, activities, behaviours, dispositions, perspectives, and bodily movements displayed on the road, and through the narratives of travel that they return home to the sending culture. Thus, travel can function as a defining arena of agency. (Smith 2001: IX)

Nonetheless, Smith purports that women have used the car as a vehicle of resistance to conventional gender roles and the strictures of a normative femininity. The car has furthered access to job markets, education, and recreation for women, thus allowing them to seize opportunities outside the domestic that have also offered new possibilities for feminine identities (2001: 175). A substantial part of Smith's study is devoted to the gendering of travel and transportation technologies, not without a problematization of race and ethnicity (XIV-XVI) and the various forms of mobility that can produce 'travel' writing,

from choice and exile to displacement and homelessness (XIII).[15] Smith also distinguishes between various vehicles of motion in terms of their power to "organize space, time, passage, perception, and encounter" and thus define "the logic of mobility" (25), an idea that, though in a different vein, I take up in my distinction of the three tropes of movement of the quest, the para-nomadic, and the picaresque.

Nomadism, a notion that has received much critical attention recently (cf. chapter five), is also the guiding term of Deborah Paes de Barros' *Fast Cars and Bad Girls* (2004). Her study convincingly traces women's road stories back to early feminine subversions of the frontier mythology, although 'nomadic' is not always a befitting label for the plethora of texts Paes de Barros analyzes, from Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative to Mary Austin's *Land of Little Rain* or Sandra Cisneros' "Woman Hollering Creek"; at times, the study forgets its definition of the nomadic as "going, but going nowhere or, perhaps, anywhere", an "oppositional aesthetic and narrative purpose […] outside heroic consciousness […], resist[ing] the linear mobility of the conventional road" (Paes de Barros 2004: 7). The book sees women's road literature and travel narratives as illustrative of the nomadic subject position (ibid. 11), but obliterates the fact that a road novel like Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl*, for instance, has a definitive goal (cf. ch. 4.4.3. of my book); Annie Proulx' – consistently misspelled as "Proulix" – *Wyoming Stories* can hardly be categorized as road narratives. The main problem with this study, then, is its homogeneous view of women's road stories as resisting, subversive, and anti-bourgeois "invisible outsider" (ibid. 11) voices:

> Outside the "desiring machine", these nomadic women fail to produce "surplus value" – typically expressed as inheritance, citizenship and the reproduction of bourgeois culture […]. Instead, women nomads ignore the regulating effect of masculinite and reject the definition offered by the phallic signifier. Disorderly and disjunctive, nomadic

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15 Smith uses a very broad definition of travel writing, yet distinguishes between (often involuntary) journeys and travel as a movement of choice that often privileges white, middle-class subjects.

> women are dangerous to the patriarchal landscape of capital. (Paes de Barros 2004: 8)[16]

Similarly, the text continues: "[i]nvisible, and inhabiting space in a radically different way, women became associated not with the heroic travel between borders, but with the silent navigation of the borders themselves." (10) The study's approach to women's road literature thus reflects the common fallacy of viewing women's literature as located beyond patriarchy, hegemony, and dominant social discourses; it therefore falsely presents a romanticized reading of the nomadic road as countercultural per se.[17] The notion of transdifferent tensions between conformity and rebellious discourses as well as between various difference categories that I will engage with in my study shows a way to escape the either/or argument of subversion and affirmation as polar opposites (cf. also Laderman 2002: 20); as I will demonstrate, women's road stories' spatiality is *informed by* rather than *beyond* patriarchal notions of gender, space, and mobility, although they also probe resistance to the dominant narrative of a gendered spatial division.

Despite these points of criticism, Paes de Barros' study is informative in many respects, and certainly deserves praise as the first monograph to deal explicitly and extensively with women's *road* narratives. Paes de Barros highlights a number of recurrent themes and motifs in women's road stories, such as the refusal of or flight from domesticity, the renegotiation of motherhood, or the recreation of subjectivity in terms of mobility and fluidity rather than identity and essence. I would add to the list of common themes the experience of female embodiment and sexuality as both pleasure and danger, and the effects of loss and divorce. Further, much of this fiction displays

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16 In the context of her discussion of nomadism, Paes de Barros (2004) also distorts a number of Deleuzian coinages and philosophical traditions: for instance, she sees the "desiring machine" as a notion referring to an embodiment of structured, and therefore patriarchally controlled, desire (8); at another point, she claims that "feminist theory questions the materiality of the body" (90), neglecting differing traditions within feminist discourses.

17 The opposite argument – no less homogenizing – that women's road narratives commonly buy into mainstream American individualism by focusing on individual liberation and self-discovery so much so that they cannot function as cultural critique has been brought forth in Lyn Elizabeth Elliot's thesis (2000).

traits of autobiographical writing, a fruitful, major tradition in women's literature. Perhaps the most significant overarching theme in all women's road narratives, however, is the exploration and negotiation of gendered space and mobility, notions examined in the following chapter.

3. Space, Gender, Mobility

> Public spaces are sites that mark rites of passage and are subjected to culture-specific imperatives such as schedules, rhythms of production, allowed or forbidden directions, loading and unloading, areas of transition, and spaces of transactions. Space is an abstraction ruled by the logic of the market economy and, as such, it is permeated with social relations.
>
> - Rosi Braidotti,
> *Nomadic Subjects*

> [T]raffic is not only a technique; it is a form of consciousness and a form of social relations.
>
> - Raymond Williams,
> *The Country and the City*

3.1. The Road and the Spatial Turn

The road as both literary and social space has been theorized across a broad terrain of cultural discourses and academic disciplines (cf. Campbell 2001: 285). As early as the 1970s, cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson gave the field of 'road studies' a name of its own, coining "odology" as the study and discourse of roads. He argued that the road's "potentialities for trouble – aesthetic, social, economic – are as great as its potentialities for good, and indeed it is that ambidexterity which gives the highway and its margins so much significance and fascination" (qtd. ibid.). As Campbell summarizes:

> Brinckerhoff saw the roadscape as the site for alternative traditions, for new diasporic 'languages', often ugly and banal, but rarely lacking in surprise and energy, where the layers and anomalies of history could be 'read' and 'reread'. The road was, for him, the heterogeneous space of 'exchange', 'transshipment', and 'contract', of interactions and encounter where the 'uniformity of taste and income and interests' is countered by 'this ceaseless influx of new wants, new ideas, new manners, new strength'. (2001: 288-9, quoting Brinckerhoff Jackson's *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*)

The road as a space of transition, clashing mobilities, and heterogeneous encounters – a contact zone in a broad understanding of the term – is defined less by structural determinants than by human usage, the "practice" of this space. Bakhtin's, but also de Certeau's, Michel Foucault's,[1] Henri Lefèbvre's, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writings on space have immensely influenced a recently postulated *spatial turn*, a turn toward theorizing and critically rethinking space, noticeable in a flood of recent publications on this topic throughout the humanities, but especially in critical social theory and geography (cf. Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* [1989], for instance).[2] Soja summarizes the "transdisciplinary spatial turn" of the late 1990s (2000: 7) as follows:

> For perhaps the first time in the past two centuries, critical scholars […] have begun to interpret the *spatiality* of human life in much the same way they have traditionally interpreted history and society, or the *historicality* and *sociality* of human life. Without reducing the significance of life's inherent historicality and sociality, or dimming the creative and critical imaginations that have developed around their practical and theoretical understanding, a reinvigorated critical perspective associated with an explicitly spatial imagination has begun to infuse the study of history and society with new modes of thinking and interpretation. (ibid.)

As Kathleen Kirby has noted, the turn to space came as a logical consequence of the prior turn to the body that accompanied the critical revision of Enlightenment subjectivity as disembodied and of the Cartesian dualism of body and mind (1996: 18). Current spatial thought, as diverse as it may be, has thus made it possible to emphasize the nexus of space, embodiment, and representation.[3] Since they take heed of difference theory and postmodern philosophy, recent studies of space depart from earlier ideologies of place that have often focused on the

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1 Cf. esp. Foucault's essays "Of Other Spaces" (1986) and "Questions on Geography" (1995), in which the author famously called for a turn to the spatial dimension of history and human existence.

2 For an excellent overview of the development of spatial thinking in Western philosophy from antiquity to today, cf. Günzel (2005).

3 Notably, this triad is theorized as closely intertwined by the Munich research group *Raum – Körper – Medium*; cf. Dünne/Doetsch/Lüdeke's edited volume (2004).

homeland and on spatial rootedness in a problematic blood-and-soil rhetoric.

In the context of cultural studies, the analysis of spatiality frequently relies on two major conceptions of space: Lefèbvre's emphasis on the trialectic production of space and de Certeau's understanding of space as practiced place (1988: 117). Without limiting themselves to a strictly phenomenological approach to space, both theorists draw on embodied experience as well as on the material and discursive production of space. Therefore, their writings serve, first, as a basis for the concept of gendered space, developed in the field of the 'new' cultural geography, and second, for my discussion of mobility and transgression as resistance to unequal gendered spatialities and thus as a form of spatial agency.

The question of spatial agency, of whether spatial structures shape humans more than humans shape spatial structures, or, on another level, whether spatialities as social and discursive constructions are sites that individual and collective intervention can change, informs one of the crucial debates in this context (drawing out the ideological opposition of materialism and idealism), as is the relation between space and time. Both these debates also inform the theoretical framework of this study, as one always has to ask whether and how literary texts can be agents in the transformation of spatial relations toward a more egalitarian society. To this question, one can respond by arguing that literary texts bridge the opposition of structure and agency, being structurally informed in language, narration, and plot, but simultaneously allowing the reader to imagine alternative spatialities and societies.

Despite the numerous studies of the role of space in the fields of geography, architecture, history, cultural theory and cultural studies, the role of spatialities for literary criticism has only recently attracted interest as an analytical lens through which textual articulations of society can be read. Prior to this development, which reflects the diminishing influence of formalist literary theory and the increasing inroads that cultural studies have made in literary criticism, space in literature had been mainly examined from a structuralist and narratological perspective. Foundational texts in the structuralist tradition would be Jurij Lotman's writings on semiotic space (his "semiosphere" in which communication and culture takes place), or Gérard Genette's

"La Littérature et l'espace" (1969) on narrative space, among others (cf. e.g. Smitten building on Genette, or Elisabeth Bronfen on Lotman). Jeffrey Smitten, in "Approaches to the Spatiality of Narrative" of 1978, for instance, recognizes how Genette sees spatiality in a rather limiting manner as only signifier, not signified, but at the same time asserts that "the notion of spatiality is weak because it is a transitional idea, incapable of fixed definition" (297). Also structuralist in approach, Ruth Ronen's essay "Space in Fiction" in *Poetics Today* (1986), which intends to "describe the relations between various categories of space-constructs and their surface (linguistic) manifestations" (421), is symptomatic of formalist treatments of space.

In a similar fashion, Carl Darryl Malmgren's *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist Novel* (1985) relates "the imaginal expanse created by fictional discourse" to the world "outside the text" (29): he develops the formula "$S_F = S_W + S_S + S_r$" (33), with "total fictional space" (S_F) made up by the space of the fictional world (S_W), the space of the speaker (S_S), and the space of the reader (S_r). His is one of the first studies in this field which initiates a slight turn to socio-spatial discourses in the study of literature: "fiction and its space are inextricably bound up in the sociocultural and literary matrix" (ibid.), Malmgren asserts, although social space as part of this "sociocultural matrix" is not at the center of his analysis. Echoing Malmgren's formalized model, Bronfen (1986) analyzes space in three categories: physical space as described in a text, metaphorical space as the spatial semanticization of abstract terms, and the text itself as a spatial dimension (5). Like Malmgren, she relies on structural analysis and in-depth description of the spatial universe of the literary text, yet in Bronfen we also see an interest in the social dimension of space in its meaning for literature, in the tension between space and subject as well as between perceived, lived, and written spaces.

Bronfen and others, writing on space and literature in the 1980s, seem to have been mainly interested in the description of how a literary text aesthetically and linguistically creates a spatial realm of its own rather than in how broader discourses of social space are articulated and challenged in literature and how space is thus always a

product of discourses and practices.[4] Such studies are therefore often unable to depart entirely from the Kantian notion of space as an a priori, empty, given, objective container 'filled' by human activity and cultural practice. The critical refutation of this notion has been at the heart of most theories in the context of the spatial turn in the humanities of the following decade, theories which are interested in spatial metaphors predominantly in their associative, social, discursive dimensions (cf. writings on spatial metaphors by Geraldine Pratt [1998], Caren Kaplan [1996], or Janet Wolff [1992]).

The spatial turn has brought about a critical re-examination of space from mainly two philosophical traditions, cultural materialism on the one hand, influential mainly in the English-speaking world (Shields 2006: 208), and phenomenology on the other, often in French and German contexts. These approaches are represented, respectively, by Henri Lefèbvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) for a materialist approach, and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Bollnow's *Mensch und Raum* (1963) in the German context or Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* (1977) for a strictly phenomenological approach. Anglo-American cultural studies, informed by post-Marxist thought and the credo of interdisciplinarity, takes the former approach of cultural materialism: it is interested in space as a site and a means of cultural power, informed by a set of historically and culturally specific notions that are loaded in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class. In this view, space can discipline the subject by restricting access and empower it by giving presence. Following Lefèbvre, spatial organization is a historical and cultural product of power struggles, of meshing and clashing a myriad of discourses, e.g. of the body or of morality. Therefore, the everyday spaces of the home, the workplace, the city and the country, the shopping street and the interstate road not only reflect social relations but also actively produce and re-produce them.[5]

4 Cf. Henri Lefèbvre's criticism of semiology and spatial theory for not exceeding the descriptive level (2003/1974: 7).

5 It is impossible to even briefly sum up Lefèbvre's *opus magnum*, a 400-page treatise that establishes the author's famous notion of a "trialectic" spatiality consisting of perceived, conceived, and lived space. Yet as it informs, together with Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), the bulk of theoretical conceptions of gendered space, I address both books here, however selectively.

Lefèbvre's main concern was to add space to the agenda of Marxist social theory, which had long been primarily concerned with temporality and the historical progress of class struggles, from Marx to Lukács; his book indeed is heretic in view of the Marxist privileging of historical progress and linear time. (It retains, however, the classical Marxist pitfalls homogenization and teleologization). The reason for this negligence is that space has been thought of as static and immobile, while Lefèbvre is convinced that space is a dynamic variable as important to social power struggles as time, and thus argues against evocations of space as emptiness, e.g. in geometry and mathematics, as an absolute, e.g. in Descartes, or as a transcendental relative, as in Kant (Lefèbvre 2003/1974: 1-2). He also turns against space as a seemingly extra-ideological mental construct that envelops its social and physical dimensions (ibid. 5-6); instead, he emphasizes that space is instrumental for the exercise of hegemony:

> Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations […]? The answer must be no. […] I shall demonstrate the active – the operational or instrumental – role of space, as knowledge and action, in the existing mode of production. I shall show how space serves, and how hegemony makes use of it, in the establishment, on the basis of and underlying logic and with the help of knowledge and technical expertise, of a 'system'. (ibid. 11)

Language is an issue in Lefèbvre's model as it represents a spatial code, characterizing particular spatial/social practices, which were "produced along with the space corresponding to them" (ibid. 17). Lefèbvre can be read as interpreting linguistic conventions as a valuable socio-historical source for the investigation of an epoch's spatial system and relations – though this is of course not Lefèbvre's focus. The spatial system is thus always inscribed in a historical 'text', a document of a certain period, and literary texts can thus function as both expression of and, by convention, commentary on a society's spatial relations as they shape and regulate human existence. (Lefèbvre is too much a materialist, on the other hand, not to vehemently oppose the idea that the spoken and written word constitute social practice, that writing can transform society by transforming language and discourse; 2003/1974: 28-9).

The two main theses that have influenced thinking on space in the aftermath of Lefèbvre's book and its English translation, which only came out in 1991, are, first, the author's emphasis on a dynamic conceptualization of space; he conceives of space as a product of changing social forces, a "tool of thought and of action", a means of production and as such also "a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (ibid. 26) that, however, can hardly be fully mastered (here, agency comes in). Second, Lefèbvre triangulates space and thus brings together mental, physical and social space as well as spatial semantics: he sees three planes of space – the *perceived* space of everyday spatial practices and (re-)production, *conceived* representations of space or theoretically conceptualized and planned space, and the *lived representational* space of the imagination, "embodying complex symbolisms" and "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art" (33; the third plane resonates in de Certeau's idea of resistant spatial tactics). This third level "not only transcends but has the power to refigure the balance of popular 'perceived space' and official 'conceived space'", as Rob Shields holds (2006: 210). Together, the three planes of social space comprise a never-ending "triple dialectic", a dialectical *process* (cf. Lefèbvre 2003/1974: 34), and are thus inseparably bound to each other, with the shifting balance between them defining historical spatialization (Shields 2006: 210).

Perhaps more critically debated than Lefèbvre's trialectics is geographer Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace,[6] though it mainly conforms to Lefèbvre's triad by translating it into a continuum of what Soja calls "real-and-imagined" space (cf. his monograph *Thirdspace*, esp. chapter one).[7] Soja's project proposes the interjection of "a criti-

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6 In Soja's work, Firstspace refers to the material world, Secondspace to the interpretation of this materiality through the imaginary, creative representations of spatiality, and Thirdspace to "a multiplicity of real-and-imagined places" (1996: 6).

7 Perhaps more than Lefèbvre, Soja asserts a structure *balanced by* agency. He starts his book somewhat celebratory, voicing his belief that "the spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today" (1996: 1) and that we are "intrinsically spatial beings", but as such, "*active participants* in the social construction of our embracing spatialities" (his term for the networks of social spaces; ibid.; my emphasis). Soja's books have triggered off debates on spatial theory throughout the social

cal spatial imagination into the interpretive dualism [materiality and the realm of ideas, AG] that has for the past two centuries confined how we make […] sense of the world" (1996: 5), and in this respect is similar to Lefèbvre's.

Somewhat surprisingly, gender plays a fundamental role in the regulations of social space in Lefèbvre (cf. also Massey [1994: 182-3], whose argument runs counter to Shields' assertion that Lefèbvre's book is gender-blind [2006: 211]). Lefèbvre asserts that

> *social space contains – and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to –* (1) *the social relations of reproduction*, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and (2) the relations of production, i.e. the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions. These two sets of relations […] are inextricably bound to each other. (2003/1974: 32, my emphasis)

That dominant discourses, through the organizing structures of social space, contain and assign "appropriate places" to the sexes is fundamental for the development of the concept of gendered space. What is equally important for my discussion of gendered space and mobility is to see spatial relations represented in "conceived" (Lefèbvre) or "imagined" (Soja) space such as in a literary text, as indicative of, building on, and dialectically intervening in dominant discourses about social relations. Thus, I am interested in the textual articulation of spatialities as they are (re-)presented always in a duality of perceived and produced spaces, out of which a third, interstitial dimension arises – the potential of the "real-and-imagined" (Soja) or the "lived" products of representations of space in everyday spatial practice (Lefèbvre). Here I see a way to avoid the dualism between spatial material forms and mental constructs of space.

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sciences, and he has been thoroughly criticized for his rather superficial integration of various spatial theorists without developing a substantive, complex theory of space himself (cf. e.g. Stuart Elden's 1998 Erlangen lecture, "'Es gibt eine Politik des Raumes, weil Raum politisch ist.' Henri Lefèbvre und die Produktion des Raumes" [tr.: "'A Politics of Space Exists, Because Space Is Political.' Henri Lefèbvre and the Production of Space", AG]), as well as for his neglect of feminist contributions to spatial theory in *Postmodern Geographies*, cf. Massey's "Flexible Sexism" in *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994: 212-48).

Lefèbvre's "representational space" – the space that emerges by living it, by our usage and development of sign systems and other representations of space – also resonates with Michel de Certeau's "practiced space". Place, for de Certeau, is an "instantaneous configuration of positions" and implies stability as the "law of the 'proper' " rules it (1988: 117), while space "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables":

> Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is […] actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. […] In contradistinction to place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a "proper". (ibid.)

While de Certeau's structuralism is apparent in this dichotomy of place as the stable and space as the fluid – a dichotomy challenged in current spatial criticism like Doreen Massey's or James Clifford's – his definition of space as made up by shifting relations and contested by different agents and agendas directly informs my reading of women's road novels: they, too, contest patriarchal divisions of space by moving in the "polyvalent unity" of the road. De Certeau's emphasis on mobility as spatial intervention is helpful for my discussion of feminist transgression and will be addressed again later in this chapter.

3.2. Space + Gender: Gendered Space, Engendering Space

If one follows Soja's line of reasoning, social space can be conceptualized in a tripartite structure that includes the real-and-imagined and is the product of social relations; thus, dominant structures of space reflect social power relations as well as hegemonic discourses that shape these relations. Such spatial structures or spatialities crucially rest on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from both physical locations (ascertained increasingly through surveillance technologies that regulate access to private and public spaces) and social spheres like public discourse or media representation. This kind of spatial structuring evokes the Deleuzian notion of striated space, a space ordered in grids which produces a spatiality of regulation and control. Examples of

striated space can be found in historical and contemporary forms of spatial segregation, of restrictive border controls and the simultaneous dissolution of borders in the globalized economy, of newly emerging 'no-go' areas or of the gendered division of labor, which reflects dominant discourses of gender roles and women's and men's 'appropriate' spaces.

In my discussion of women's road novels, I am critiquing the masculinization of the road as a physical and social space by exposing a masculinized discourse of travel and the road genre. Thus, the literary representation of space as a gendered phenomenon (cf. Higonnet 1994: 1) and its reinforcement of the gendered inflection of genres is one of my main interests. The preceding chapter's review of critical studies of the road genre demonstrates that spatial access and agency are distributed unequally due to powerful dominant discourses about 'man's world, woman's place'[8] – and thus to the crucial nexus of place, space, and gender created.

This nexus is at the center of the concept of gendered space, which was developed in the 1990s by feminist geographers like Doreen Massey, Gillian Rose, Daphne Spain and others in the context of a 'new' cultural and critical geography[9] with a feminist slant. Studies on gendered space focus on profound and intricate relations of space and the construction of a gendered reality (although Massey and others also emphasize other cultural difference categories such as class and ethnicity in this context, which often radically alter the theory). A basic starting point for any research in this direction is to be found in the analysis of specific discursive interactions of gender, place and

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8 Cf. the title of Elizabeth Janeway's 1971 study, *Man's World, Woman's Place*.

9 Critical geography is defined in the glossary of Hubbard, Kitchin, and Valentine as "[t]hough diverse in its epistemology, ontology and methodology, and hence lacking a distinctive theoretical identity, […] brings together those working with different approaches […] through a shared commitment to expose the socio-spatial processes that (re)produce inequalities between people and places […]" (2006: 345). The 'new' cultural geography shares this critical stance (thus the 'new') while relying on the tradition of cultural geography; it also emerged in response to Geertz and Clifford's *Writing Culture* debate and thus marks the textual turn in geography (new cultural geographers, for instance, read landscapes, cities, or buildings as 'texts' produced by social relations).

space and its effects. As Massey, in her seminal collection of essays *Space, Place, and Gender* asserts: “From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood” (1994: 179).

Massey sees a clear correspondence between the common view of dynamic temporality and space as static to the traditional, patriarchal construction of masculinity and femininity, where men are represented as the active, women the passive part in a dichotomous relation (ibid. 6-9).[10] She therefore advocates breaking both dichotomies by thinking in terms of “space-time” as “the spatial is social relations ‘stretched out’” and considering these relations as “inherently dynamic” (ibid. 2). As Massey argues in “Politics and Space/Time” (1992) as well as in her latest book (*For Space*, 2005), space is as important as time for questions of both mobility and social change. Thus, space-time is defined as

> a configuration of social relations within which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity. Moreover, since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power, meaning, and symbolism, this view of the spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification. (1994: 3)

Thus arises the political impetus of her project: “social change and spatial change are integral to each other” (ibid. 23). In terms of gender, she formulates this as follows:

> Space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover, they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both *reflects and has effects* back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live. (Ibid. 186)

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[10] Massey relies on Foucault’s argument that space has been thought of as “the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile” in his essay “Questions on Geography” (1995: 70).

Not only does Massey abandon space and time as opposites, she also thinks of place as dynamic, not as the static opposite of dynamized space (cf. also McDowell 1999: 4).

Gillian Rose's *Feminism and Geography* (1993) represents another ground-breaking publication in feminist cultural geography that critically evaluates geographical traditions and methods from a feminist standpoint and develops the concept of "paradoxical space".[11] Rose argues that women are constituted as explicitly embodied, located subjects. In contrast, the dominant discourse of masculinity creates in many men the feeling of freedom from the body and its inevitable locatedness. These differential, gendered forms of subjectification, she continues, give rise to specific experiences of space:

> Women of all kinds are expected to look right, and to look right for a gaze which is masculine […]. The threatening masculine look materially inscribes its power onto women's bodies by constituting feminine subjects through an intense self-awareness about being seen and about taking up space […]. Women's sense of embodiment can make space feel like a thousand piercing eyes; […] it is a space which constitutes women as embodied objects to be looked at. (1993: 145-6)

Anna Mehta and Liz Bondi have also suggested that "women embody discourses that construct them as […] vulnerable and physically powerless, particularly in the face of male violence, and as the object of aggressive male sexuality" (1999: 77). This sexualized constitution of the female body underlies women's navigations of space and also the structuration of space into the allegedly safe home – the private – and the public as always potentially threatening and dangerous. The public/private dichotomy, though highly culture-specific, has been a powerful white middle-class interpretation of gender relations that became fundamental for the general discourse of women's and men's 'proper places'; as a normative topography of the feminine which

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[11] By paradoxical space Rose refers to the many-faceted spatial paradoxes that women live in, as prisoners and exiles or as simultaneously inhabiting centers and margins, for instance. In the tensions produced by these paradoxical spaces, Rose sees the chance to articulate a sense of going beyond oppressive dichotomies and patriarchal control (1993: 151). Again, it is the interstitial *movement* between poles that destabilizes geographies of power; cf. also Desbiens 1999.

places women on the inside of the domestic realm, it is thus also crucial in discussions of gendered space. Thus discursively, the doorstep becomes a sort of demarcation line between the *separate spheres*, regardless of the fact that real middle-class women have continually crossed this threshold, be it in order to attend church, make visits, or travel (it comes as no surprise that women's travel writing, predicated as it is on leaving the 'safe haven' of the domestic realm, critically engages with this dichotomy).

In *Putting Women in Place* (2001), Mona Domosh and Joni Saeger not only trace the gendered separation of social spheres to the public vs. private dichotomy that emerged in the modern age and intensified in the wake of Western industrialization (cf. e.g. McDowell 1999: 73),[12] but also connect the dichotomous socio-historical construction of public/male vs. private/female to limitations in women's mobility.[13] Stating that "[i]t is hard to maintain patriarchal control over women if they have unfettered freedom of movement through space" (Domosh/Saeger 2001: 115-6), they evoke Doreen Massey's earlier contention that "[t]he limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination" (1994: 179). Domosh and Saeger name both openly political and more subtle social forces that keep women in their place, such as driving restrictions and fashion conventions.[14] Domosh and Saeger then take a closer look at the ideology of home as the 'feminine sphere' where women are 'in' place and conclude that the separation of spheres reveals itself as both a false dichotomy and a 'lose-lose' situation: if the home was where 'woman' categorically belonged, where she was safe and protected by the patriarchal system, one would have to wonder why most violence against women does not

12 Already in 1977, historian Karin Hausen traced the division of spheres into the masculine public and the feminine private to the dissociation of family and work life in the 18th century. cf. "Die Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtscharaktere'. Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben".

13 Importantly, Domosh and Saeger qualify the ideology of separate spheres in terms of class, yet unfortunately obliterate ethnicity in this respect (2001: 3-5; race is again brought into the discussion later on in the context of female mobility).

14 As Mary Morris notes, it is telling that women's corsets were called "stays" (1992: 25).

happen in public but at home (a statistic Hille Koskela's study of 1997 confirms). According to Domosh and Saeger, domestic violence is an effective method used to keep women confined (2001: 117) and thus to uphold the private/public dichotomy that has served as a discursive tool of control over women. In Gill Valentine's words, women's association with the domestic as their proper place in this ideology makes them vulnerable to patriarchal violence both in- and outside the home; "inside, it's no one else's concern, outside, she deserves it" (qtd. in Rose 1993: 35).

Thus, the home, itself a historically and culturally contingent concept, can be both a site of shelter and oppression for women and, as various theorists have argued, should no longer be equated with the private or domestic realm, as it is a nexus where public discourses and social relations flow together and shape 'private' lives. The binary relation of home/stasis and travel/mobility, is impossible to uphold from such a perspective, as the home itself is a dynamic site of social relations, a site of "unrestful differences […], not, in any event, a site of immobility" (Clifford 1997: 85).[15]

It is the falsely polar ideological construction of the public as dangerous and the home as safe, together with the female body as fragile and the male as sovereign, that is responsible for the continual reproduction of this dichotomy and its cultural authority, and thus ultimately for many women's experience of confinement. In the words of Trinh Minh-Ha,

> the general cliché by which [women] feel exiled […] is the common consensus (in patriarchal societies) that streets and public places belong to men. Women are not supposed to circulate freely in these male domains, especially after dark (the time propitious to desire, the drive, the unamenable and the unknown), for should anything happen to them to violate their physical well-being, they are immediately said to have 'asked for it' as they have singularly 'exposed' themselves by turning away from the Father's refuge. (1994: 15)

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15 On feminist debates about home as an oppressive space or a site of resistance, cf. also Martin and Mohanty's "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?" (1986) or Janice Monk's discussion of "Home Space: Protective or Constraining?" (1992: 126-33).

Such a discursively produced "geography of fear" results in feelings of insecurity, angst, agoraphobia, vertigo, claustrophobia, vulnerability, and in panic attacks, as studies in both geography (e.g. by Gill Valentine, Mehta and Bondi, or Koskela) and psychology (e.g. by Maureen McHugh) have shown.[16] The psychological research on agoraphobia demonstrates that it is indeed not an individual fear but a cultural phenomenon which strongly relies on the separation of spheres: due to a radical internalization of normative ascriptions of gendered spatiality (in this case, domesticity), more than three-fourths of clients with agoraphobic symptoms are women (cf. McHugh's summary of related clinical studies, 1996: 344). Thus, examining agoraphobia as a cultural construct, McHugh traces the history of the disorder, links it to prevalent gender roles and lists a number of public spaces – among them gas stations – that are uncomfortable for a majority of women. She follows psychologist I.G. Fodor by arguing that "[a]goraphobic women are […] oversocialized into the female role, receiving overdoses of feminization training to be fearful, emotional, avoidant, nonassertive, and nonadventuresome" (ibid. 347). Koskela's study concludes that "while men have more experience of violence in public space women are more fearful there" (1999: 3).

This social production of fear is, as Koskela notes, "a question of power in space (or lack of it)" (1997: 314), rather than a question of physical weakness or statistical facts, though this is not to say that the fear of rape, for instance, is not grounded in the actual experience of violence – a violence that is, however erroneously, discursively linked to the public rather than the private sphere. In a Foucauldian understanding characterized by its relationality and permeative force, social power in its relation to gendered geometries of space accounts for the fact that in patriarchal societies women, rather than men, are asked to

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16 One of the few scholars on agoraphobia in literature is Gillian Brown, who links it with anorexia and women's resistance to the 19th century market economy in the United States, thus also unmasking the intricate links between 'private' diseases and 'public' discourses and developments (1987). More recently, Paul Carter has published a monograph on *Repressed Spaces: The Poetics of Agoraphobia* (2002), in which the agoraphobe is represented mainly by male texts of high modernism (his claim that the disease is on the decline seems to apply to men only, if we believe McHugh's summary of clinical studies on this topic).

avoid allegedly dangerous spaces in order to prohibit the occurrence of rape; thus, women's relation to space itself becomes inimical as "[s]paces are felt as part of patriarchal power" (Rose 1993: 146). Yet Koskela's study also highlights ways of resistance to these structures that have been internalized, physically and psychically, as fear:

> using space can be a way of de-mystifying it. If one does not use the space, […] the 'mental map' of the place is filled with indirect descriptions[,] the image of it is constructed through media and the stories heard […]. Making use of space as part of one's daily routine erases the myth of danger from it. (1997: 308-9)

In this vein, then, the "negotiation of danger is in many ways the negotiation of power" (Mehta/Bondi 1999: 78).

Seemingly fixed notions of dangerous/safe and public/private spaces are destabilized, as Koskela's study implicates, by making space dynamic, i.e., by movement: "By daring to go out, […] women produce space that is more available for other women. Spatial confidence is a manifestation of power. Walking in the street can be seen as a political act: women 'write themselves onto the street'" (1997: 316).

It is significant that owning a car, a vehicle that, as Virginia Scharff (1991: 170-3) has demonstrated, combines and brings into dialogue public and private spatialities, has facilitated female mobility; while female automobility did not necessarily "disrupt fundamental patterns of gender" (ibid. 173), it nevertheless "meant contesting gender stereotypes, muddying the distinction between public and private […] and creating new forms of control and vulnerability for American women" (170). The car thus provided an "unpredictable vehicle" (ibid.) for contests over women's access to public space.

3.3. Mobility as Resistance

> I have always been at the same time
> woman enough to be moved to tears
> and man enough
> to drive my car in any direction
>
> - Hettie Jones,
> "Teddy Bears on the Highway"

Beat poet Hettie Jones' poem "Teddy Bears on the Highway" associates unfettered mobility with masculinity, with being "man enough"; women, instead "are moved". Eric Leed's notion of the "spermatic journey", of traveling as a gendered and gendering activity (1991: 90), comes to mind; "[t]here is no free and mobile male without the unfree and sessile female" (217). Though I would add that the static position of the sessile, against which the active, hegemonic self is defined, can be filled by other groups as well, from ethnic Others or the poor,[17] and that these groups are often discursively feminized as irrational and subservient. The powerful association of the feminine and the docile, predicated on the division of spheres, has structured Western concepts of travel, gender, and space, and helped produce a number of social and political inequalities: "[m]an in motion is the dominant image of Western thought[, for] accounts of travel have served as vehicles for our deepest notions of progress and purpose." (Wesley 1999: xii) Massey's conceptual mobilization of place and space, associated as both terms are with femininity, thus leads her to propose mobility as a form of feminist resistance to patriarchal spatialities: "the limitation of women's mobility, in terms of both identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination" (179); female mobility "does indeed seem to pose a threat to a settled patriarchal order […]. One gender-disturbing message might be – in terms of both identity and space – keep moving!" (11).[18]

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17 The class aspect significantly influences women's mobility, as wealth and class position guarantee certain interpretations of a woman's presence in public. Also, space is not only gendered, but also classed, as privileged upper-middle class norms define propriety in public space.

18 The challenge is, in Massey's phrasing, to achieve mobility while also recognizing locatedness and embodiedness (1994: 11). She meets this challenge e.g.

Again, as Domosh and Saeger (2001: 120) and others have noted,[19] it is important not to see mobility as *inherently* empowering and immobility as a disadvantage; yet it is crucial to remember that first, the historical limitation of women's mobility has served as a tool of control and oppression, that secondly, the domestic continues to be seen as inferior in economic and cultural value in contemporary western cultures and that third, it is above all the freedom of choice at stake here. By addressing women's road stories from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, I hope to emphasize the situatedness and cultural diversity of female mobility and its variability in terms of literary articulation. The texts all speak from a certain 'proper place' which they articulate 'improperly' by presenting an act of moving out of propriety. As "relations between individuals and places" are mediated "through the regulation and control of movement and property", and as "[e]ven the most marginal or deviant have their proper place in modern society[, namely] the homeless shelter, the insane asylum, [or] the prison" (Kawash 1998: 137), movement is central to resistance to normativity. Thus, if we imagine interventions into restrictive spatial patterns that inhibit the freedom of choice of motion or stasis, of home or away, practiced physical mobility nevertheless always appears to at least *potentially* disrupt such patterns, as Massey proposes (implicitly relying on de Certeau's definition of space) – and thus seems able to produce space differently.

> Der Raum ist nicht nur Raum *für* meine Bewegung – er ist […] auch Raum *durch* meine Bewegung […] – wodurch der Raum nicht bleibt, was er soeben war, sondern augenblicklich verwandelt wird, wie ich

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in her essay "A Place Called Home" in *Space, Place, and Gender*, in which she re-reads home as an open, dynamic site of interrelations rather than a static location that is always confining (157-73); cf. also Ardener (1981: 19).

19 Irene Gedalof's (1996) critique of Braidotti, Geraldine Pratt's criticism of margin/center vocabularies (1998), or Janet Wolff's "On the Road Again" (1992) all warn against the privileging of mobility, reflected in the general trend of cultural criticism to turn to metaphors of movement. Wolff's essay has repeatedly been criticized for its overstatement of masculine mobility and neglect of travel by women or people of color, cf. K. Mills (1999: 14); Deborah Clarke addresses Wolff's problematic claim of an intrinsic relationship between masculinity and travel (2004: 102). As Marilyn Wesley notes, however, Wolff does propose the reappropriation of travel metaphors as a means of subversion, cf. Wolff (1992: 235-6,) Wesley (1999: xviii).

> im umgekehrten Falle nicht nur aufnehmendes Gefäß für seine Gehalte bin, sondern seine Atmosphäre in meiner Bewegung mittrage und allererst präge. (Elisabeth Ströker qtd. in Bronfen 1986: 79)[20]

According to Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*, the footprint is the basic element of a language that articulates space by moving through it (1988: 97-8); in the 20th century, the footprint, especially in the American context, seems to have been superseded by tire marks on the highway; in any case, ordinary, everyday movements through space are where de Certeau sees the potential to escape normative regulations – one of the core arguments in his oft-quoted monograph. Following de Certeau, the space of the road is continually (re)produced by the mobile presence of its users, but also, on the "real-and-imagined" level, by the way the road is textually represented as space. My postulation is that women's road novels intervene in the discursive genderedness of oad-space; they thus contest this genderedness on a symbolic level that is as integral to culture and society as are actual practices of travel. At the same time, of course, they cannot do so in an unfettered and free-floating manner, as their articulations are themselves informed by existing social discourses, not only with regard to gender, but to a range of difference categories.

Through their road writings, women symbolically contest the notion of the road as a masculine space and produce what cultural geographer Tim Cresswell has called "heretical geographies" in *In Place/Out of Place* (1996: 11). Their stories can be seen as a renegotiation of spatial politics by which they counter physical as well as symbolic borders and enclosements. As Marilyn Wesley contends:

> In taking her figurative journey, the woman traveler moves out of her traditional position as object of masculine culture, and her active career controverts the fundamental opposition of masculine mobility in an exterior area to feminine restriction to a domestic space. Not only does the metaphor of her journey inscribe a place for women in the world, but by challenging the range of privileges and restrictions au-

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20 Tr.: "Space is not only space *for* my movement – it is […] also space *due to* my movement […] – thus space does not remain what it just was, but is momentarily transformed, as I am in the reverse case not only a receptacle for its contents but also carry its atmosphere by my movement and shape it first", AG.

> thorized by gendered spatial orders, the trope of the woman's journey is a narrative reconstruction of the meanings of that world. As her own subject, the woman traveler goes beyond subversion to construction of alternative possibility. (1999: xv)

Women taking to the road are often deemed erratic misfits, which is reflected in expressions like 'streetwalker', 'wayward girl', 'tramp', and 'loose' (or 'fast') woman, all of which connect female bodies, public space, and mobility, and, via their negative connotations, identify the 'public woman' as improper, sexually available, disturbing the gendered organization of the public sphere, and as thus out of place (Soyka 2002: 21); "[i]f the woman [in the West] goes outside the house she becomes more dangerously feminine rather than more masculine. A woman's interest, let alone active role, in the outside calls into question her virtue." (Wigley 1992: 335) As Mark Wigley's argument in an essay on the "housing" of gender suggests, such expressions have served, from their etymological beginnings, to control women's bodies in the West and to create the male, as woman's polar opposite, as excessively mobile and dominant (ibid. 337). Female sexuality is privatized, he contends, simultaneously with her domestication, the internalization of the spatial order that confines her (ibid. 340, 342). The spatial structures of the house are theorized here as replacing the controlling eye of the patriarch, with walls of enclosure, locks and gates installed to keep her 'in place'.

In Cresswell's conception, to construct any subject as either 'in place' or 'out of place' is a powerful instrument of hegemony that ultimately aims at keeping dominant social groups in *their* place, on top of the social ladder. Cresswell's observations on the intersections of place, hegemonic power, and resistance to that normative force (by what he terms "transgression") combine ideological and spatial dimensions. Looking at instances that disrespect the expectations imbued in certain places, he argues that "space and place are used to structure a normative landscape – the way in which ideas about what is right, just, and appropriate are transmitted through space and place" (1996: 8), and furthermore that the spatially transgressive defiance of these ideas "serves to foreground the mapping of ideology onto space and place" (ibid. 9). Following Cresswell, discursively produced expectations of masculine and feminine behaviors in certain places are clearly a form of the ideological structuring of space, and hence of domination, aiming at keeping subjects in their 'rightful' and 'natural'

places. However, I disagree with Cresswell's contention that such a normative geography is "always already existing" (ibid. 10). In my reading of his study, his focus on transgressive acts in fact even relies on the very notion that place is never natural or pre-social, but only made natural by spatial systems that are in need of constant reproduction and reassertion in order to keep their powerful force.

How can such normative geographies be disturbed? How can spatial agency question and contest normative structures of gendered spatialities? Cresswell differentiates transgression from resistance in that the former "does not […] rest on the intentions of actors but on the results" (ibid. 23), but acknowledges that the question of intentionality remains an open one (ibid.); for literary texts, we have to disregard this distinction. Focusing on the text (rather than doubtful authorial intentions), spatial transgression and expatiation in literature offer potential trajectories for resistance not only within the narrative but also beyond, by way of reader reception. Resistance, a notion that itself has to be formulated as always situated, can thus be defined as a conscious or unconscious, effective or ineffective reaction to a dominant order, as a dynamic process that emerges in the dialectics of agency and structure, articulation and discourse. Road narratives, by turning the road into a site of feminine presence, at the same time map dominant gender ideologies onto space, but also allow for fictional spaces that oppose order and social regulation.

Also, while the very notion of transgression arguably affirms the dichotomy of public/private (Siebert 1993: 159), the transgression of this boundary can be articulated as destructive to this very dichotomy, especially when women's journeys are depicted as a continuum between these spaces – when, for instance, childcare, certain domestic duties, or 'private' issues are written onto the road rather than left behind in a clearly defined domestic sphere. Thus, gendered spaces and dichotomous spatial boundaries are contested via the spatial transgressions enacted in women's road narratives, and, in turn, spatial agency is created through the articulation of physical movement that constantly defies geographical and symbolic centers; hence, acts of spatial re-

sistance are capable of disturbing and upsetting normative geographies of gendered space.[21]

Cresswell's notion of transgression as the breaking-up of hegemonic spatial semantics also resonates with the concept of deterritorialization, developed by the French poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as a strategy to contravene "striated" space and produce "smooth space" (spaces that escape structuration and normative control), and thus to oppose hegemonic regulations of fixity (cf. their "Treatise on Nomadology", chapter twelve of *A Thousand Plateaus*). Via what they call "lines of flight" – unpredictable and unruly routes of escape that defy spatial control – and "nomadic war-machines" – the dispersal of warrior-herders across open spaces, which, historically, generate war when confronted with limits imposed by sedentary nation states – normative spatial structures are contested. Importantly, their term territorialization, comprising both deterritorializing and reterritorializing movements, refers to a process rather than a system or structure. This process describes existence as it simultaneously constitutes and defines itself ("territorializing") while already dissolving ("deterritorializing") these definitions and building new ones ("reterritorializing"). Thus, these de- and re-territorializations highlight the processual, ephemeral modes of transgression, in tune with Deleuze's and Guattari's project to retheorize the subject (or what they call "Body without Organs") without having to rely on stable identities and identifications. In their view, the subject is always about to constitute and define herself while simultaneously already dissolving these acts of self-definition, as Guattari explains in his *Three Ecologies* (2000/1989: 38). Deterritorialization, thus, can only refer to the momentary, unstable unsettling of fixed hierarchical spatial structures: "write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987/1980: 11). Subjects constitute themselves and create rhizomes[22] – networks of unstructured offshoots

21 Cresswell's example in the chapter "Putting Women in Their Place" is a case study of a women's peace camp in Great Britain, which examines why and how the peace activists there were represented as being unwomanly and out of place, and how these women disturbed normative spatialities by their mere presence "at the front" of a public-political discursive site (1996b: 136).

22 The Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome was developed as an opposition to the tree structures predominant in Western epistemology, e.g. the "tree of knowledge"

and trajectories across smooth spaces which form an alternate process of mapping that turns against the colonial practice of cartography to chart and measure territories – to turn "smooth" into "striated" space. I will examine the terms of Deleuze's and Guattari's nomadology more closely in chapter five; for this section on mobility as resistance, I have introduced the Deleuzo-Guattarian vocabulary of (de)territorialization as it will appear in various readings of women's road narratives throughout this study in order to help define the way some of these narratives appropriate space in non-normative ways. A number of para-nomadic and picaresque road stories, for instance, deterritorialize and alienate[23] their protagonists in order to propose women's transient anchoring in self-definitions while momentarily subverting these definitions by transgressing their categorical boundaries, by moving on and in-between.

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that, since Plato, has remained the central model for a hierarchical organisation of science and learning.

[23] Cf. Annegret Pelz's main argument in *Reisen durch die eigene Fremde: Reiseliteratur von Frauen als autogeographische Schriften* (1993), in which she discusses the double alienation from society and self as a major element in women's travel writing.

4. Questers on the Road

[D]irections in America are different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limits, its shifting and displaced frontiers […]. America reversed its directions: it put its Orient in the West […].

- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,
A Thousand Plateaus

Geography in the United States is mythological.

- Leslie Fiedler,
The Return of the Vanishing American

4.1. The Quest in America: History and Literature

The first narrative of mobility I examine is that of the quest, one of the oldest forms of narrating human movement. Often in the form of a ritualized passage, the quest has played a major role for the formation of Western – and some non-Western – cultures and literatures, from the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic and Homer's *Odyssey* to medieval knight-errantry and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (cf. Enevold 2003: 79). In this context, "[t]he road", as Delia Falconer contends, "promises progress along a fixed spatio-temporal path toward a future goal. […] The route map, with its narrative of beginning and end, guarantees the future by subordinating the presence." (1992: 43) This future- or goal-orientedness is *the* main characteristic of the quest (cf. Stout 1983: 89, 99), whose destination – a person or place, the attainment of answers or (usually fetishized) objects – is imagined as granting social improvement or personal regeneration and the possibility to redefine oneself. Such a striving for a better place, as well as the pilgrimage for spiritual renewal, has a more or less clearly defined motivation, often resulting in a structure of departure as escape, a flight from something, and a yearning for something and/or someplace else resulting in the geographical movement of the literary protagonist.

In the context of U.S.-American cultural and literary history, the quest motif remains a vital, if ambivalent, element in national mythology, harking back to the colonialism of the Puritan Pilgrims in the 17th century, the expansionist doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the mid-19th century, and various 20th-century versions of upward mobility associated with the American Dream. Accordingly, the heroic quest for freedom from hardship and oppression on the one hand and the freedom to explore, to 'light out for the territory', on the other is also at the heart of the American literary canon, from Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" and Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (though these texts also articulate the failure of their questing endeavors). The sheer size of the continent has, throughout U.S. history, often been understood as promising the freedom to always be able to start anew, almost synonymously conflating personal, socio-economic, and geographical mobility and disregarding prior inhabitants.

Historically, the quest is thus probably the most traditional narrative form of Anglo and European mobility in the Americas, entailing many stories of emigration and immigration that have shaped a colonial past and a postcolonial present. In the United States, Delia Falconer sums up, "the historical consciousness […] is often spatialised as the road leading to California, the 'open road' into the future […], guaranteed by constant forward movement and a Romantic ideal of a predestined supernatural order" (1992: 46). With social or personal utopias as the main impulse for the questing individual, a teleological ideology of progress and discovery is inseparable from the quest genre's legacy; as Kris Lackey argues, "[t]he rhetoric of discovery – issuing from the wish to reenact pioneer hardships, to recreate an innocent country, and to imaginatively possess the land – remains vital after almost a century of American […] road novels" (1997: 4); "[a]utomotive Manifest Destiny", he further asserts, "is an internalized revisiting of the historical fact" (ibid. 31).

When Leslie Fiedler, in *The Return of the Vanishing American*, characterizes U.S.-American geography as mythological (1968: 16), he is referring to the fact that American letters have defined the country often topologically in terms of the four geographic directions – North, South, East, and West. Fiedler defines four interwoven myths that created the image of the Far West in literature: the myth of "Love in the Woods" (50), essentially the Pocahontas story; the myth of "The

White Woman with a Tomahawk" (51), fighting her way out of captivity; the "Myth of the Good Companions in the Wilderness" (James Fenimore Cooper's main theme), and the "Myth of the Runaway Male", deserting his wife and civilization: Fiedler states that "westering, in America, means leaving the domain of the female, since in our classic books fathers are usually invisible or conveniently dead" (ibid.). These escapees from domestic responsibility have shown a predilection for an East-West movement in tune with the national myth of Manifest Destiny, emerging in the revolutionary era and resulting in 19th-century expansionism (Price 2004: 40), when the famous Horace Greeley slogan exhorted young *men* to go west and grow up with country.[1] The belief in a road to fame and fortune was grounded in the promise of cheap or free land; to this day, the image of California as El Dorado, the 'Golden State' and Edenic Land of Cockaigne, and a somewhat less restrained place than the East, has not lost its mythological force.

The frontier narratives Fiedler describes are a particularly influential form of the literary quest in the U.S.-American context; the concept of the frontier, which Frederick Jackson Turner considered the central paradigm of American nation-building and identity formation, has retained much of its power, long after the frontier's official closure in 1893. Testimony to the ongoing mythological weight of the West, road narratives by men and women of various ethnicities have taken up and refigured the concept in the second half of the 20th century.[2] As Ronald Primeau contends, "[v]arious myths – paradisal, frontier, individual, success, growth – reinforce one another" (1996: 8) in American road narratives; Charles L. Sanford also associates car

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1 The expansionist ideology of the time responded to a variety of economic and political concerns: a rapid increase in population due to immigration and the scarcity of undeveloped land in the densely populated urban centers of the east; the need for increased agricultural production; and Southern desires for an expansion of agriculture and thus the slave economy, for which additional markets were needed.

2 A second paradigmatic destination is Mexico (see Roiphe's *Long Division* or *Thelma & Louise*), which is increasingly seen in criticism as another frontier functioning in similar terms; cf. cultural geographer Patricia Price's juxtaposition of the Western and the Southern border zones of the United States (ch. one and two of her monograph *Dry Place: Landscapes of Exclusion and Belonging*, respectively).

culture with a “neo-frontier spirit” (1983: 138), and Kris Lackey acknowledges the vitality of the rhetoric of discovery in contemporary road narratives: “Automotive Manifest Destiny is an internalized revisiting of the historical fact” (1997: 31).

However, the quest of European-Americans has always oscillated, in dialectical fashion, between dominant and resistant spatial practices (Falconer 1992: 46-7), between dissent with dominant orders in Europe and the continuation of the colonialist spatial ideology of expansionism. This ideology has claimed territories yet unincorporated into the nation-state, at the cost of the lives of millions of Native Americans who were spatially contained and forced into controlled territories, of African-Americans displaced to newly emergent slave states, and of Mexican Americans, who suddenly became second-class citizens after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded half of Northern Mexico to the United States in 1848. Oppositions between utopian vision and individual isolation, liberal and conservative values, curiosity about and fear of the Other, have shaped the figure of the white American hero canonized in the national literature (Heller 1990: 7). These contradictions are also fundamental in order to grasp the complexities of the quest: the settlers’ abandonment of home in order to claim another territory as their new home place corresponds to the fact that the quester can never be certain about what s/he will find (and hence whether it was worth leaving at all) – the ensuing disillusionment is documented, for instance, in women’s pioneer diaries.

It is significant for the general argument of my study that the notion of women not belonging in (presumably) dangerous territory is implied in the frontier concept. While there has been critique of the over-use of the frontier-metaphor (e.g. Patricia Nelson-Limerick [1994]), the parallels between the 19th-century frontier myth and the construction of the American road genre as a masculine territory in the second half of the 20th century are neither negligible nor coincidental. The term ‘frontier’ is, as Nelson-Limerick quotes Jackson Turner’s classical 1893 definition, “‘an elastic one, and for our purposes does not need sharp definition’. One hundred years later, despite earnest scholarly efforts to define the frontier”, Limerick continues in her own

words, "'elasticity' and confused meaning formed its one constant characteristic" (78).[3]

The confused, complex gender-economy of the historical, 19th-century western and the 20th-century asphalt frontiers is of particular interest here: both concepts posit "gender on the edge", as Rachel Borup put it in her dissertation on women "writing" the American frontier in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Following the vein of New Western History, Borup asserts that the historical frontier functioned as a central paradigm through which gendered identities were constituted, and that it was ideologically produced as an exclusively masculine territory (1997: 1-2), yet she also accounts for "the social complexity and variety of gendered experiences that attended westward expansion" (vi). This view follows Annette Kolodny's seminal efforts to expose the naturalization of the frontier as a 'manly terrain' as a cultural construction, criticizing the universalization of white male experience of the West in both *The Lay of the Land* (1975) and *The Land Before Her* (1984; see also Borup 6 and much of the work of Virginia Scharff, e.g. 1991, 1999, or 2003).

The frontier has thus evolved into a border-territory and a contact zone which is not only ethnically and socially contested, but also unsettles the man/culture vs. woman/nature dichotomy (cf. also Price 2004, ch. one). The dominant tradition of cultural representations of this liminal terrain show nature and wilderness as both feminized – a space to be possessed, ordered, and 'cultured' by patriarchal pioneers – and masculinized – a manly terrain set in opposition to a domesticating, feminine cultural force. Wilderness has been conceived of as a space of individuation, a testing ground for the independent seeker, and an 'outside' to the protection, as well as the surveillance and discipline, of the dominant social order. In the United States, wilderness has also been seen as constitutive of a national exceptionalism and as

[3] While Limerick's uneasiness with the fuzziness of the term is understandable from a Western historian's perspective, any attempt at de-elasticizing the frontier-concept seems inappropriate simply because the frontier has always been invested with multiple meanings and a dynamic symbolic economy. The almost mythical force of the concept is, one could argue, an effect of this "confused meaning", and it is such "confused meanings", rather than neat, dichotomous structures, which allow for the subversion of patriarchal symbolic systems.

a formative element of a uniquely ‘American’ character. As the 19th century arrived and continued, a growing tendency to conflate ‘the West’ with an empty, feminine wilderness developed along with the trend to inscribe these terrains as manly. And yet, a feminine gendering of wilderness and the natural world has a long history in America (cf. Kolodny 1975). While many women writers have found the natural world to be rich territory for examinations and expressions of gendered and racialized identities, classical Westerns testify to the tensions the oppositional forces of the masculine and the feminine, which generate the frontier as a gendered space. However, these confused gender relations are usually negotiated in the Western in a way that ultimately restores the dichotomous, patriarchal system of separate spheres.

A number of contemporary quest narratives set out to substantially distort this gendered and colonizing pattern in order to produce different versions of the literary quest west (Primeau 1996: 116). As I argue here, it is often exactly such multiple differences and allegiances in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class, as well as the transdifferent tensions arising from these multiple (be)longings, that complicate such plans of revision.

4.2. Frontier Paradigms: Interactions and Interventions

> With one eye on the rearview mirror, perhaps we will chart a path to a better place, farther along.
>
> - Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads*

The dream of and quest for freedom has always been cast in a romantic vein tightly linked to dominant ideas of masculinity: “In the popular mind, the myth of freedom is associated with sturdy pioneers […], brave men in whaling boats, and at least one irrepressible young boy on a raft”, as Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach puts it in her classic study of the road genre (1976: 34). Women writers have revised, though by no means abandoned, the quest narrative and the rhetoric of westward expansion in various ways, as both Kolodny in *The Land Before Her* (1984) and Brigitte Georgi-Findlay in *The Frontiers of Women’s Writing: Women’s Narratives and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion*

(1996) have demonstrated. Modifying the claims of Kolodny's seminal study to some extent, Georgi-Findlay indeed argues that the rhetoric of the frontier was itself heterogeneous and contested rather than a monolithic masculine formula women subscribed to or contested, depicting "women positioned ambiguously within relations of power and authority" (13). This claim can likewise be advanced for discussing the quest narrative as a gendered genre; however, Georgi-Findlay does not erase gender differences on the level of discourse and authority, where she asserts that women's writing of the west was affected and effected by different discursive constraints complicating women's access to the rhetoric of empire building and colonization (12).

Similarly affected by such constraints, women's quest narratives often pose the question of arrival, of attaining the imagined goal, as a diegetic point break at which the sheer possibility of a 'better place' within the bounds of the realist narrative comes under scrutiny. Reading these stories through the lens of gendered discourses, one major question they pose is the (im)possibility of a rhetoric 'beyond' the patriarchal. In the majority of realist quest fiction, a projective destination of 'beyond' ultimately turns out as a mere romantic narrative construction. Though the projected destination of the journey functions as a vital precondition and motivation for departure, they can rarely be plausibly narrativized in the end; in Slettedahl Macpherson's words, "[w]ithin the boundaries of feminist fiction, escape can be attempted, enacted, celebrated, but never finally or safely contained" (2000: 235). As the film *Thelma & Louise* has exemplified prominently, the yearning for a better place is frustrated by the realization that moving beyond or stepping outside the social and symbolic order altogether is indeed impossible – while its internal revision is not.[4]

Women's road narratives have thus sought, not always successfully, to create different routes for their quests: the more conservative among them solve the tension between normative and rebellious femininity in women's quest stories by a return to the romance plot, with

[4] Of course, *Thelma & Louise* – and especially the film's ending – has been much debated, as the final scene opens up a variety of possibilities for interpretation. For a good overview of the issues at stake, cf. Laderman (2002: 184-94); for an overview of its reception by feminist critics, cf. Enevold (2004: 76-9). A spatial analysis of the film is provided by Soyka (2002: 49-68).

marriage as the endpoint of their protagonist's journeys (cf. 4.3.); a major group of road-quests parallel geographical movement with the renegotiation of mother-daughter relationships on the road (cf. 4.4.); others, mixing the quest with literary para-nomadism, emphasize that the road itself can be refigured as the destination, thereby sustaining contradictory impulses of realist convention, gendered spatialities, and feminist aspirations to question and transform these textual bounds (cf. ch. 4.5.; when the main character decides to keep moving after her destination has proved disappointing, the narrative might eschew ultimate fixation, denying the possibility and significance of arrival altogether, and thus approaching the para-nomadic mode of movement discussed in chapter five). Nevertheless, as these quest narratives presuppose female departures, "moment[s] of rupture of so many boundaries", as Janis Stout has characterized them (1998: xi), all of them probe the extent to which social realities can be challenged and changed in the course of the protagonist's journey. Since the quest in America has been such a formative element in national mythology, women's quest narratives undeniably partake in this mythology while at the same time critically examining its genderedness.

In *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters* (1990), Ihab Hassan addresses the genderedness of the quest, paraphrasing Michael Nerlich's assertion of the West's "systematic glorification of the […] adventurer as the most developed and most important human being", an "ideology of adventure" that "transgresses boundaries of class, abets change, tolerates uncertainty, and entails confrontation with others" (5) – yet significantly excludes women as legitimate subjects of such adventures. Equating women with nature, "[the] American hero [sic] loves nature but must also violate 'her'" (7), Hassan explains, an ethos that affects the hero's attitude toward women (he cites Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 1984). Though Hassan acknowledges that women increasingly have become intrepid travelers (cf. 7), he associates women's errands with "pure motion in space, without inner need or visionary gleam, without a quality of awareness that gives resonance to narrative, indeed without narrative itself" (8) and thus without the capability to "serve us as a model for quest. Hence the relative scarcity, in *Selves at Risk*, of postwar women writers." (8-9) Hassan goes as far as to argue that "[m]en also seem more prone than women to catastrophic fantasies, feelings of insecurity, hence to striving and strain"

(9), that women abhor risk and thus "feminize" the quest by turning inward (cf. 10).

In another discussion of the genderedness of questing, Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson confirms this male bias seemingly inherent in escape stories, but exposes how literature (and criticism alike, one might add) has "naturalized" this assumption in "masculinized genres" such as the adventure story (2000: 41). Whilst recognizing Hassan's observations, she also uncovers his implicit recreation of the quest as masculine by bemoaning the paucity of women's quests without examining women's travel narratives on their own terms (cf. 45):

> If "adventures" have been by and large denied the female character, she has marginally more luck with the quest, though her exploits are not recognized as "true" quests as often as they perhaps should be. This is because they may take a different form than that of the male quest. The male quest is generally considered linear; it may have its inevitable diversions, but the male quester is assumed to pursue his goal until he accomplishes it; only then is he welcomed back to the hearth. […] [T]he female quest rarely follows this pattern. (2000: 88-9)

Slettedahl is perhaps too essentialist and monolithic when she speaks of "the male quest", excluding also factors of ethnic differences in quest literature, yet the gist of her argument, a critical response to the gendered bias of genre criticism, is significant. Relying on Dana A. Heller's influential study *The Feminization of Quest-Romance: Radical Departures* (1990) in her argument, Slettedahl identifies the difficulties of women's narrative escapes entailed by the necessary transgression of her 'proper sphere' (8-9, 88) and the resulting limited options for the questing protagonist: in the end, she often (re)turns to house and husband (11), thus reinforcing patriarchal gender norms, as "few escape novels are able to maintain an indefinite quest or escape" (Slettedahl 2000: 89), though a space outside of patriarchal ideology is sometimes envisioned in a final retreat to wilderness or marginality (ibid. 91). Yet regardless of their ending, Slettedahl sees the escape narrative as "clearly involved in questioning the roles of women, and their 'traditional' placement within the domestic sphere" (ibid.).[5]

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[5] Slettedahl's study focuses indeed on escape rather than quest narratives, with escape preceding the questing mode of movement (thus, the final observation

Heller's book, despite its dated, essentialist rhetoric centered upon women's "quest for authentic self-knowledge" (1990: 1) and stories "that attempt to speak authentically in woman's own voice" (ibid. 9), was one of the first major studies examining the change of the quest pattern predicated by female literary subjects. Historically, Heller asserts, male quest narratives, privileging aggressive libidinal drives and individuation through victory over same-sex rivals, were made possible by a mastery of women relegated to domesticity and passivity: "Women have been blocked from identifying themselves with the active subject of quest-romance because they have internalized an image of themselves as passive objects, framed by the classic structure of the myth, removed from the very symbols and activities the quest traditionally evokes." (6) Heller then locates a shift in the American literary landscape, beginning in the 19th and fully emerging by the late 20th century (121), in what she titles "the feminization of quest-romance" (6), with "woman's motion toward the door" occasioning "a radical departure from […] social and literary convention [such as 19th century domestic fiction] alike" (10). Transcending the limits of an enclosed space, female questers begin their journey first of all by recognizing "that society neither expects nor wants her to test her powers, prove her autonomy, or step outside the line of 'proper' feminine behaviour" (ibid.).

Though Heller's dichotomous rhetoric of 'women's' and 'men's' narratives suggests two highly monolithic patterns of questing, she draws valuable attention to the gendered conditionality of the quest as a mode of narrative movement. Her observations on the differing intra-narrative conflicts encountered in women's quests are likewise centered upon binary relations of autonomy vs. dependence, world vs. home, rebellion vs. submission, active vs. passive, and internal vs. external exploration (12): that these oppositions are indeed "recurrent obstacles" (ibid.) in this literature is indisputable, as is the claim that many female quests end as "thwarted or impossible jour-

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I cite here is not limited to women's quests, but can applied to the nomadic and the picaresque journey as well). The way she links escape to the quest in a rhetoric of discovery ("If one leaves in order to negate an existing order, surely one then wishes to discover a new order away from the site of entrapment", 2000: 90) is debatable. On the relation of the teleology of discovery and the quest, see below.

neys" due to a "rude awakening to limits" or their ultimate reconciliation to society's expectations of passivity and immobility (14). Further, Heller's analysis does not remain bound to these dichotomies; on the contrary, she grants women's literary quests the capacity for both opposites; the feminization of the heroic quest, in her own words,

> has provided women writers a narrative means to acknowledge and accept indeterminate processes that the masculine myth attempts to determine through rituals of closure, aggression, exclusion, and individuation – rituals that help preserve an exclusively masculine domain. (13)

Of course, female quests are not free from "closure", "aggression" or "exclusion" – in this respect, Heller's account is idealized. It is only in her conclusive remarks that the author contends there is no "outsider position" (120) to the dominant gender discourse available.[6] Still, her belief that the "women's quest openly addresses this paradox in its effort to portray the need for political agency in the quest to expand the limiting available categories of identity" (120-1) can be embraced unequivocally: in a shift from passivity to action, from stasis to mobility, the questing female protagonist transgresses the boundaries of home.

Textual attempts at feminine expatiation critically engage with dominant patterns of the U.S.-American quest such as the pioneer spirit or the flight from familial commitment. They remain within the bounds of the traditional quest by sharing with it a similarly strong utopian moment – the moment of escape and the belief in "the geography of hope" that Wallace Stegner attributes to the movement west (qtd. in Scharff 2003: 151); they also retain travel writing's traditional structure of departure and arrival, although, as I have argued, these arrivals are often complicated by the fact that a feminist utopia is at odds with the conventions of the realist narrative. Yet female quest narratives also transcend or even parody these generic bounds, infusing the quest with the awareness of the discourse's genderedness as well as of transdifferent "coalitional tension[s]", the "unattainable bal-

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6 Heller addresses the essentialist debate in feminist scholarship during the late 1980s in the conclusion to her study, granting that women's texts "exist not as sites of a substantive category of woman, but as culturally specific performative acts that speak from within and *in relation to* the very complex discursive and material structures that create the effects of gender identity" (1990: 120).

ance between individuals and cultures […] indelibly marked and measured by differences of sex, race, class, religion, region, experience, human capacity" (Heller 1990: 123). On the one hand, these tensions are variably negotiated by the quest narratives discussed below, as they open up "the lure of the road, goal orientation, and the nature of the quest hero" (Primeau 1996: 89) for debate or revision. On the other, however, they can also result in transdifferent frictions the narrative is unable to control and resolve.

4.3. Romance of the Road, or, Manifest Domesticity?

White women's response to and participation in "westering", as Kolodny, Nelson-Limerick, Georgi-Findlay and others have shown, has been manifold, and women's fiction about the quest west has addressed and given voice to the impact of the westering ideology on women. With regard to women's road narratives, female protagonists' belief in a better life and a new beginning in the American West often functions prominently as the motivation for going on the road, although some texts simultaneously counter the very belief in such an imaginary tabula rasa.[7] The binary opposition of a 'domesticated' South and East and the 'open range' of the West is most obviously deconstructed in westering novels with a strong romantic subplot; Doris Betts' *Heading West* (1981), the first text discussed in this chapter, is exemplary for such quest narratives. Thus, what I call "Manifest Domesticity", borrowing Amy Kaplan's term,[8] seems to be predicated on the infusion of the literary road-quest with the (heterosexual) romance, which accounts for the strong re-territorializing force of domesticity. The less such subplots are focal and idealized in the narrative, the weaker the pulling force of the home place becomes, as my briefer,

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7 Cf., for instance, Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* (1987) or Kate Braverman's *Wonders of the West* (1993).

8 In her highly perceptive article "Manifest Domesticity" (1998), Kaplan argues that domesticity, not as a static condition but as the process of domestication, is related to the imperial project of civilizing. Analyzing a number of women's literary texts from antebellum America, she reveals how the ideology of separate spheres contributed to U.S. imperialism and how this ideology depended on racialized notions of Otherness.

contrastive analysis of Sharlene Baker's *Finding Signs* (1990) will demonstrate.

4.3.1. Doris Betts' *Heading West*

Doris Betts' *Heading West* establishes, but ultimately fails to redeem, the promise of a revised feminine spatiality that the protagonist's road trip can engender. Betts' protagonist initially displays a strong belief in the myth of going west in search of better or more opportunities and freedom (even though her departure from the South is initially not her own decision). The novel's second part focuses on a romantic plot that unsettles the emancipatory agenda of the first half; at this point in the narrative, the protagonist returns to a domestic arrangement that appears just as confining.

The main character's journey is not triggered off by wanderlust; to the contrary, her movement away from a home depicted as overwhelmingly confining and suffocating is relatively passive, as it is forced by a kidnapper. Yet soon Nancy adopts the road trip as her own, determined to head west to find freedom from old social roles: at home, she is identified solely via these roles – as the stereotypical middle-aged spinster town librarian and the caretaker of both her sick mother and her mentally disabled brother Beckham. It is not until she is kidnapped that she steps out of these internalized "slots into which she fit", (18) slots marked "Big Sister, Elder Daughter, Virgin Spinster" (ibid.).[9] Yet at the end of the novel, her traditional social role is reiterated, albeit on different terms: Nancy is engaged to a domineering man she then follows to live with in the West. Swerving between narratives of emancipation and submission, *Heading West* abounds with irresolvable transdifferent tensions.

Doris Betts' novel presents Nancy Finch, a 34-year old North Carolina librarian, as a well-read and witty woman who, like every

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[9] Another 'spinster' road novel worth mentioning is Pagan Kennedy's *Spinsters* (1995); contrary to Betts, Kennedy subverts the stereotype from within, developing a rather positive vision of unmarried women and emphasizing sisterhood as a road to personal growth. Coincidentally, Kennedy also leads her protagonist sisters to the Grand Canyon.

preceding summer, is about to spend her vacation with her rather ignorant sister Faye and her imbecilic brother-in-law Eddie on a trailer trip through the Blue Ridge Mountains. During a lunch break in a state park, a kidnapper appears, ties up Faye and her husband, steals their money, and pushes Nancy into his car. Heading west together, they move through Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Nancy's numerous attempts at escaping her captor are half-hearted at best; rather, she is relieved to have left behind "living death" at home without having to justify this step to her family (Ferguson 1983: 72); "free of all choices", she retrospectively recounts, she was "taking a vacation from conscience" (Betts 1981: 291). Nancy does not see any possibility to determine for herself a place in the socio-spatial web of her world; she fears being drawn back into her old life and "was almost glad to think she might die, at least, at a distance" (14). Thus, she is hesitant to disembark from the journey, for it is not until the fifth chapter that can she imagine an escape without having to go back home (61).

Nancy is continually torn between the terrors and the pleasures of her abduction, at times even feeling grateful toward her kidnapper, Dwight Anderson: "When the man with the gun stepped out of a laurel thicket, she knew that part of her had been waiting for him ever since she memorized 'The Highwayman'" (11). The subtext to the first part of Nancy's story (parts one and two in the book, from her abduction in chapter two to Dwight's death in the Grand Canyon in chapter thirteen) is one of Nancy's favorite poems, Alfred Noyes' "The Highwayman" of 1913. The ballad retells a Scottish legend in which Bess, a landlord's daughter, is assaulted by highwaymen, one of whom she becomes romantically attracted to. They tie her up and leave; when her love-object does not return to fetch her, Bess kills herself. The highwayman is gunned down, and together they are said to appear as ghosts on moon-lit winter nights, united in death. In *Heading West*, the narration repeatedly hints at this masochistic attraction that clearly exceeds Nancy's thankfulness for getting away from her family on the one hand and is not warded off by the violence of the assault on the other (Dwight "had yanked Nancy to her feet and slapped her face on both sides" to make her get in the car, and Nancy experiences physical fear as "[h]er body began to shake", 14). Following this initial assault, Nancy immediately reflects on what she gains by being freed from her family:

> Nancy's wish to be free of doing all the thinking for all her family had grown desperate. Some days their dependence ate her alive. No longer choosy as she had been at twenty, she had stopped wishing for Prince Charming or miracles. She had prayed to be free of them on any terms. (15)

The paragraph ends here, leaving the reader with the impression that Nancy accepts her new victimization happily, even somewhat ironically equating it with the advent of "Prince Charming or miracles", i.e. with a positive version of liberation from family loyalty and spinsterhood (understood as forced upon her by her social surroundings). However, the subsequent paragraph counteracts this impression, merely representing the expected reaction of a crime victim: "Now as Nancy sucked on a bloody flap in her mouth she switched prayers: Just get me out of this, she broadcast to Heaven, and I won't complain again. […] This man is not what I meant, she prayed" (15).[10]

This passage is programmatic for the first half of the book: Nancy's emotional state constantly oscillates between happiness and dismay, her fear of rape manifestly reflecting Gill Valentine's thesis of a "geography of fear" pervading women in public space. Even though her kidnapper seems not to care much about Nancy as a sexual object – he once says "[i]f I wanted to touch you I would" (18)[11] – his hostage constantly imagines sexual assault; when Dwight, for some irrelevant reason, cups his hand in the air on the first stretch of the road he spends with Nancy, it is enough of a gesture for her to imagine her "breast, or thigh, or more […] being tested in that hand" (15). At the same time, Nancy feels relieved and enjoys the adventure, arguably due to her partially favorable view of Dwight as a liberator. Many of the first-person stream-of-consciousness passages even adopt a humorous, sarcastic tone, clearly expressing a state of adventurousness

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10 As a religious woman, the protagonist, especially in the first half of the book, heavily relies on her prayers, believing that God (rather than Nancy herself) can change her destiny.

11 Other than a hinted-at desire for a traveling companion to take turns at the wheel (29), Dwight's motives for taking hostage remain unclear to the reader as well as to Nancy, who repeatedly imagines that "there was something about me he wanted" (120). It seems Dwight has to prove his masculinity by controlling a woman in order to set himself apart from his weakly twin brother (315).

rather than of apprehension. Furthermore, the self-reflective humor Nancy displays also counters the "virgin spinster" stereotype, as does the novel's emphasis on Nancy's body, her sexuality, and her physical reactions, noted also by Slettedahl Macpherson (173). Remembering that her period is due soon, for example, Nancy "could almost feel […] her circulatory system constrict. All point bulletin: Be on the lookout for a man, dementia praecox, and a woman, premenstrual tension. Approach with caution" (31).

A few pages earlier, imagining her fate in Dwight's hands, she jokes just as morbidly about the possibility of rape, evaluating her kidnapper's attractiveness:

> she imagined the closed coffin as empty, her body never found. Because? Because Nancy did not get murdered at all, merely raped! Merely? At that Nancy opened her eyes to steal a glance at the gunman's bony, nondescript profile. I could live through that. […] Nothing required that she follow *his* schedule for rape. (18-9)

Unlike Nancy's subtle humor, the fact that her transgressive desire for Dwight is narrated merely in a fictional undercurrent of transdifferent situations perpetuates the "old maid" stereotype of the unhappy, passive woman who is afraid (or unable) to express her needs. This is also illustrated when Nancy escapes from a motel room in order to get a prescription for contraceptive pills, telling herself that "rape would have shorter consequences than pregnancy" (89); after her return to the room, she is thrown back into passivity, "willing to wait [for Dwight] in the motel" (90). And although Dwight never assaults her sexually, Nancy keeps imagining; alone by a river off-camp in the New Mexico night, she fantasizes about "being delivered to strangers who had won her by lottery", admitting that "[t]hose sexual fantasies which canceled out all question [sic] of volition usually worked best for her. […] Neither Mama nor the church elders could hardly blame a helpless wench in some circumstances" (114). Yet when a stranger (who later turns out to be Dwight) *does* appear, Nancy is full of fear, "will[ing] herself into a geological formation" (115). The contrast between Nancy's sexual fantasy, however masochistic or passive, cannot compare to the threat of sexual violence in which Nancy would have no control over the situation.

Otherwise, the narration portrays Nancy as sexually active – e.g. when she remembers how she masturbated while observing her

sister having sex with Eddie (30) or lists all the men she has slept with (58-9). Yet it is also made clear that her surroundings view her as deviant from 'healthy', heterosexually regulated femininity (e.g. 29). That Nancy's fear of rape is expressively voiced in *Heading West* while her 'unhealthy' desire for Dwight is sublimated by humor confirms Sabine Sielke's argument that although rape no longer remains unspoken in 20th century fiction, new silences have emerged (2002: 10). Sexuality, for Nancy, remains largely imaginary, solitary, or a matter of silent desires.

Noticeably, it is mostly in the few pages that depict the enclosed space of the car in which both Nancy and Dwight cautiously transcend their roles of criminal and victim, demon and spinster. In conversation, Nancy manages to establish a delicate personal connection with Dwight: she actively negotiates the terms of her capture (e.g. 26-7), while her captor, more or less willingly, tells her personal details of his life (e.g. 106-7), calls her "Queen of the Road", (43) and grudgingly permits her to let Judge Harvey T. Jolley, a middle-aged widower and former judge, join them on their road trip (34-5). Similarly, Dwight confronts Nancy with existential questions about herself. These trigger off uneasy thoughts in Nancy – about her life at home, her femininity, her 'crazy' spinster co-worker Evaline Sample, her desires, and her future.

It is primarily the road trip's space for self-reflection and for communication that allows the protagonist to gain strength and self-assurance. In Betts' novel, the various places and spaces on and off the road clearly serve a heterotopic function in the Foucauldian sense: the spatiality of the road operates differently than the social space the protagonist inhabits at home.[12] In contrast, the journey's spatiality is produced by the combination of dissimilar strangers: Dwight, Judge Jolley, various roadside encounters, plus Nancy herself are all agents that open up this 'other' type of space – the heterotope – by communication and negotiation. It is here that Nancy, via her verbal skills, feels powerful and appropriates the trip as her own, telling Jolley that she "had been in the car without ever being on Dwight's trip. […] 'He's

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[12] Foucault defines heterotopias as "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites […] that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (1986: 24).

always thought he was taking me for a ride but I've taken him for one, you see?'" (42) Her appropriation of the journey constitutes another reason why she sees no need to contact the police when she has the chance to, e.g. when she finds a telephone in a trailer home on a campground (51) or when a policeman checks their car in Memphis:

> [T]he [Mississippi] river boundary seemed to mark a dividing point between this part of her life and the next. She stared ahead through the misty rain trying to see the country's second, western half. […] What she had done, not done, was irrevocable. She had committed herself to everything she had heretofore told Dwight only to goad him; she had made the trip hers. (68)

Nancy eventually acknowledges her commitment to this road trip, probably her first active decision in a long time. Nancy is heading west with a purpose now: transformed, she claims for herself the promise of the west as a Garden of Eden, evoked by the notion of Manifest Destiny:

> [Nancy] moved down the trail almost muttering aloud. I only want to be happy [...]. What's wrong with that? People promised me that. Everybody. I'm going to write that in *my* declaration of independence, not the pursuit but the capture of happiness. Heading west to Nancy's Manifest Destiny. (140)

Even if arguably affirming the myth of the West, Nancy tries to renegotiate its gendered spatiality, countering the masculinist paradigm of the frontier as 'unwomanly', dangerous terrain by her willingness to wander off and to explore the landscape on her own (cf. Nancy's solitary descent into the Grand Canyon in chapter thirteen). Thus, Betts' novel follows the quest pattern in women's road narratives – the yearning for a better place, frustrated finally by the realization that a mere moving *beyond* social realities is impossible. That these realities could probably be changed by her own actions escapes Nancy until late in the novel, when she wonders "how many of her […] long-term wishes might have been […] easily granted if she had only requested them with firmness" (301). It is instead an accident that changes those confining realities when after various roadside/campground adventures and near-escape episodes, the novel reaches its decisive moment with Nancy witnessing Dwight die with "barbaric pleasure" (259). In

a cathartic episode, he falls off a cliff in the Grand Canyon during a fight with Nancy (208), whereas she survives a severe heatstroke.

Heading West's second part (i.e. parts three and four in the book) harshly brings Nancy's temporary escape from socio-spatial control to a halt. Nancy's breakaway and her timid plans for a picaresque life ("Next time I'll pick a man for no reason at all, somebody disposable", 110) are thwarted upon meeting Hunt Thatcher, after which a highly conventional romantic plot unfolds. Hunt, divorced, and the son of Chan (who earlier helps Nancy escape from Dwight and takes care of her after Nancy has been rescued from the Grand Canyon), is the typical Western loner, a breeder of wolves depicted as incredibly patronizing, even disrespectful at times: a guy who has "never been drawn to women with large vocabularies" (253). Early in the romance, Nancy finds Hunt's "kitchen so empty of female attention" it "almost [makes her] comprehend the territorial sensations of the wolf" (280). Thus she begins her return journey to traditional domesticity, which she had tried to escape while still on the road, e.g. when Dwight reminds her of her domestic duties by ordering Nancy to do the laundry.[13]

Quite fittingly, Nancy's submission and Hunt's controlling possessiveness mark their first sexual encounter:

> Both her eyes stabbed once and then reabsorbed tears she refused to shed on behalf of this kiss, this ultimate male argument, […] and long fibers tightened in her throat where the roar was nested. So much concealment, she thought, slipping her arms around him. Nothing quite as it should be. But pretty good, she decided. […] This was the last intention clear to Nancy's will, which was already blurring into sound and touch. […] [S]he saw right away that Hunt knew sex was a power and that he wanted her given over to it, lost to it, made helpless by it. […]

[13] For Nancy, Dwight's orders "set off echoes. Time for my medicine, Nancy. Bring me a glass of tea. Is breakfast ready yet? […] Help me upstairs. Familiarity made her cry out, 'Stop ordering me around!'" (94) In this context, the historical caretaking role of pioneering women on the journey West parallels her experience of the journey (they are explicitly referred to when Nancy inserts a tampon, thinking "of centuries of women and the inconvenience of crossing the Sinai wilderness or the Rocky Mountains while constantly boiling rags" [80] and thereby demystifying the pioneer adventure).

> She had to close her eyes on the bright outdoors as his sweet delays controlled her until she was spread open and starved. (298)

After a visit back home in North Carolina, knowing that "she has to make her peace at home before she can make a home with [Hunt]" (Veach Sadler 1992: 105), Nancy finally decides for a home of her own in the West, marrying her new lover; eventually, Judge Jolley's remark that "[i]t won't be easy [for her] just to keep moving away from home" (Betts 1981: 122) proves right.

The way the story's ending is narrated constitutes a severe rupture in the narrative. Nancy's inner monologization, her voice of self-reflection that accompanies her journey well into the Grand Canyon (e.g. her "declaration of independence" quoted above, 140) gradually falls silent as it is subdued by the subsequent "back-to-normal narrative" (starting with Nancy's rescue from the Grand Canyon, 225) and the fictional space the incipient romance occupies (from p. 253). Slowly recovering from heatstroke, italicized memories, fantasies, and "real events float[ing] […] by" (246) are told from Nancy's perspective, yet already in the third person. The narrator's distance to the protagonist continues to grow after Nancy has recuperated from her delirious state; even though the reader witnesses scenes much more intimate than ever before in the book (as in the quotation above, for instance), Nancy's thoughts are, if at all – much of the narration is now taken up by dialogue – subsequently presented in the third person. Nancy's own voice of self-reflective interjections thus falls silent, thereby hinting at a socially sanctioned, conventional future in which self-awareness is no longer necessary once the romance is settled. Betts draws the limits to the feminine quest; the breakout, culminating with Nancy's breakdown in the Grand Canyon, does not lead to Nancy's independence, but to a relegation of her will to her future husband. In retrospect, this development seems to imply that Nancy may never have yearned for freedom in the first place; it echoes the general ambivalence of the book in terms of its feminist agenda.

On the one hand, Betts' novel (or at least its first part), like many literary quests by female authors, echoes the American captivity narrative and traditional feminist escape stories; they share a conception of escape that has to do, to some degree, with normative gender roles, as Slettedahl Macpherson notes in her extensive study of escape in American feminist literature (2000: 6). On the other hand, Betts'

main character can be interpreted as "a depoliticized symbol" (171), a "relatively passive protagonist" who "refuses to escape from a kidnapper's car" (170), in Slettedahl's words. Yet although it is true that Nancy does retreat from most attempts at escape, slowly realizing her collaborative behavior, the way the narration presents this reluctance on Nancy's part can also be read as a preventive reaction: escape, for Nancy, might mean having to return to the enclosed social space she inhabits at home, where she is the strong daughter and her sister the pretty one (Betts 1981: 339). Slettedahl's study concludes that *Heading West* remains disappointing in its final praise of domestic containment (2000: 174).[14]

That Betts relies on the device of a kidnapper as a catalyst for the protagonist's escape in order to deflect potential criticism of a woman's decision to leave is significant in this respect. Uncomfortable with what would be a radical feminist choice, especially with regard to ideals of Southern femininity,[15] Betts strategically assigns responsibility for the escape to another figure (88); as a consequence, the experience of captivity oscillates between the spirit of adventure and a geography of fear.[16] Such a "double-voiced" narrative quality, as

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14 While Slettedahl Macpherson's study offers many insightful analyses of various escape novels since the 1970s, these are mostly judged against a contemporary standard, placing little attention on how feminist literary politics depend on a variety of contextual factors. *Heading West*'s conservative ending was noticed with disappointment by male reviewers, too (cf. Leonard 1981 and Yardley 1981, contrasting Scura 1983 and Gutcheon 1982), who then take the novel as evidence against Betts' qualities as a novelist. Yardley claims that Betts "has yet to demonstrate a firm grasp on the structural complexities of the novel"; these reviews dispute Betts' status as "a very important figure among those Southern writers who have come to prominence since the '60s" (Yardley 1981).

15 Although womanhood in the South certainly cannot be considered apart from general American notions of femininity, the region's legacy of an almost obsessive preoccupation with the "'proper' boundaries" of gender roles is clearly articulated in Betts' novel, swerving between the "freedom of textuality" on the one and the "tragic incarceration of gender" on the other (Donaldson/Jones 1997: 17).

16 Nancy's fantasy of herself as a "bare-breasted Indian" (Betts 1981: 200) free to roam the West is evidence for its embeddedness in this tradition. Slettedahl Macpherson correctly notes the impropriety of this metaphor (174), which locates Native Americans in a mythical past and neglects the rigid control sys-

Rebecca Blevins Faery notes in *Cartographies of Desire*, is a prime characteristic of early American captivity narratives: Faery argues that Indian captivity represented an expansion of experience rather than a limitation for Puritan women (1999: 31), with the result of fictional ambivalence: "[Mary] Rowlandson's narrative is indeed a profoundly dialogic text in which conventional puritan ideologies contend with experiences that Puritanism could not accommodate." (ibid. 14) Much of this holds true for Betts' novel, written 300 years later and also located in a tradition of female captivity. In view of the Southern Christian context of Betts' writing, ideologically informed discursive restraints imposed by conservative ideals of femininity may account for the seeming incoherence of the novel, and may have hindered what starts out as an ambitious road-novel from realizing its radical feminist potential. The cultural legacy of Southern femininity and religious convictions, it seems, clashes with Betts' attempt at a feminist road novel, with the result of transdifferential tensions that ultimately are resolved into a romantic narrative closure at the end of the book.

As much disappointment as it may provoke, taking the sociopolitical and regional-cultural circumstances in which Betts' novel emerged into account is crucial when considering its conclusion – the new conservatism of the American 1980s, a long tradition of Southern femininity, and Betts' Christian background (cf. Scura 1987: 54). What is at work here is what Slettedahl Macpherson calls a pattern of "return to adult domesticity" (2000: 191) characteristic of much women's literature of the 1980s, the decade being characterized by an antifeminist backlash, as a result of which female narratives of escape often adopted somewhat darker visions of the future than their 1970s' predecessors (ibid. 147 & 150).

In *Revolution of Poetic Language* (1974), Julia Kristeva argues that even fictional space is subject to repressive forces; what cannot be said in the text forms, so to say, the textual subconscious. Arguably, the Kristevan "forbidden discourse" in *Heading West* could refer to the narrative expression of Nancy's sexual attraction to Dwight (her younger captor), or to the possibility of Nancy falling in love with Judge Jolley (an older widower) or Chan, her female rescuer (and

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tems the American colonizers have devised in order to restrict Native freedom and mobility.

Hunt's mother). Thus, what the text presents as the protagonist's liberation must be relegated to a conventional heterosexual relationship in order to adhere to traditional ideals of femininity, particularly the passivity of the Southern lady. Ironically, this is also what Robert Brinkmeyer notes in his praiseful reading of *Heading West*: "The golden dream of heading west has become in the end the *golden mean of marriage*, a balancing of love, commitment, and freedom. Or more simply, the best of the West and the best of the South" (2000: 71; my emphasis).

As Nancy's Manifest Destiny is, in coherence with the classical Freudian model of female development, domesticity rather than the 'open range' of the west, the novel attempts to uphold the myth of the west as a place of personal fulfillment. The tensions and ambivalences I have highlighted in my reading of *Heading West*, however, counter this vision of feminine domestic bliss, for Betts' novel fails to establish an alternative feminine spatiality in which Nancy Finch would remain a mobile and active female hero: indeed, she becomes a rather conventional heroine. Once the female protagonist seems 'destined' to return to the domestic sphere, an alternative vision of home seems beyond reach.

All of these contextual factors limit the feminist stance the story expresses, though the novel was clearly marketed with a feminist appeal and female reviewers and critics of the novel indeed did celebrate Nancy as a feminist female hero.[17] Scura's "Doris Betts's Nancy Finch, a Heroine for the 1980s" (1983) is a case in point, praising the book's "feminine perspective" (ibid. 3) and Nancy's willingness to "undergo a spiritual and physical ordeal traditionally suffered by men in our literature" (ibid. 6; see also Gutcheon's [1982] review). For a Southern Christian audience in the 1980s, the book might have been considered highly provocative indeed (e.g. in terms of sexual explicit-

[17] The dust jacket of the first edition summarizes the plot as "tak[ing] us into the life of a bright, spiky, vital woman in her thirties, fleeing the murderous boredom of her spinster life – and into her deepening and mysterious complicity with the unbalanced stranger who has kidnapped her". As if it were Nancy's willful decision to leave, *Heading West* is presented as the story of a strong woman out for adventure, and undertones of a tale characterized by Nancy's fear about her endangered body and the relegation to Hunt are silenced.

ness),[18] even though *Heading West* "praises domestic containment as a woman's ultimate goal" (Slettedahl 2000: 174).

In *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985), Rachel Blau DuPlessis has critically examined both conventional romance and quest scripts as they have been transformed in 20th century women's writing. DuPlessis observes that in 19th century fiction, "successful quest and romance could not coexist and be integrated for the female protagonist" (1985: x), and that "[t]his contradiction between love and quest […] has […] one main mode of resolution: an ending in which one part of that contradiction, usually quest or *Bildung*, is set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or by death" (ibid. 3-4). Her observation that the romance plot separates love and quest, values sexual asymmetry and "evokes an aura around the couple itself" (ibid. 5) holds true for Betts' 1980s' road narrative and thus marks it as obviously tied to such 19th century romance conventions. DuPlessis also makes clear that the narrative resolution subordinating quest to heterosexual coupledom has often revealed much tension, as the quest is often vital within the narrative, and the ending, "obeying […] social and economic limits for middle-class women" (ibid. 7) is at odds with the trajectory of the novel. However, since the quest then occupies more narrative space and might thus be at the center of the reader's attention, the ending is not necessarily counterproductive – it may be demystified by the romance reader as mere formula.

In light of these issues, it would be unjust, I believe, to simply condemn *Heading West* as antifeminist. Rather, Betts' story bears witness to the transformation of a woman's road story emerging in as well as commenting on conservative social settings, in which a total escape from the geography of fear and a binary model of gendered spatiality is hardly possible. Thus, on the one hand, the novel stakes out the limits of the realist fictional mode for telling women's road narratives against a conservative social backdrop. On the other hand, however, it demonstrates the irreconcilable contradictions that emerge when the road narrative is blended with a romantic formula characteristic of women's popular literature.

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[18] See also Scura's characterization of Betts' life as "grist for a feminist's mill" (1990: 163).

4.3.2. Sharlene Baker's *Finding Signs*: Revising the Romance of the Road?

At first glance, a brief contrastive reading of Sharlene Baker's *Finding Signs* (1990) supports the thesis that the romance plot inhibits the potential of women's quest narratives to revise the public/private binary and to advocate feminine mobility.[19] However, the book also reveals that the romance plot may simply function as a mere diegetic prop: in Baker's novel, it acts as the incentive for the protagonist to embark on a road trip, but is then continuously deferred in order to uphold the protagonist's mobility. By using the romance as nothing but a framing device, the journey takes center stage; although the text remains within the quest structure of departure and arrival, the many stages in between that are the narrative focus of the book emphasize that 'the journey is the reward'. Hitchhiking from San Diego to Spokane in the 1970s to visit her high-school boyfriend Al Righetti, whom Baker's protagonist believes to be the "love of [her] life" (1990: 108), 23-year old Brenda Bradshaw is repeatedly sidetracked, working as a sales clerk, a seasonal fruit picker in an Arizona apple orchard, and as a truck driver. When the journey takes her farther and farther away from her destination, she begins to wonder if her restlessness stems from wanderlust or fear of commitment. This question is resolved in the end by positing mobility and domesticity not as binary opposites, but as options that are not mutually exclusive.

Zigzagging across the map from San Diego to Philadelphia and Boston to Reno in often adventurous episodes, Brenda's first-person narrative focuses on three major themes: first, her relationship to her older brother Will, a Vietnam veteran who is at the center of the first third of the book (before Brenda starts hitchhiking on her own), as well as her mother-role in this relationship; second, her 'legacy' of restlessness inherited from an air-force family that moved from bases twelve times when she was a child (139) and her quest to "find signs"

[19] Baker thanks Doris Betts in the preface; it might well be that *Heading West* served as an inspiration for *Finding Signs*.

to tell her how to handle this legacy; and finally, contrasting her restlessness, her search for a new home in a romantic relationship.[20]

These three themes are closely connected to Brenda's role as a woman of "a very different breed" (226), as she is characterized by both Al and the owner of a Caribbean-bound boat Brenda plans to work on. Like many women's road stories, Brenda's story reflects on the dilemmas of cultural agoraphobia as well as the inscriptions of gendered spatialities on the (diegetic) female body – and consequently, the narrative. Time and again, Brenda is faced with a fear projected onto her that she subsequently internalizes; in chapter twenty-five, for instance, a traveling sales representative starts talking to her in a roadside diner:

> "[…] Are you hitchhiking?"
> "Yes."
> "Aren't you afraid?"
> "I get asked that by *everyone*. I guess if I were really afraid, I wouldn't be doing this, would I?"
> He shrugs. "You ought to be afraid. Lot of kooks in this world. Better for a man." (77-8)

Subsequently, it is exactly because this man himself is a "kook", trying to convince her to spend the night with him, that Brenda experiences her first night, sleeping in the roadside shrubbery, full of fear, even though she tries to tell herself it is irrational:

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[20] In a queer reading, the suppressed lesbian subtext of the novel is evident at various points in the narrative; when she introduces her friend MaryEllen to the reader, Brenda parallels Al and MaryEllen in terms of importance for her trip, for instance, yet is all too eager to repudiate any possible homosexual tendencies: "It was Al who got me out here on the road […]. Or maybe it goes back further, back to when I first met MaryEllen Keen. MaryEllen had wanted my body, no doubt about it. I never wanted to mess with hers, even though MaryEllen was the sort of woman I would have gone nuts over if I were a man. It's nice to know, for sure, that you haven't got homosexual interests. Just to know." (1990: 6) Some lines later, Brenda describes MaryEllen's body: "MaryEllen was deceptively lean, and muscled, with a long brown ponytail that stuck to the sweat on her back between sharp shoulder blades, and with long brown legs, and sinewy arms that could hit a nail blam! once to set it." (ibid.) While the description reveals a homoerotic gaze of admiration for her bisexual friend, the possibility of a lesbian relationship is constantly written out of the narrative.

> Stop it, Brenda, I tell myself. He's a goddamn lonely telephone company worker who tried to pick up on you. Big deal. I push into the bushes. Even though I'm in the dark, I'm sure he has seen just where I have gone. […] I cry cold tears for myself alone and lonely, lonelier than the telephone man, pitifully alone in the bushes while dozens of people drive past me, drowsy from just having left their warm marriage beds […]. (79-81)

With most people's reactions to her transient life on the road emphasizing her physical weakness and inferiority as a woman, Brenda draws her own disillusioning conclusions. In contradiction to Ronald Primeau's characterization of the free-floating road experience, the text thus openly dismantles the assumption that the open road is ungendered, albeit without giving up transgression as a strategy to counter its genderedness: Brenda continues moving. Yet, as the quote above also exemplifies, she is continually torn between her quest for Al and her own "warm marriage bed" on the one hand and adventure on the other:[21] her nomadic girlhood has prepared and perhaps predestined her for a picaresque life on the road, but the overarching quest for stability and an answer to what she really wants in life – significantly, the boat that she plans to take to Jamaica gets named "Brenda's quest", the accompanying smaller vessel "Brenda's Question" – compromises picaresque aspirations – and vice versa. These tensions are the major propelling force of the entire narrative.

Like Nancy Finch of *Heading West*, Brenda openly alludes to the paradoxical situation of a spatial confinement pertaining to both public and private arenas: while on the one hand cross-country travel is glorified as the mythical U.S.-American experience of freedom, mobility, and agency, it confronts her with her embodied-ness and its consequences in the public sphere on the other. As she explains to one of the men giving her a ride:[22] "It's something, isn't it? There you are,

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[21] Significantly, in *Love Always*, the 1997 film version of *Finding Signs* which Baker co-scripted, this conflict is the single focus, setting the protagonist's involvement with Righetti against her adventurousness, while the brother-sister relationship is no longer at issue.

[22] It is interesting that the 15 different people stopping for Brenda are all male. This clearly heightens the possibilities for both heterosexual romance and assault, while blocking the potential for female bonding on the road. It is one of the many clichés in the book that Maureen Corrigan's *Washington Post* review (1990) notes.

just a private person thinking private thoughts, walking down the street, then you turn and stick out your thumb and you're suddenly public property. That moment when you cross the line from pedestrian to hitchhiker… it's weird." (76) The protagonist's awareness of her body as "public property" is clearly gendered, as its movement through public space is linked to sexual vulnerability and the threat of rape (cf. esp. chapters twenty-five, twenty-six and fourty-seven). Consequently, hitchhiking is reconfigured as a form of giving up control over the protagonist's corpo-reality, thereby revising and qualifying the countercultural myth of the freedom of the hitchhiker.

Throughout the novel, Brenda is haunted by this paradox of physically confining mobility, which makes obvious to her how she cannot simply leave her en-genderedness as a woman behind. Early in the narrative, her representation of life on the road, which she characterizes as a territory of dependence rather than independence, reads like the antithesis to the beat generation's claim of freedom through mobility (although significantly, Brenda starts her journey right after reading Kerouac's *On the Road*, 53). This description of dependencies ridicules the celebration of the open road the road genre traditionally evokes:

> On the road you belong to the world. You depend on strangers to take you places, and often to feed you and take you in; you depend on the weather not to be too cruel to your highly vulnerable self; you depend on your own body not to betray you with sickness or depression. I'm always a little hungry and a little cold. (4)

Toward the end of the novel, Brenda is significantly weary, "so tired of moving [she] could scream" (187), and yearns for "the end of the road" (192). Baker's protagonist simultaneously feels in and out of place on the road throughout the book; from the beginning of her journey, she knows "a woman can't make it for long, out here" (5), yet in spite of herself continues her road trip even beyond the last page of the book (as the ending suggests). Finally reaching Spokane, she learns that Al has married another woman and heads back to San Diego to visit her brother, where she briefly rests. On the road again, Brenda decides that commitment to another person does not necessarily preclude mobility. She sets out to stay with David, a kind, quiet illustrator she met in Seattle and notably the only man who did not make "the obvious remarks about a woman traveling alone" (198).

Although Brenda, like Nancy Finch in *Heading West*, has fallen in love by the end of the novel, Baker's narrative succeeds in eschewing traditional domestic confinement at the end of Brenda's quest. Even if one cannot refute Maureen Corrigan's argument altogether that "*Finding Signs* opens by challenging the sexism of a genre" and "ends by reaffirming that there is only one fitting conclusion to a woman's story" (1990), one has to take into account that the romantic conclusion is narratively marginalized – it is implied rather than narrated – and left with an open end: thus, it is not presented as a passage into stability and stasis, but as another episode on a journey, whose duration and outcome remain entirely open. While Betts' novel ends in patriarchal re-domestication that is the narrative focus of the entire second part of her book, Baker affirms her protagonist's self-determined spatiality and mobility by using the romance plot as a mere narrative backdrop against which Brenda's journeys take place. Brenda's quest is accomplished by her learning to live rooted in space, to practice the "spot-in-space theory" (Baker 1990: 67) her brother told her about when she was a child:

> everyone has a spot in space, a spot where the very core of you lives, your home. Nothing can knock you out of that spot […]. [W]hen you think you're walking down the sidewalk, propelling yourself through space, you're not. You're in your spot. You're pulling the sidewalk beneath you with your feet. (66)

By way of travel, the narrative ultimately produces both geographical place (David's house) and social space as dynamic rather than static notions. Brenda's insistent defiance of expected spatial behaviors eventually turns into an experience of self-empowerment and regaining control, as the very last sentence of the book demonstrates, suggesting Brenda will remain active and mobile despite her new commitment to David: "Then I step outside, and start pulling toward me what I need" (241).

* * *

The quests both Nancy and Brenda embark on oscillate between visions of old and new homes, between escape and return. Both Betts' and Baker's novels are infused, although to different degrees, with the spirit of "Manifest Domesticity", but the protagonists are torn between

their desire for adventure and freedom from social constraints on the one hand and the urge for rootedness in a traditional (heterosexual) relationship on the other. The question that remains for the rest of this chapter is whether women's quest narratives can envision different routes, routes perhaps uncompromised by romance plots, in order to revise normative gendered spatialities within the framework of this narrative mode of mobility. Can character constellations and narrative solutions different from Betts' and Baker's deterritorialize the masculine legacy of the American quest narrative? In the following, I will address these questions by looking at a second major strand in women's road quests that focus on the renegotiation of mother-daughter plots for alternative versions of familial relationships.

4.4. Beyond the Romantic Quest? Alternative Homes and Other Mothers

> Ideally, the process of creating another life would be freely and intelligently undertaken, much as a woman might prepare herself physically and mentally for a trip across country by jeep […].
>
> - Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*

4.4.1. Escape from Father Freud?

In the context of 19th century women's frontier literature, Brigitte Georgi-Findlay claims that "different women on ever new and different frontiers continually had to face the challenge of writing about the West anew, confronting their own restrictions and creative possibilities in the […] genres that were available to them" (1996: 66). As Georgi-Findlay's *Frontiers of Women's Writing* also argues, pioneer and 19th-century women's writing about the west often drew on established literary conventions, but also accommodated women's experiences to larger contemporary discourses about the frontier. Similarly, I argue in this chapter that the road novel has been one genre that women have repeatedly used for articulating their quests for better lives and alternative versions of domesticity and mother-child relationships, quests that often lead west. These literary journeys, too, are frequently enmeshed in more established formulas like the romance

plot. Thus, textual renegotiations of the mother-daughter plot in quest novels can also be viewed as a merging of formulas and themes. The question, however, is whether this apparent production of a hybrid, new form of the quest – the mother-daughter-quest – can entirely escape both premeditated Freudian paths and the cultural baggage of American mythmaking of the west, imbued as it is with colonial fantasies and paternalistic attitudes.

A broad survey of a corpus of women's quest narratives written since the 1970s suggests that mother-daughter relations are particularly compatible with the road genre, as they are more common a theme than heterosexual romance. This strand of women's road literature challenges the convention that the "mark of motherhood" (Boyce Davies 1994: 135) leads to women's inability to travel. Mother-daughter quests such as Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* (1988) and its sequel *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* (1980), Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl* (1996) and Anne Roiphe's *Long Division* (1972), analyzed in the following, all set out to rewrite the road as a space for maternal negotiations. These kinds of quests, narrative journeys of mothers and daughters on the road together, try to escape the oedipal drama Freudian psychoanalysis has cast women into, creating spaces outside of the normativity of the oedipal triangle.

Put somewhat simplistically, the Freudian oedipal scenario of penis envy, change of love object, and ultimate mother-daughter separation, generally divides women into mothers and daughters. Relations between them are, according to Freud, necessarily jealous and hateful because the (heterosexual-'normal') girl blames the mother for all its 'lacks' – of the desired love-object (her father) as well as of the phallus (cf., for instance, Freud's 1931 essay "Über die weibliche Sexualität"). As the texts discussed in the following show, a number of women's road narratives question this logic and foster a redefinition of women's relationships as mothers and daughters.

Feminist psychoanalytic theory has been criticizing and revising Freudian assumptions for decades, and has done so from various angles. But although Freud himself already hinted at his own uncertainty about the importance of the pre-oedipal late in his life (Freud 1974/1931: 170), the re-evaluation of the pre-oedipal, pre-symbolic phase in the girl's development (characterized by a close bond with the mother and the pre-linguistic) is generally seen as the most signifi-

cant merit of feminist psychoanalysis. However, some critics have begun to ask to what extent any psychoanalytic approach can manage to repudiate the founder of the field or his successors (such as Jacques Lacan) without questioning the binary structure of psychoanalytic views of development (oedipal vs. pre-oedipal) and the validity of Freudian terminology as such.

Critics like Marianne Hirsch point out how Julia Kristeva, as one among many psychoanalytic critics, continues to use oedipal, binary terminology: even when she substitutes the oedipal with the "symbolic" and the pre-oedipal with the "semiotic" (or pre-linguistic) phase, she inadvertently remains within the same binary structure.[23] Against her best intentions – a main concern in Kristeva's work is a rewriting of the mother-function (i.e. what she calls "maternality") – and despite her impressive re-reading of subjectivity, her theory thus depends on the oedipal structure of the child's development as the decisive point of reference. Does this involve, indirectly at least, the affirmation of a male standard, associated with the logos, (non-poetic) language and culture? If the maternal remains in the realm of pre-linguistic, bodily signification (sound, rhythm, babble), how can this assumption escape from involuntarily confirming 'Woman's' mystified cultural value as the natural, the dark continent, the unspeakable that cannot be accessed without translation into the symbolic order of language?[24] While these questions are impossible to answer here, both Hirsch's and Domna Stanton's (1986) criticism of Kristeva point to her theoretical dependence on the role of the phallus. Luce Irigaray, too, Hirsch contends in *The Mother/Daughter Plot* (1989: 136-8), pri-

23 See, for instance, *Revolution of Poetic Language* (1974). Kristeva's concept of maternality is developed in "Stabat Mater" (1976) and "Death-Bearing Woman" (from *Black Sun*, 1987), where she begins by defining matricide as "biological and psychic necessity", "our vital necessity, the sine-qua-non condition of our individuation" (2002: 197). In addition to Hirsch, a critical reading of Kristeva's, Irigaray's, and Cixous' concept of the maternal is provided by Domna Stanton (1986).

24 In "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini" Kristeva writes that "[a]s long as there is language-symbolism-paternity, there will never be any other way to represent, to objectify, and to explain this unsettling of the symbolic stratum, this nature/culture threshold, this instilling the subjectless biological program into the very body of the symbolizing subject, this event called motherhood" (qtd. in Hirsch 1989: 172).

vileges daughters-as-sisters relations while excluding the mother yet again: "Daughter and mother are separated and forever trapped by the institution, the function and role of motherhood." (137) In Hirsch's view, the "feminist family romance", the feminist alternative to the traditional family plot that has as its basis the dislocation of the masculine, only frees *daughters* – not mothers – from a Freudian legacy of guilt and abhorrence (1989: 138). For a whole generation of feminists in the 1970s, says Hirsch, the mother represents a collaborator of patriarchy and its institutions rather than an ally against it.[25] Referring to Jessica Benjamin's work, Hirsch further argues that it is for this continuing neglect of motherly subjectivity that psychoanalysis finally does abandon the oedipal scenario (1989: 161).

The turn to a more positive re-evaluation of motherhood occurs, for one of the first times, in Adrienne Rich's famous autobiographical treatise *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), in which Rich reviews the relationship between mothers and daughters from a (future) mother's point of view:

> The cathexis between mother and daughter–essential, distorted, misused–is the great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement. […] Yet this relationship has been minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy. (1976: 225)

In her book, written as a reflection on the author's personal experience of motherhood and thus to a certain extent implying the cultural specificity of the mother-child relation – one of the basic neglects of psychoanalytic theory – Rich initiates a rethinking of the fundamental significance of *both* daughter- *and* motherhood. Also attributing matrophobia to many contemporary feminist discourses, she argues against the division of women into mothers and daughters, thus paving the way for overcoming the oedipal scenario of psychoanalysis which

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[25] Hirsch mentions Nancy Friday's best-selling account of the relationship with her mother, *My Mother/My Self* of 1977 in this respect, a book which is mostly written from the daughter's point of view about mothers and their collaboration with patriarchal society.

had been unable to account for the subjectivity of mothers. According to Rich, the emphasis of moments of transition (as daughters become potential mothers and thereby remember their connections to their own mothers) breaks this traditional dualism and enables a new conception of adult femininity that tries neither to privilege motherhood (as the only legitimized role of women in patriarchal societies) nor to prescribe an ideal vision of the maternal; "[w]e are, none of us, 'either' mothers or daughters; to our amazement, confusion, and greater complexity, we are both." (1976: 253) The mother is *both* subject and object at the same time, always a multiple subjectivity, a nexus of various dialogical selves.

From this point of view, culturally institutionalized expectations of idealized mothers and obedient daughters are open to contestation: if mother and daughter are both granted subjectivity alike, a psychological space is created that houses ambivalent emotions, anger as well as affection. Also, the dialogue between mothers and daughters can be envisioned as a medium to negotiate lines of separation and connection. Hirsch claims the need to abandon the psychoanalytic frame, in which the mother's desire – the desire for the phallus, without which language and representation are impossible in both Freudian and Lacanian theory –

> can never be voiced because her desire exists only in the fantasy of the child as something the child can never satisfy. […] The mother herself is and remains absent even to herself. The place she inhabits is vacant. Although she produces and upholds the subject, she herself remains the matrix, the other, the origin. And the child's own narrative – the narrative of our culture – rests on that "othering." (1989: 168)

In this traditional picture criticized by Hirsch, both mothers and daughters (as mothers-to-be) comprise a matrix rejected by the child.

The narration of mothers and daughters – biological or surrogate – together on the road highlights the journey's potential to produce a space in which seemingly stable psychological and cultural patterns of the mother-daughter-relationship can be interrupted and renegotiated. Jessica Enevold refers to this emergent space as a "materotopia" (2003: 99). Endowing mothers with narrative voices, such road stories mobilize motherhood, with the effect that women's bodies are portrayed not as wombs and vessels, matrices that the "spermatic" voyager (cf. Leed 1991: 220-36) encounters and overcomes, but as

dynamic and ambivalent agents transcending both biological and psychoanalytic naturalizations. Unsurprisingly, in the majority of these narratives the Freudian mother-daughter plot is significantly altered. Thus I disagree with Deborah Paes de Barros' contention in a chapter on the "Search of the Maternal" (2004: 89-125) that "[e]ach of these [road] texts searches for an aspect of the idealized maternal; the protagonists find not simply their own lost mothers but the perfect maternal that is vanquished or hidden in the prosaic reality of the functional world" (97). While Paes de Barros rightly views the maternal body as central in the negotiation of the "space between the extremes" of life and death (91 & 96), the maternal may also function to renegotiate mother-child relationships in a way that these become viable for both mothers and children rather than that in a way that idealizes either of the two.

Paes de Barros observes how the process of pregnancy and birth itself is referred to, in a number of English expressions, metaphorically as a journey, a major reason for her to define the road as a womb in her book: "in women's road literature, the passage is more than theorized; rather, the road depicts the birth process [...]. The road becomes the womb" (2004: 112). In an analysis of works by Barbara Kingsolver, Dorothy Allison, and Beverly Donofrio, she suggests that it is often only within the limits of this road-womb that a new mother-daughter relationship can emerge.

Though women's mother-daughter quests, as de Barros correctly suggests, focus on this familial relationship as dynamic and negotiable, the concept of the road as womb-space again seems to translate mother-daughter relations back to the pre-symbolic realm. Thus, the road becomes an idealized space of regression to a time when the mother-daughter bond is seen as unbroken and 'whole', uncorrupted by the symbolic order and, by extension, its cultural embeddedness. Thus, the road-as-womb paradigm essentializes women by implying the universality of the psychoanalytic narrative of mother-daughter-relations and by therefore erasing cultural difference. In contrast, literary emplotments of these relations, as I am going to argue in the following readings of mother-daughter quests, are indeed troubled by transdifferential tensions that arise precisely because of the fact that mother-daughter relations are negotiable only if other realms of difference – of ethnicity, class, and generation, for instance – are dealt with as well. Seen through such a lens, the road as womb-space is a some-

what idealized theoretical paradigm which is qualified by the more complex, transdifferential spatialities narrated in and through the literary texts I analyze. In these narrations, the potential creation of a dynamic space of negotiation for mothers and daughters, while it is conditional upon the transgression of borders between the public and the private and of the patriarchal home, never fully escapes the 'Law of the father', the symbolic order and the social-cultural dimension of human existence.

4.4.2. Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* & *Pigs in Heaven*: From Mother-Daughter Negotiation to Multicultural Fantasy

Barbara Kingsolver's best-selling novels *The Bean Trees* (1988) and *Pigs in Heaven* (its sequel of 1993) articulate the urge of a Southern woman to leave behind a home that is experienced as socially confining and geographically confined, and to establish a new life in the U.S.-American west. In both books, the road is a crucial site of cultural and maternal negotiation, which, however, is continually compromised by gender, class, and ethnic differences. While on the road the protagonist appears as an uncontested mother, her intimate connection, gradually established in the course of the two books, to her adopted Native American daughter is rendered precarious whenever she leaves the road. Structurally, this opposition of mobility and stasis is reflected in the fact that the books are divided into chapters in which Taylor and the girl, Turtle, are together on the road on the one hand or struggling to stay together in various places on the other.[26] Kingsolver's stories focus on the journey as a dynamic womb-space, intersecting the public and the private, complicating notions of home and belonging, and conditioning a refraction of maternity; yet they fail to successfully negotiate cultural difference precisely because the road is a space which is enmeshed in social and symbolic orders and thus

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[26] Though the road chapters make up only a small part of the narratives, the road is a crucial site in the negotiation of differences rather than a mere setting. The Abacus paperback edition of both novels, showing a white-lined road on the front (*The Bean Trees*) or back (*Pigs in Heaven*) covers and focusing on the road narrative in the short summaries on their back jackets, for instance, clearly direct reader expectations toward the genre of the road novel.

affected by transdifferential tensions. Finally, the displacement of multiple differences by way of privileging the mother-daughter bond distorts the novel's textual politics.

The Bean Trees starts with Taylor Greer's quest for freedom and a new start in the West – as far as her worn-out car will take her away from her home in rural Arkansas. After having been raised by a single mother, Alice, and having graduated from high-school, "Missy" Marietta Greer vows not to end up pregnant and trapped in unhappy marriages and poverty like the bulk of her classmates; she also resolves to take on a new name (and thus a new, self-fashioned identity), determined by the town where her gas will run out – Taylorville. At a stop in Oklahoma, a Cherokee woman leaves her little niece with Taylor, who thus, against her original intentions, is cast into the role of a mother – a parallel to the involuntary motherhood of many of Taylor's peers (Novy 2005: 191). At first, Taylor is overwhelmed by this responsibility and cannot see herself as a nurturing, maternal figure; the toddler "attached itself to me by its little hands like roots sucking on dry dirt" (Kingsolver 1988: 22). The child is extremely shy and seems retarded, but clings to Taylor (who names her Turtle "on account of her grip", 36); bathing her in a motel further down the road, Taylor learns that Turtle has been physically and sexually abused. Stranded in Tucson with no money on her hands, the new surrogate mother finds help in the maternal character of Mattie, owner of Jesus Is Lord Used Tires and a secret shelter for 'illegal' Central American refugees, who gives Taylor a job. Mattie figures as an older and more mature version of Taylor; she has no children of her own, but has become an important nurturing figure in her community.

Gradually, the main character is able to set up a modest home with another single mother, Lou Anne, and to gain Turtle's confidence and love (Rubenstein 2001: 54). Yet she also learns that she will not be able to keep the child she has come to love without a legal adoption. As Taylor realizes that she will have to forge this adoption due to the fact that Turtle's biological parents are untraceable, a Guatemalan Indio couple living with Mattie, Esperanza and Estevan, who lost their own daughter in their home country to a regime of political terror, agree to step in as the alleged Native American parents. After the adoption is finalized, Taylor drives them to another secret shelter in Oklahoma; the book ends with mother and daughter on the road back

to Tucson and the happy prospects of an accomplished quest for a new home.

In *Pigs in Heaven*, the first-person narration of *The Bean Trees* changes to a multiperspectival third-person narration, corresponding to the novel's emphasis on personal and cultural conflict rather than on the *bildungsroman*-esque development of Taylor from an adolescent loner into a community-oriented female adult.[27] Three years later, Taylor and six-year old Turtle are on another road trip, this time recreational; while this journey also functions as a safe womb-space of mother-daughter-bonding, its aftermath starts a bulk of legal problems which set the agenda for a road trip that will only come to a halt at the very end of the novel. At Hoover dam, Turtle witnesses how a mentally handicapped man jumps into the spillway and alerts Taylor, thus saving the man's life. When Oprah Winfrey invites Taylor and Turtle to a show on children who have saved lives, Turtle is recognized as Cherokee and brought to the attention of Annawake Fourkiller, a young Cherokee lawyer who works for the Nation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. She immediately doubts the legality of the adoption, knowing that the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 grants Native American tribes sovereignty over adoption processes where their children are involved (84). Annawake visits Taylor and supplicates that the child should grow up among the Cherokee, but Taylor is frightened of losing Turtle and runs away once more, this time from the new home in Tucson and her partner Jax. Her mother Alice, fleeing from another dissatisfying marriage and worried about Taylor, briefly joins them on the road but then decides to intervene on her daughter's behalf. While Taylor struggles to make a living in Washington State, Alice visits her cousin Sugar in Heaven, Oklahoma, who married into the Cherokee tribe and knows Annawake. In the meantime, Annawake believes she has identified Turtle as the child of tribal member Cash Stillwater's deceased daughter; her sister and her abusive (Anglo) boyfriend took

[27] The genderedness of the concept of the loner in U.S. culture and its resignification in *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* is examined by Loretta Martin Murrey, who argues that "[f]emale characters in American literature often move away from and back to the community and, to a larger extent than male characters, seem to be linked to previous or future families" (1994: 156); thus, the traditional role of women as domestic caretakers and mothers often qualifies their escape stories.

Turtle in after the mother's death. The young lawyer, trying to solve the situation by also taking Taylor's perspective into account, also acts as matchmaker between Alice and Cash, who promptly fall in love. Living with the Cherokee and learning of a history of ethnic oppression, Alice slowly starts to adopt Annawake's and the tribe's point of view and convinces Taylor to settle the case. Once in Oklahoma, Turtle recognizes her grandfather and a compromise is reached by the joint custody assigned to Cash and Taylor; in a Ceres-Pluto arrangement, Turtle/Proserpina will live with Taylor and Jax in Tucson and spend summers with her grandfather and grandmother on Cherokee grounds (Martin Murrey 1994: 159).

As Deborah Clarke states in her essay "Domesticating the Car: Women's Road Trips", Kingsolver's road novels, written in colorful idiomatic language and rich in metaphors,[28] "unsettle the masculine boundaries of automobile culture" (2004: 116) – not simply because Taylor learns to drive a push-start wreck and to change and repair tires (a feat given her traumatization by an exploding tire in her childhood), but because she uses the car for her "own exertion of will in renaming and re-locating herself" (ibid. 117). Clarke reads *The Bean Trees* as exemplary in depicting how women's fiction has appropriated the car as a domestic space, representing women with children on the road and thus transforming the idealized quest for freedom:

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[28] These are often drawn from Kingsolver's professional background as a biologist (cf. Epstein): the title of *The Bean Trees*, for instance refers to the wisteria vine, a bean plant whose characteristics are its endurance under harsh environmental circumstances and great skills for adaptation due to its symbiotic relationship with rhizobia; a Chinese-American grocer gave seeds to Mattie, who planted them in her Tucson backyard. The plant seems to be a symbol for Turtle's tortured life and her persistence in a symbiotic, nurturing relationship with her adopted mother; but as "bean" is Turtle's first word, later extended to "humbean" for "human being", it also suggests "the organic continuum of all living things" (Rubenstein 56). *Pigs in Heaven*'s title refers to the Cherokee term for the Pleiades, disihgwa, the Six Pigs in Heaven (cf. 87), based on one version of a mythical story of six boys who value themselves more than the community and get punished by being transformed into pigs; the seventh star of the Pleiades, in Annawake's interpretation, is the mother who regrets her punishment and abides by her boys. The title is programmatic, in that the book tries to find a middle road between Native American community values and Anglo-American individualism.

> Kingsolver tweaks women's traditional roles [as caregivers] without eradicating them. Cars may help to re-shape women's lives, but they do not radically transform them. The refugee subplot also foregrounds Kingsolver's awareness of the many forms of mobility and unsettles what may otherwise be read as a sentimental tale of female empowerment. [...] Kingsolver avoids an uncomplicated presentation of the road trip as the path to maturity and self-awareness that complements her realization of the limited power of automobility for women. (ibid. 119)

The road and the roadside are domesticated with a critical difference: domesticity, in Kingsolver's reformulation, which echoes Sharlene Baker's *Finding Signs*, does not imply stasis and confinement. Motels, for instance, are depicted as what Clarke calls a "domestic transit-place", a "serial domestic space that does not ground or confine" (2004: 120).[29] Taylor's quest seems predicated on the protagonist's very ability to domesticate the car and the journey, which also implies a revision of the public/private dichotomy on the one hand and the mythical westering rhetoric on the other. Here, the Southwest might be harsh in terms of environmental conditions, to which the texts frequently allude, but it nevertheless is transformed into an alternative, care giving and nurturing social space, the "matriarchal community" (cf. Martin Murrey's 1994 essay title) upheld by women like Mattie, Lou Anne, and Taylor herself.[30]

Arguably it is the protagonist's working-class background which positions her at a critical distance from bourgeois ideals of domesticity. Ruth L. Smith, who briefly discusses Kingsolver's work against the backdrop of a critical evaluation of the nexus of home and morality in

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[29] In this vein, Clarke also notes how the novel transforms conventional expectations about technology and nature: as Mattie's junk yard is used as a wild vegetable garden, it is the pastoral that infiltrates technology rather than vice versa (2004: 118).

[30] In this context, Roberta Rubenstein cites Taylor's stunned observation of a bird nesting in a hostile-looking cactus with ease (2001: 56 and Kingsolver 1988: 124), and of Taylor's fascination with the wisteria vine: "The organic world [...] offers a model for Taylor's moral growth [...]: the 'miracle' of mutuality and community that makes both home and attachment possible." (Rubenstein 2001: 58) On the power of women's networks in the book, see also Clarke (2004: 122).

Western philosophical traditions such as liberalism and phenomenology, claims that home

> [in Kingsolver] is not an innocent, sentimental place that stands as the polar opposite of alienation or that is dangerous because it can impinge on autonomy. Home is not an undifferentiated repository of the emotions, senses, and experiences that rationalism cannot incorporate. Rather, home is a place of complex activity; it is many places and never the only place. (1998: 189-90)

While *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* succeed in revising traditional middle-class ideals of home and the nuclear monocultural family, Kingsolver's fictional gender politics are not without problems. For one, it can be argued that her texts depict male characters as either absent or one-dimensional (cf. e.g. Epstein's [1996] criticism), but what hampers her alternative vision of motherhood more severely is the fact that she marries off both Alice and Taylor at the end of *Pigs in Heaven*, thus displacing the mother-daughter narrative by a traditional romance ending – and with romance, as I have argued in the preceding chapter, the road usually ends. Rather than abandon the heterosexual nuclear family, Kingsolver re-authorizes its normativity in the form of what one could call a multicultural fantasy of unions across cultural and ethnic difference (Jax Thibodeaux has Cajun roots; the Cherokee are traditionally clan- rather than nuclear-family oriented). Taylor concedes some of the maternal power established in the preceding novel for the sake of a traditional familial structure that is expected to create stability for her daughter; the permeability of family relations is substituted by the alleged permanence of the nuclear family, though unconventionally, nurturance is now the responsibility of more characters than just the adoptive mother (Novy 2005: 211-2). While *The Bean Trees* in fact explores the idea of the Tucson all-female community with no biological ties as an alternative, nurturing form of family, its sequel suggests that this form is too unstable for a child to grow up healthily – hence there is a major contradiction between the two texts.

Critics often find Kingsolver's work too obvious and complacent about its political agenda and have described it as "aggressively politically correct, yet fundamentally conservative" (Ryan 1995: 77) and as "low-fat fiction" (ibid.). However, Kingsolver's representation of Native America, I would argue, is neither obvious in its cultural implications nor politically correct. While Kathleen Godfrey has noted

her essentialist idealization, commodification, and *positive* exoticism of the Cherokee in the essay "Barbara Kingsolver's Cherokee Nation" (2001: 259), one has to add that Kingsolver also uses *negative* stereotypes in *The Bean Trees* that she tries to make up for – not entirely successfully – in its sequel.[31] Kingsolver herself admitted her ignorance of "a whole moral area when I wrote about this Native American kid being swept off the reservation and raised by a very loving white mother" (qtd. in Rubenstein 2001: 59). The texts are negligent of and insensitive to Cherokee culture in many other ways as well, not comprehending the system of qualification by way of the tribal rolls,[32] demographic facts ("as we drove east we saw fewer and fewer white people. Everybody and his mother-in-law was an Indian. All the children were Indian children, and the dogs looked like Indian dogs", Kingsolver 1988: 204), and the history of the Trail of Tears (in *Pigs in Heaven*); also, on the road through Oklahoma Taylor, Estevan, Esperanza and Turtle see a Cherokee policeman they do not take seriously because he is Native American: "[…] a police car came up behind us and we all got quiet and kept an eye out, as we had grown accustomed to doing, but when he passed us we just had to laugh. The cop was an Indian" (ibid. 204). *The Bean Trees* further suggests Turtle was sexually abused by her *Cherokee* relatives, who are not given a voice to speak for themselves at any point in this text. The Cherokee remain flat, inarticulate, and exoticized throughout the novel – one major reason for Kingsolver to write *Pigs in Heaven* was the author's objective

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31 This is of course not to be understood as a reproach against Kingsolver as an individual author. What is at stake here is the general ethical dilemma of how to represent the Other when it is impossible to move beyond hegemonic discourses pervading the dominant culture. As Godfrey states, *Pigs in Heaven* is thus only one example "of Anglo-authored texts about Native peoples that are tainted by hegemonic practices, reflecting contemporary America's ongoing difficulties reconciling itself to its ethnic diversity" (2001: 261). Following Godfrey, one also has to acknowledge Kingsolver's attempt to "create a multivocal text […] that conceives of American Indians as subjects" (ibid. 262) – however flawed it might be.

32 Alice's belief that one-eighth of 'Cherokee blood' is the basis for tribal enrolment is left uncommented (Kingsolver 1988: 13); the reader is thus not informed that the claim to Cherokee identity is predicated upon finding a relative in the tribal rolls.

to correct this picture (cf. Kingsolver qtd. in Rubenstein 2001: 59), perhaps in response to the criticism the book received.

In some respects the second novel accomplishes this task; however, *Pigs in Heaven* transfers the problematics of ethnic and cultural identity onto the Cherokee child rather than the central maternal figure of Taylor: although the reader learns early in *The Bean Trees* that Taylor herself has a Cherokee great-grandfather,[33] this legacy remains largely unacknowledged throughout *The Bean Trees* and in much of its sequel, despite its potential importance for the adoption case in *Pigs in Heaven.* When Annawake tells Taylor that Turtle, according to Cherokee law and worldview, must grow up among the Cherokee, this could have been a starting point for a different quest altogether – a quest for the protagonist's Native American legacy, foreshadowed in the *Bean Trees*,[34] which might have led to the erosion of seemingly irreducible cultural differences in terms of values of individuality, community, and family. Instead, the negotiation of multiple allegiances is displaced from the central narrative revolving around Taylor,[35] whose hostile and fearful emotions with regard to the Cherokee claims paradoxically trap her on the road (and in fact endanger Turtle's safety and well-being; she has to wait for hours in the car while her mother works because Taylor cannot afford a babysitter, 290). Taylor remains defensive, "resisting the implications of Annawake's beliefs concerning cultural identity and historical loss", as Roberta Rubenstein puts it (2001: 61), and agrees to the custody compromise

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33 On page 13, the reader learns that Alice, rather naively, has taught Taylor the Cherokee Nation was their "ace in the hole" and that if they "run out of luck [they] can always go live on the Cherokee Nation".

34 Taylor associates her Cherokee heritage with Turtle's in the first novel rather than its sequel, as Novy also mentions (2005: 192). Taylor explains early in the novel to a stranger that "[Turtle's] great-great grandpa was full-blooded Cherokee. […] On my side." (Kingsolver 1988: 71) It is also in *The Bean Trees* that Taylor reflects upon her own Cherokeeness when she first drives through Cherokee lands (15).

35 Even though Kingsolver's decision to employ varied perspectives in *Pigs in Heaven* tries to establish multiple narrative centers, the reader identifies with Taylor, whose story remains the main plot, also as a consequence of reading *The Bean Trees* before (cf. also Novy's [2005] reading) – though the second book does focus more on the daughter than the first.

for her own rather than her daughter's sake.[36] Taylor delimits herself from her multi-ethnic heritage by defining herself against the Cherokee throughout the books. Ruth L. Smith contends that "[e]ven though Taylor is part Cherokee herself, it is only in relation to the Nation that she begins systematically to see herself as a white person" (1998: 193), although her self-definition increasingly rests on rocky foundations as she realizes she "might not always know what is best" (ibid.).[37] Thus, the road's liberatory potential is compromised by moments of transdifference that arrest the main character in flight, as Taylor is unwilling to negotiate cultural difference. Similarly reluctant to take her own or her adopted daughter's multiple affiliations into account, Taylor clings to the womb-space of the road as if it were beyond the grasp of either patriarchy or cultural conflict – a belief the narrative ultimately cannot uphold.

The child herself, transplanted from one cultural environment to the other and only slowly learning and willing to speak, is too young and frail to negotiate these conflicting cultural allegiances. Moments of transdifference are inscribed in her mumbled narrative voice, which could be seen as a symbolic means to muffle such intrapersonal conflicts. One of the few transdifferential moments appears, for instance, when Turtle disassociates herself from her Cherokee heritage, telling her story as "[w]e had to run away from the Indians" (248) – sounding like the stereotypical white pioneer-child of the 19th century. The child is too young to understand these contradictions, and, most significantly, her adoptive mother makes no effort to explain their own 'Indianness'.

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[36] In contrast to Kristina Fagan's view of adoption as a utopian national fantasy in her reading of *Pigs in Heaven* that resolves cultural conflict in an all-too neat, personalized manner, Taylor's implicit dissociation from her Cherokee heritage, which I view as an important issue in the book, suggests that the national fantasy of cultural reconciliation rests on the culturally dominant group's agenda to ensure its own safety rather than on the genuine acknowledgment of cultural difference and the care for the well-being of future generations.

[37] It is necessary to note that Ruth L. Smith does not read the two books as problematic in terms of their larger implications regarding cultural and ethnic difference, but as evidence for complexity and uncertainty in terms of identity and allegiance (1998: 194).

Only Alice, Taylor's mother, sets out to explore her Native American ancestry by spending time at the reservation and learning about the tribe and her relatives. When she examines the tribal rolls with Sugar, who clearly functions as the mediator between White and Native, she tells Alice blood quantum is not important: "being Cherokee is more or less a mind-set" (Kingsolver 1993: 275). Alice's reaction upon finding her grandmother – instead of the Cherokee grandfather the reader remembers from *The Bean Trees* – in the tribal rolls reflects such a moment of instability: "Alice stares at the book of names. She can't put a finger on who, exactly, she feels she's cheating [...]. 'It doesn't feel right to me', she says. 'I always knew we were some little part Indian, but I never really thought it was blood enough to sign up.'" (Kingsolver 1993: 275) Another time, she tells Sugar she knows "'[...] we had the same grandmother [...]. But you're fogetting I'm not Indian.'" (270) Only when she participates in a stomp dance, related to the reader through Anglo eyes that enjoy what they believe to be an authentic experience of Cherokee culture – "music that sounds like the woods [...], [n]o artificial flavorings" (269) – is she initiated into her new tribal identity and feels "completely included" (271). In contrast to Alice's, Taylor's genetic connection to the Cherokee remains by and large unspoken and unexplored in the text.

It is indicative of Kingsolver's political agenda that her protagonist's quest for a new home, while it might be threatened by Native American laws, is endangered even more by the single mother's poverty. Despite working full time, Taylor can barely pay the rent and buy food: "it's not like getting into anywhere at all. It's working yourself for all you're worth to get ahead, and still going backward", she thinks (251) before realizing that she will not be able to continue a life in flight, separated from her supportive matriarchal community in Tucson (Martin Murrey 1994: 158). Existential threat is the reason why Taylor confronts the Cherokee claim to her daughter – rather than any understanding on her part of the necessity for her daughter to connect with her heritage. With the consent of the law, her quest is accomplished: the road's dynamic space is abandoned as soon as the mother-daughter relationship is legally sanctioned (cf. also Paes de Barros 2004: 114); the road as a womb-space, limited, as I have argued, in its potential as an alternative spatiality exactly because it rests on a displacement of cultural (trans)difference, is integrated into a normative socio-spatial order.

From this perspective, it is consistent with the logic of the narrative that *The Bean Trees* more firmly establishes an alternative vision of home and family, at the cost of a complex portrayal of Native America. In contrast, *Pigs in Heaven* 'legalizes' this alternative vision by introducing two father figures, yet manages to give a voice to the Cherokee, their history of expulsion, social situation, colonial and cultural conflicts, and tribal worldview[38] – a shift also recognized by Marianne Novy (2005: 188). In *The Bean Trees*, thus, the expansionist doctrine of Manifest Destiny remains largely intact: in order to accomplish her quest to claim new territory for femininity and motherhood beyond dominant patriarchal patterns of the nuclear family, Taylor has to 'win against the Indians' (cf. also Godfrey 2001: 275).[39] Whether Kingsolver is entirely successful in "suggesting the possibility of movement that is neither masculinist nor imperialist nor classist" (Clarke 2004: 121) is thus debatable. Though the texts embrace a multicultural, patchwork family closure, popular with many readers and critics, the structural confines of the quest west are oddly repeated.

By the end of the story, the idealized fantasy of a pre-oedipal womb-space of the road has to be abandoned, and heterosexual bonds are embraced as the novel has subtly expressed that mother and daughter are not sufficient to constitute a family (cf. 291 & 324; Novy 2005: 203 & 206); in Paes de Barros' words, "[t]he mother-daughter dyad of the road is ruptured; traveling, Turtle and Taylor bond solely

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[38] This history is not always presented accurately, however; the Trail of Tears is known to have taken place in an extremely harsh winter rather than in summer, as *Pigs in Heaven* has it (281).

[39] In his reading of Kingsolver's novels, Robert Brinkmeyer claims that *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* distance themselves from, rather than partake in, the frontier legacy: "Kingsolver revises the American dream of individual freedom into the dream of putting down roots, building families, and establishing communities. […] [She] suggests that the American experience of moving west has less to do with the dream of starting anew in a world of endless possibilities than it does with being a refugee, with being displaced." (2000: 98-9) He fails to take into account the price that Native Americans have had to pay for Anglos who have "put down roots" in the West as well as to understand that this settler mentality has been central for the powerful rhetoric of the frontier. His celebratory interpretation resembles Bob J. Frye's praise of Kingsolver in "Nuggets of Truth in the Southwest: Artful Humor and Realistic Craft in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*" (2001).

with each other but off the road they are embraced by the [...] paternal demands of heterosexual culture" (2004: 115).[40] When confronted with the moral dilemma of acknowledging cultural difference at the cost of personal loss, with Taylor's new motherhood as the catalyst, the success of Taylor's quest becomes questionable. As hard as Kingsolver's protagonist tries to "make this work here" (244), to "keep a roof over [her] own head" (246) and care for her child without the support of her partner and her community, Taylor is eventually integrated into the symbolic and spatial patriarchal order: "Surrender Dorothy", as one chapter is titled in reference to *The Wizard of Oz*.

4.4.3. Journey toward the Maternal, Quest for the Past: Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* and Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl*

Like Kingsolver's *Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*, Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* (1980, re-published by Random House in 2006) depicts a young woman as a surrogate mother-figure setting out to start a new life in the West. Similarly, Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl* (1996) centers on a mother-daughter-relationship on the road, although it leads east rather than west and toward the past before it continues into the future. With ethnic conflict displaced as a literary subject in both of these novels, they seem to opt for an 'easy way out' of the predicament of the U.S.-American quest narrative by focusing, almost exclusively, on the gradual evolvement of mother-daughter bonds; in tune with most quest-narratives of the early 1980s, (hetero)sexual relationships are structurally significant again in Wolitzer's novel (cf. Elliot 2000: 219). The two quest texts are analyzed in my study for their dissimilar literary strategies that lead them to establish alternative mother-daughter trajectories – and, in turn, alternative forms of the literary quest, countering prevailing myths of the open road to the west. In contrast to Wolitzer's novel, Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl*, the most recent of the four texts discussed in chapter 4.4., seems programmatic

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[40] Paes de Barros (2004) unfortunately neglects the issue of cultural conflict altogether and does not differentiate between Anglo paternalism and patriarchy and tribal society, itself a victim of white political paternalism; cf. also Craig (s.d.).

for its redirection of the quest, leading toward a coming-to-terms with the past rather than toward a future, tabula rasa-like destination.

Focusing on the relationship between Linda Reismann, a dance-instructor and widow at age 26 after only six weeks of marriage, and her adolescent stepdaughter Robin, *Hearts* is told in the third person from both the stepmother's and the stepdaughter's perspectives, which opens up the possibility for reader identification with both characters. The book follows Linda's and Robin's journey: from Linda learning to drive shortly before her husband dies in New Jersey (cf. 3-5 & 16; a fact that anticipates her growing independence, as Elliot claims [2000: 219]) to their arrival in California, when driving has become a form of dancing for Linda.[41] Ronald Primeau sees this depiction of automobility, together with the fact that the protagonists travel slowly, stop whenever they want, and reject straight trajectories as a "dramatic revision of male road symbols" (1996: 111-2); although Primeau thus simplistically affirms the notion of a dichotomous binary system of road symbolism, there is no doubt that Wolitzer's novel questions the road narrative's masculine legacy.

However, *Hearts* also interacts with, rather than just counteracts, this legacy. Drawing on the national fantasy of California as an Edenic h(e)aven, Linda is determined it is her "ultimate destination" (19):

> Her mother had spoken of going to California during her last years, "to get away from all this", with a vague gesture that might have included the house [...], the harshness of Northeastern winters, and the inexorable downward path of her life. *Everybody* wanted to go to California. Linda believed it was a migratory instinct, apart from the rational arguments for its good weather, geographical beauty, and glamorous movie industry. Yet she was excited by the idea of seeing palm trees and redwoods, the Pacific Ocean, and famous stars pushing shopping carts in those all-night supermarkets. And if happiness is to be found somewhere, isn't it likely to be at the furthest distance? She imagined herself driving in bluish evening light to the very edge of the coast, stopping short at a place where small waves would break at the Maverick's fenders. (19-20)

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41 The last sentence reads: "Linda's right foot pressed the accelerator and her left one was braced against the floor of the Maverick, but she believed she was dancing" (324).

Even natural disaster experts, who predict severe earthquakes in the state, cannot deter her from her destination (150). Significantly, it is her deceased mother who appropriated the national myth in the spatial and gendered context of a confining house and home and has bequeathed her dream of the west to Linda, who then tries to live her mother's fantasy. The myth of the Golden West thus appears not as exclusively masculine, but as the matrix of all sorts of American fantasies of escape. This legacy of an imaginary land of Cockaigne in the West, both national and maternal, provides her with a continual motivation to drive on: "Linda had a sudden desire to get away. She'd had enough, more than enough, of the survival of things. And she wanted to stay mobile, anyway, to keep moving toward her destination before California broke away from America and drifted off." (175) Linda's belief in California as offering a second chance in life is sustained also by singing along with the Mamas and the Papas' "California Dreamin" on the radio (149); further, she plans to start reading books (178), as well as swimming and jogging (217) – a healthy lifestyle she associates with the national culture: "It would be her initiation into the real America" (ibid.).[42]

In the beginning, Linda has no intention of including Robin in her projected new life. They are virtual strangers to each other and their relationship is nothing if not hostile and jealous, competing for the love of Dwight Reismann (cf. chapter three in the book). On the journey, as Linda, who plans to drop the girl off with her husband's relatives in Iowa, and Robin, a sullen, precocious thirteen-year old, share the closed spaces of cars and motel rooms, this reciprocal anger gradually dissolves. Cast together by these womb-like spaces that neither mother nor daughter-figure can ever fully control, the classical oedipal jealousy for the male love-object disappears – albeit with in-

[42] Linda's plans for a future in which she cares for herself rather than a husband and family are interpreted by Elliot, together with the importance of a non-marital sexual encounter during the road-trip, an adolescent girl prologue, and the representation of female friendship, as evidence that the book "subordinate[s] claims of female independence to the rhetoric of 'true self'" (2000: 204). The grounds on which her interpretation of *Hearts* is based remain unclear; as a matter of fact, Elliot contradicts her claim in a conclusive remark, arguing "[t]hat [Linda] turns down Wolfie is intended as further proof of her convictions, and that she has arrived at them independently" (ibid. 220).

terruptions (they compete for the attention of a hitchhiker they both find attractive, for instance) and temporary feelings of resentment. These tensions between (surrogate) mother and daughter and, from the maternal perspective, between escape from and commitment to responsibility, often result in phenomena of transdifference. This can be seen in Wolitzer's sarcastic tone, bitter-sweet metaphors and disturbing similes such as the following, when Linda and Robin's relationship is portrayed as a process resembling difficult peace negotiations between countries at war: "[i]t would be possible to part soon with some feeling of friendship [...], shaking hands warmly, perhaps even embracing, the way Begin and Sadat had done at the airport after the Mideast Peace Treaty was signed." (217) The narration swerves between being drawn back into the "striated space" of the oedipal triangle and moving toward an alternative, "smooth" space for mother and daughter. With the womb-like spaces they share forcing them to communicate and overcome their hostilities, however, they do not have to part but will stay together at the end of the book.

In *Hearts*, the communal space created by a shared road-adventure in cars and motels is the most important structural device that is highlighted as creating a bond between Linda and Robin, and thus also can be seen as 'feminizing' the road. Yet the road is also significant for Linda's growing attachment to Robin as a traditionally masculine space, as she recognizes her responsibility for her stepdaughter's physical safety, propelled by her own obsession with violence against women: "Whenever Linda read an article in the newspaper about the unidentified body of a young woman found in the woods somewhere, or dragged from a river, she felt a disturbing affinity." (37) Suspicious of the large number of hitchhikers they encounter, Linda projects her fear onto Robin:

> Linda knew better than to pick anyone up, no matter how innocent they might seem. In their newspaper photos, captured murderers and rapists didn't always appear sinister or different, either. [...] Not that she was worried so much about her own safety; she was too miserable by now to care. [...] But she was still responsible for Robin [...]. (70)

Clearly, this is a fear culturally conditioned by media reports, film, and literature (she refers to both Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* implicitly and *Bonnie and Clyde* explicitly, 155) as well as by Linda's personal experience of being stalked by a client (39). Even when they

meet Wolfie, a hitchhiker and pacifist who helps them change a flat tire (71) and shares his 'road wisdom' with them (74), this fear is not entirely overcome; through Wolfie's name alone, the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale – on which, in the introduction to this study, I have drawn as one of the earliest road stories with a female protagonist – is evoked.

Although after Wright Reismann's death, fathers are absent from both Robin's and Linda's life – Linda lost her own father when she was a teenager – father-figures are not absent on the road. From the truck-driver who draws their attention to their flat tire (cf. 70) to Wolfie and the pharmacist from whom Linda buys a pregnancy test (60), she seeks masculine approval as long as a bond with Robin is not established. Symbolic of paternal guidance, Linda also carries her deceased husband's ashes with her because she is unable to decide on an appropriate resting place.

As Linda soon finds out, another 'legacy' she struggles to leave behind is her pregnancy to her deceased husband, which she tries to terminate in an abortion clinic along the road – a plan which fails, as the clinic gets violently attacked by anti-abortion activists while Linda is waiting for her operation (cf. chapter seventeen; she realizes that the operation has failed only later). Rather than giving up her unborn child like Wright's ashes, she gradually embraces and ultimately accepts not only her unborn child but also her stepdaughter as her own.

As Linda finds out that Robin's unknown relatives in Iowa are selling their house and are not eager to care for Robin either (cf. chapter fourteen), her emergency plan is to leave the girl with her biological mother Miriam, who had abandoned her family when the daughter was little. When Robin learns where they are going, her anger at her biological mother manifests itself in a (rather child-like and unrealistic) plan to kill her and to pay her back for having been abandoned:

> They were finally on their way to Glendale, the last stage in Robin's journey toward her mother. Thoughts of her mother occupied her entirely now, driving out the still-fresh news of Linda's pregnancy. [...] [She] couldn't work up the fantasies she had found so comforting only yesterday. All she was left with were the grim probabilities of reality [...]. That woman who had gone away eight years before would be a stranger because eight years had happened and because she had chosen to go. But she would still be Robin's mother, the one who had given birth to her and, before that, carried her everywhere in the shel-

> tering ark of her body. Robin, who was set now to reject *her*, to turn away a belated appeal of love with violence, wondered if she would get the chance. To be rejected twice was unthinkable. In all her dreams of their reunion, it was her mother who experienced joy, and Robin was closed in on that joy with the deadliness of her resolve. (297-8)

"Grim probabilities of reality" and the maternal "sheltering ark", "love" and "violence", dreams of rejection and reunion: Wolitzer creates a narrative space for Robin's feelings of transdifference at this point in the story – expressing her hurt and anger, but also her almost physical yearning for her mother, her literal af*filia*tion. While a differential dichotomous either/or-relationship of pre-oedipal connection on the one hand and oedipal rejection is not dissolved here, these binary positions begin to disintegrate as Robin approaches her biological mother geographically and thus physically. The co-presence of both a positive and a negative attitude toward her mother results in the oscillation of the mother/daughter difference.

When the two finally meet, however, the narrative focus briefly shifts to Miriam, who gets a voice to explain why she left her family and to relativize the 'good mother'/'bad mother' binary; Robin's thoughts are again marked by transdifferential ambivalence:

> "I know I'm not the best mother in the world, but I'm not the worst, either," Miriam said. "When I was there, we were very close [...]." Robin thought that *if her mother had never left she would have grown up listening to that laugh*, that it would have become as casual and familiar as a language. But now she despised its sound, its inappropriate punctuation of Miriam's narrative. Robin knew it was an evasive technique, that it replaced *the truth that could only be told through language*. (310; emphases mine)

Significantly, "the truth", which in Robin's view can only be communicated in the symbolic realm, refers to the girl's negative vision of the mother who left her when she was a child; the daughterly truth, if negligent of the maternal perspective, can only correspond to the standard oedipal rejection once the realm of the 'unspeakable' is left behind. However, the text continues to create narrative space for the mother as Miriam's voice goes on to explain why she left: paradoxically echoing Robin's negative image of the mother role, Miriam declares that she did not want to become like her mother, who "stayed at

home and made everybody miserable", "missed her chance in life [so] she wanted everybody else to miss theirs" (310). Married and with a baby at age 21, Miriam realized "I might as well have been back with my mother; you know, trapped, and being good" (311) and thus left. Both Linda (and the reader perhaps, too) sympathize with Miriam, but although Miriam eventually does connect with Robin on both an emotional and physical level – Robin almost falls asleep and "lose[s] her fierce and precious guard" (312) – and asks Linda to let her daughter stay, Robin refuses reconciliation. Although she abandons her murderous plan, the mother-daughter-(trans)difference is not entirely obliterated or translated into familial harmony. Eventually, Linda and Miriam accept Robin's decision, and the meeting between biological mother and daughter becomes the turning point of the novel, after which Robin, little by little, begins to embrace her new, surrogate mother. Thus, the negotiations between Robin and Miriam appear to be crucial for Robin to be able to accept other maternal bonds and, consequently, for the narrative to uphold an alternative mother-daughter spatiality. It becomes clear they will stay together:

> [Linda] took the girl's arm and led her into the living room. Robin was like the victim of a street accident, a hit-and-run. There was no blood or other evidence of injury, but she seemed to be in shock, and who knew what damage was unseen. [...] "It's all right," she repeated. "Nobody will make you stay. I'll take you with me." "You don't have to," Robin muttered. "I know that, Robin," Linda said. "I want to." (315)

Back on the road approaching California, Linda and Robin bury Wright Reismann's ashes in the woods together (318-21), a ritual that strengthens their bond and suggests an ultimate escape from patriarchal control.[43] It is similarly significant that when Linda falls in love and sleeps with Wolfie, a hitchhiker, earlier in the story, she decides to leave him despite of his offer to take care of her, Robin, and the ba-

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[43] Similar in structure, another such ritual is performed when Robin offers to share her last joint with Linda (285-8). In this episode, the mother-daughter roles are reversed, as it is Robin who initiates Linda into the drug experience and tries to console her exhausted stepmother, sad after breaking up with Wolfie. Linda, in turn, "accept[s] with ease their reversal of roles", which makes Robin feel "a sense of power [that] led to a reckless generosity" (287).

by (269). In chapter ten, this turn in the plot is foreshadowed after Wolfie leaves for the first time (they will pick him up again later on): Linda and Robin become closer for the first time, leaving the jealousy that had arisen because both young women felt attracted to Wolfie, in a repetition of their relationship to Wright, temporarily behind. Spatial relations mirror this development: "When they were ready to leave again, [Robin] climbed into the front seat next to Linda, for the first time since they'd left New Jersey." (78) The chapter ends, and chapter eleven notably begins with Linda and Robin descending into Hidden River Caverns in Ohio, a womb-like space characterized by "dampness" and "physical closeness" (79).

Linda decides for a family without father upon arriving in California,[44] where she naively believes "if you feel like having a snack in the middle of the night, you just go out and get it" (323). Like the pioneers she remembers, "[a]lthough they couldn't tell when they crossed into another state" (322), she and Linda, the narrative makes clear, have crossed into another "state" in the course of their journey as well. Their relationship progresses from hostility to maternal and daughterly affection, literally over Dwight's dead body. Thus, Wolitzer's novel re-writes rather than repudiates the mythical journey west as a movement not from civilization to wilderness, but from patriarchal to matrifocal homes without predication on biological ties.[45] Correspondingly, it is only on this last stretch of the road that Linda realizes her feelings for her stepdaughter:

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[44] Linda's memory of the troubled relationship with her own abusive father (e.g. 207) can be read as contributing to this decision: "If Linda had been a man of draft age when her father was still alive, she believed she would have gone off without protest to whatever war they happened to be waging, in a last-ditch effort to please him. And she would have been killed, probably, because nothing less would really have done it." (75) Linda's development culminates in abandoning this desire to please various male love-objects.

[45] The fact that Linda's abortion is unsuccessful, however, clearly does affirm biological mother-child ties as well. Though Wolitzer sympathizes with women's reproductive rights in a Random House interview and with the feminist movement in an interview with Aruna Sitesh, it is in fact the attack on the abortion clinic that makes Linda's future patchwork family possible, as it is her pregnancy which makes Robin regard her as a potential mother for the first time.

> Why am I talking so much, Linda wondered, and decided it was to avoid *speaking the unspeakable* [my emphasis]. It was because she could not say aloud that she was *bound* to Robin, that you can become a family by the grace of accident and will, that we have a duty to console one another as best we can. [...] Linda thought that she had outgrown some of that despised sentimentality, and would become tougher and more disenchanted as she went along. Finally she would be old and tired of everything, and ready to face death with resignation, if not courage. But then someone would probably come in at the last minute [...]. And Linda would want more, the way she did now. [...] Linda looked up and found Robin looking back, her eyes alive with tears.
> "We're here!" Robin said, and they were. (323-4)

Although motherly love is associated with the "unspeakable" ties between mother and child here, echoing psychoanalytic accounts of the pre-oedipal stage, the scenario Wolitzer develops at the end of the novel does not imply a regressive development of either Linda or Robin. Instead, their story follows the classical progressive narrative of the quest, albeit a quest that is not about conquering and taming, but about overcoming familial trauma, personal crisis, and oppressive relationships by way of mutual support and friendship, which also always leaves room for more ambivalent emotions. This revision of the mother-daughter plot even reverberates with Linda's attitude toward her own pregnancy, which is similarly ambivalent.

The quest is thus also a quest for alternative domestic arrangements beyond the nuclear family. It is no coincidence that Wolitzer states in a recent interview she had "been thinking a lot about domestic life" while writing *Hearts*: "I wondered what truly binds people together for good, and if you can form a solid family without a blood relationship" (Random House interview) – a question her novel certainly answers in the affirmative. All in all, Wolitzer's novel is thus more successful than Kingsolver's texts in feminizing both the car and the road as womb-space, but like Kingsolver's, it affirms rather than repudiates the legacy of the quest west.

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Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* resembles Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* by transforming the road-quest into a quest for the maternal from the point of view of protagonists who are in the process of

becoming social (rather than biological) mothers. Contested in their role by both their surrogate daughters and their social surroundings, the main characters struggle for a coming-to-terms with the maternal. By looking at Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl: A Road Trip across the American Generations* (1996), I am now turning to *biological* mother-daughter relations, asking how a road quest can re-signify these 'natural' relations as socially constructed and changeable. Both mother and daughter interact with each other in order to create a dynamic shared space on the road; the maternal eventually emerges not as a universal, uncontested 'given', but as the outcome of a process of negotiating (trans)difference. The notion that biological factors are enough to establish an eternal bond between the two main characters is contested in this novel, as its focus is on shared (hi-)stories the daughter tries to understand, to reflect on critically, and thus to appropriate as her heritage. At the same time, *Dharma Girl* is significant for the U.S.-American quest narrative in that it abandons the idea of the West as the quintessential place of new beginnings, thus shedding the cultural baggage of empire-building and westward expansion. Instead of privileging the notion of progress and futurity, Cain's autobiographical book has a daughter and her biological mother embark on a quest for their family's past.

In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida argues for heritage to be understood not as a given, received passively (1994: 54), but rather as having to be actively acquired, selected from a multitude of heritages, since heritage is always heterogeneous (ibid. 16); "never one with itself"; "[i]ts presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*" (ibid.). Of course, a multiple inheritance is constituted not only by a variety of personal heritages and lineages, but also by the collective legacies within a specific cultural framework, the legacies – yet also "the weight" – of generations. What is at stake, then, is the critical reception of the personal and cultural past, vital, according to Derrida, for human existence: "*[t]o be* [...] means [...] to inherit. All the questions on the subject of being or of what is to be (or not to be) are questions of inheritance." (54) The act of inheriting, in this view, is a creative narrative act that filters out, adopts, and dismisses certain aspects while emphasizing others. This "principle of selectivity" (87) is always already an act of both inclusion and exclusion. From this perspective, Cain's decision to write her quest narrative in the form of a mother-daughter road trip is highly

significant. Tracing the stories of her childhood in an Iowa commune, the narrator-protagonist-cum-implied-author, Chelsea Cain, seeks to come to terms with her past as well as her present in the context of the cultural and social contexts of the late 1960s and the 1990s:

> this had gotten to be about more than just me. What I was trying to uncover involved my parents and the core values of the culture I was living in. It was about seeing if any of the old lessons I had learned were still relevant. It was about finding some alternative to spending two hours a day sucking down espresso drinks at Starbucks. (30)

Growing up in a hippie commune with a father trying to evade the draft (29) and an unconventional, free-spirited, loving mother, Chelsea rejected this countercultural legacy as a young adult, changing her name from Chelsea Snow (her parents wanted her to have her own last name) to Chelsea Elizabeth Cain (her mother's last name, 5), hiding her past from her friends (ibid.), and championing conformism, such as "a look that took her four years to cultivate, although it is exactly the same as everyone else's […], which was, of course, the point" (6). Studying at the University of California at Irvine, she is confronted with the news of her mother's cancer and becomes restless and depressed. The book starts with the narrator looking back to this moment in her life:

> June 1995. I have been walking a lot lately. It is an odd compulsion. I leave my apartment. I start walking. I have no idea where I'm going. […] [S]ometimes, I will walk and walk, and not recognize anything at all.
> […] I want to understand who we all were. Who we are.
> It is, I think, the reason why I walk. (3-4)

Confronted with the "meaninglessness" (26 & 27) she sees in both her personal life ("I was twenty years old, living off my college loans, not learning anything, owned about nineteen baseball caps from the Gap and had absolutely no plans for the future", 25) as well as in her generation "of dull-eyed, slack-mouthed losers" (ibid.) – thus also the book's subtitle – her restless wanderings soon obtain direction. Convinced that she will "find *something*" (19) in her past to root her in the present and that she will "run into herself" (7) by going back to her childhood, Chelsea becomes a "psychonaut – a voyager into the soul" (ibid.) at the end of the prologue: "[…] [I]n order to find herself, she

first has to create a self to identify. She has to tell the story. […] She has to see if she can find what she has lost track of, before she can go on to anything else." (7) From the beginning, then, the self is a conscious narrative creation in the book, which has to start with the past before it can point to the future.

In her quest for her roots, the protagonist decides to re-settle in Iowa and to turn her moving away into a road trip with her mother, as going back in terms of time and space, for Chelsea, also entails renegotiating the mother-daughter relationship. The Sixties are important for her, she explains, not out of nostalgic longing and backwardness,[46] but because "those years were my connection to that woman sitting on the grassy hill next to my father [in a photograph]" (28), the woman whose life she now sees endangered by cancer.

However, traveling with the mother in *Dharma Girl* is not, in psychoanalytic terms, a return to the maternal womb in which mother and daughter are one again and difference is erased. The spatial-geographical return does not entail regressive fantasies of an idealized pre-Oedipal, 'natural' bond. To the contrary; sharing the closed, narrow space of the car and spending days on end with each other, the road is depicted as highlighting difference:

> This is what it's like traveling with my mother. She is a Buddhist and wants to "experience the place". I am an atheist and want to find the nearest, cheapest lodge with coffee, where I can sleep eight hours and then get back on the road. This slight difference in priorities has led to some discomfort in the past. My mother passes rest stops and wants to rest. I'd rather not make more than one stop per state. My mother gets hungry and wants to find a restaurant she likes and eat, I get hungry and want to go through a drive-through the next time we stop for gas. But this trip has been different. I think we have both been so lost in our own thoughts, that worrying about details – not to mention chit-chat – has seemed incidental. That sort of thing is for tourists. We are travelers. (35)

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46 This does not mean there is no Sixties nostalgia in *Dharma Girl*. It is perhaps most obvious when Chelsea, in an inner monologue, asks her parents to "[t]ell me about evading the draft. Tell me about running away to Mexico. Tell me" and in the next sentence mistakes the seriousness of draft evasion for "freedom" and "adventures" (29); on the same page, she says she "wanted to roll naked in the mud at Woodstock or protest something, anything".

Whereas tourism, it is implied, is about outward appearances, physical surroundings and concerns, mother and daughter are travelers into their own minds. Inspired by a light-hearted interest in Buddhism that her mother is much more serious about, Chelsea becomes a "dharma girl", a seeker on "the path to knowledge or something" (19); it is no coincidence that, reversing the future-oriented American quest pattern headed west, mother and daughter are going east, the direction of Buddhism's origins as well as their own: "Toward Iowa. Toward Snowbird. […] We weren't just returning. We were voyaging, passaging and pilgrimaging." (19) Recalling her nickname as a little girl, Snowbird, Chelsea wants to seek the help of her old self as well as of her guardian angel, "spirit guide" and "*bodhisattva*" (20), the Snowqueen, a figure invented by her mother when Chelsea was a little girl.

As Deborah Paes de Barros has noted, the *dharma* of the book's title is also, in the context of the road genre, a direct reference to Kerouac's *Dharma Bums*, reminding the reader, she contends, "of the fact women were largely excluded from Jack Kerouac's homosocial space" (2004: 97); unlike Kerouac's literary characters, the road takes Cain's protagonist "not […] to rugged individualism and separation, but […] toward fulfillment, community and attachment between mothers and daughters" (96). Not only is de Barros' reading of Beat literature somewhat simplistic; she also constructs a questionable opposition between *The Dharma Bums* and Cain's novel rather than a continuum. Cain's book indeed resonates with Kerouac's and other Beat poets' fascination with eastern spirituality, e.g. by casting the geographical journey as always also an inward journey, leading Chelsea "into her own psychic landscape" (Paes de Barros 2004: 97).

This juxtaposition of geographical movement and inner quest is reflected also in the novel's narrative structure. Written as a memoir of certain moments in Chelsea's life – from her earliest childhood, the time after moving away from the commune and the split-up of her parents, to the move to the West Coast and Irvine and finally back to Iowa – it is told mainly in first person, including a number of interior monologues. It is significant that Snowbird, the protagonist as a child, appears as a split character in dialogue with the adult protagonist, emphasizing how Chelsea has tried to evade the integration of her childlike self into her current identity, a means of repression to escape transdifferent tension between multiple generational and (counter-) cultural affiliations. This tension, which relates both to the intraper-

sonal (her attempt to get rid of her former, girlhood self) and the interpersonal (disconnecting herself from her parents and their legacy) levels – is activated and erupts when her mother's life is endangered, the point when Chelsea and Snowbird begin a dialogic narrative.[47] The structure suggests that if Chelsea's mother passes away before Chelsea has revisited her family history, the latter will lose every connection to the former and her family's past and will never again have the chance to find out about it; such is the logic of her quest for the past in order to make the future possible. Without erasing the difference between past and present, Chelsea recognizes she is still connected to Snowbird:

> I am sitting on the bed remembering […] when Snowbird comes in. Her wild blonde hair is wilder than usual and her red dress is dirty. She sees me and stands in the doorway on the sides of her feet, the way that I still do sometimes. […] "It's me," I tell her. "I've come back to help you look for berries." (70)

Snowbird becomes an important helper-figure in Chelsea's quest for the past – her search for the "berries" she collected with her mother when she was a child. Yet the narrative does not depict a strictly linear development in the process of integrating this former self into the narrator's present (Paes de Barros 2004: 99); once, for example, when Snowbird haunts Chelsea as a spectral figure, following the car in a red station wagon and then passing it, they fail to connect: "In the second it flies by I catch a glimpse of Snowbird in the passenger seat. She is looking through a red plastic viewfinder and doesn't see me. I glance toward my mother, who is asleep, and then back toward the station wagon, which is quickly disappearing." (81)

A number of elements signify Chelsea's active embrace of her legacy: remembering and narrating childhood episodes, looking at old photos and asking questions about life in the pastoral idyll of the commune, and visiting important sites of this time as well as the town where her family of German settlers established their first home in the

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47 On transdifference as a generational phenomenon, cf. Ralf Schneider's essay "Literary Childhoods and the Blending of Conceptual Spaces. Transdifference and the Other in Ourselves" (2006).

United States (cf. chapter fourteen);[48] and, on a culturally collective level, trying to grasp the turmoil of the Sixties and the hippie 'project' as well as recognizing the parallel reality of social, political, and ecological problems in the United States of the 1990s (cf. ch. eight). Most importantly, though, is Chelsea's re-establishment of the connection, physical and psychological, with her mother. As Paes de Barros observes, "[t]o locate that lost girl of the past, Chelsea has to find her mother, a woman once revered as the 'Snowqueen' " (2004: 98).

It is the time on the road together with her mother that creates a communal space in which Chelsea can reflect upon her mother's background and history (cf. chapters seven & sixteen), recognizing her spirituality ("her freedom and spontaneity come from a very serious place within that says, incessantly, quietly, this: be today, because you have it, and you might not have it tomorrow", 48) but also how this active spirituality was changed by the harsh reality of raising a kid as a single working mom (after splitting up with Chelsea's father): "She did not have space in her head to consider taking an afternoon off and bicycling hard downhill just for the hell of it." (ibid.) Cancer changed her mother back into the "free spirit" (ibid.) of her young adult years; she moves again and plans to travel in Mexico, where Chelsea will later visit her (166-7). Revaluing the roots of her political activism and her philosophy of life, Chelsea actively embraces her mother's legacy: "Now it is my turn to try to live by [my mother's] example: Starting with this trip back to Iowa, from here on in, I am going to exist in the moment, to Be Here Now" (51); further, she resolves to become politically engaged for the same reason. Gradually approaching her childhood home, the protagonist thus revalues the maternal by contextualizing her mother's story both historically and geographically.

Revisiting the commune in remembrance and approaching it physically, Chelsea also approximates a heterotopic space as defined largely by the women inhabiting the commune (Paes de Barros 2004: 99), as well as by the nurturing activities, shared by men and women

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[48] That the critical evaluation of Cain's family's "pioneer" (87) legacy remains a minor issue in the book is perhaps a result of the genderedness of this legacy: it was the great-great-great-grandfather who went west during the Civil War (88), built a house and founded the family.

alike, of gardening and cooking, supporting each other in a community that functions like a loving surrogate family.[49] In this pastoral community, nurturance was not at odds with decay; instead, her mother explains death to the little girl as an integral part of the natural cycle (ibid. & 79). Arriving in Iowa, Chelsea becomes aware of how both her mother's physical beauty and her frailty (120-1) are one. Remembering how she buried a doll and dead birds when she was a girl (77-8), the adult Chelsea loses her fear of death when her mother, diagnosed with metastases that will most probably claim her life, tells her shortly after the completion of their road trip that she lives without fear and regret (169). Chelsea, threatened by the continuation of her mother's mutating cells in her own body, has to remind herself not to let her life be governed by the constant fear of death: "So I think about what is important. About how I want to be. About those summer nights on the farm and my mother and how the Snowqueen always said she would watch over me. And I think about living" (ibid.).

One material reminder of maternal wisdom is a drawing of the corn goddess by her mother which Chelsea keeps over her desk. On the road, mother and daughter have shared a journal in which they portrayed each other visually and verbally, e.g. by writing down funny sayings and anything they found memorable during their trip. Retrospectively, the notebook, for Chelsea, "tells a story" (153) – the story of the reunion of Snowbird and her mother, the Snowqueen, the benign corn goddess that remains the daughter's spiritual guide. "By the end of the text", Paes de Barros states, "Chelsea's mother is once again installed as the Snowqueen, and Chelsea has reclaimed her name." (2004: 101) In the epilogue of *Dharma Girl*, Chelsea reflects on how both she and her mother, on their respective journeys to Iowa and Mexico, have "both looked for, and found something, […] recovered the unrecoverable" (Cain 1996: 165). Now that both the fictionalized journeys and the narrative are drawing to a close, the roots narrative – a term coined by Rüdiger Kunow (2002) in the context of multicultural American literature in order to describe the journey of a culturally uprooted protagonist trying to recover his/her roots – is re-

[49] As Paes de Barros also notes, it is "patriarchy in the form of the law" that "intrudes upon and wrecks paradise" (2004: 100), with the FBI prosecuting Chelsea's father until he turns himself in.

versed and approaches what Kunow, in contradistinction, names the "routes narrative" – a more dynamic and open story focusing on the future rather than the past. This dichotomous separation is contested by Cain's text, as it is Chelsea's quest for the past, by way of the reunion with both her mother and her girlhood alter ego, which makes the integration of her girlhood possible in a way that Chelsea can move on into the future. Her name is Chelsea Snow once more (166), and she has yet again taken to walking, this time, however, not out of an escapist restlessness, but for the pleasure movement can bring. The last memory of her childhood presented to the reader is when her mother took Chelsea on a night-drive to enjoy, just the two of them, the natural phenomenon of the harvest moon, which they finally discover just "[b]ecause we had gone looking for it. Because we had driven into the dark, trusting the experience. Because [my mother] kept driving." (170) This is what Chelsea vows to continue:

> So I walk. And I remember. As I tap my umbrella against the pavement, I feel I am moving forward. I am learning. Do I know anything more about the universe than when I started out? No. […] [But] I know this:
> *I am still a product of this place*. And as I go out into the big world to hunt for berries, it is with my parents' joy, cynicism, rage, revelry, hope, honesty, conviction and devastation. […] And it is with the knowledge that somehow I am still that blonde, little girl running naked through the vegetable garden.
> I am still Snowbird. (170-1)

As this paragraph succinctly suggests, forward movement is not inhibited by the baggage of the past but rather predicated upon its renegotiation. While *Dharma Girl* can thus be read as a quest for personal and cultural roots, it does not end in physical rootedness or psychological stasis. Cain's active appropriation of her legacy instead acts as an incentive for personal transformation as well as for social criticism of the *status quo* via the willingness to live with rather than repress intergenerational transdifference, as Chelsea becomes politically engaged and reflects on the consumer-capitalism of her present. In this way, the text also criticizes the repression of the past in the national narrative of progress, in which the American westward quest narrative is deeply ingrained. Unlike other quests, the text also makes use of the road trip in order to recover a broken connection *without erasing difference*, regressively idealizing the maternal, or privileging the daugh-

terly over the mother's perspective. Therefore, Cain's *Dharma Girl* not only "provides a lyrical account of how the road becomes the road back toward reconnection with the maternal" (Paes de Barros 2004: 98), but also fundamentally rewrites the quest narrative by creating the road as a dynamic space not of territorial discovery but of spiritual recovery.

4.5. Interstice: The Wandering Jewess – Anne Roiphe's *Long Division*

As Chelsea Cain's *Dharma Girl* demonstrates, seeking a road out of the oedipal triangle that prescribes certain norms of femininity can also work to transcend the limitations and cultural baggage of the quest formula. Yet there are also other possibilities for the expansion and revision this legacy: in what follows, I discuss Anne Roiphe's *Long Division* (1972) as a mother-daughter quest that is rewritten by the transdifferential tensions arising from multiple ethnic affiliations on the one hand and by making use of a different paradigm of mobility – nomadism – to counteract the goal- and achievement-oriented quest plot on the other. It is thus a text that is located in the interstice between the questing and the para-nomadic paradigm in contemporary women's road literature.

The changing relationships between mothers and daughters are a key theme not only in women's road novels, as I have argued in chapter 4.4., but also in contemporary Jewish American literature by women (cf. Janet Burstein's monograph *Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing the Maternal in Stories by American Jewish Women*, 1996). Janet Burstein notes that one endeavor of Jewish American women writers today is to "re-vision traditional imperatives by drawing the mother to the center of her own narrative" which is particularly important "in light of ethnic imperatives that both silence and subordinate mothers, relegating them to the margins of their husbands' and children's lives" (1996: 8). The cramped mother-daughter quarters depicted in Jewish women's literature – Vivian Gornick's *Fierce Attachments* (1983) is a case in point – are expanded via the

dynamic spatiality of the road in Anne Roiphe's *Long Division*.[50] That the mother is placed at the center of the novel can be read as a deliberate political stance which, as I have argued in 4.4.1., was not the norm in the 1970s, a time when many second-wave feminists vented anger and disappointment about mothers they saw as complicit with the patriarchal establishment.

The mother-daughter connection is only one thematic focus, however, as *Long Division* also draws heavily and explicitly on the cultural archetype of the Wandering Jew, a Christian legend that, in its various versions, explains the 'eternal wanderings' of the Jewish people as a punishment inflicted on the Jerusalem shoemaker Ahasuerus for taunting Jesus on his way to Crucifixion (Maccoby 1986: 250). In numerous ways, the legend, which has inspired Western literature into the 20th century[51] as well as Jewish-American re-writings (Glazer 1997: 81), informs the protagonist's perception and production of space in Roiphe's road novel. Its ethnic and gendered spatiality, however, is as much constructed upon the novel's positive revision of the Wandering Jew by way of the nomadic as upon transdifferential tensions present throughout the narrative; furthermore, the fact that the protagonist is a single mother accompanied only by her little daughter on a cross-country trip lends itself to an interpretation emphasizing the narrative contestation of conservative Judaism's disregard of female mobility.[52]

The female road hero in *Long Division*, Emily Brimberg Johnson, is a middle-class Jewish woman from New York who sets out with her daughter Sarah, age ten, to drive to Juarez, Mexico, in order

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[50] See also the gender-specific Jewish immigrant experience from the shtetl to the "Promised Land" that Gisela Ecker describes in her essay "Einzug in das *Promised Land* oder *Lost in Translation*? Osteuropäische Jüdinnen auf dem Weg vom Shtetl zum American Dream" (1994).

[51] In Anglo-Saxon literature, the Wandering Jew appears most notably as a Romantic hero, as in Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner", Wordsworth's "Song for the Wandering Jew", and Shelley's "Queen Mab", but also in Kipling's "The Wandering Jew" and Joyce's *Ulysses*.

[52] Roiphe explicitly refers to this in *Generation without Memory* (1981: 148). The 'place of woman' in traditional Judaism also explains why so many activists in the second women's movement in the United States were Jewish women trying to change the status quo.

to obtain an immediate divorce from her husband Alex, an unfaithful gentile painter.[53] Rather than letting its protagonist passively wait for the official recognition of her freedom from unwanted marital ties, the text decides to render divorce a goal she can actively approach. Emily, who is also the first-person narrator of the novel, begins the story of her journey by venting her anger at her former spouse:

> What I'm doing in this car flying down these *screaming highways* is getting my tail to Juarez so I can legally rid myself of the crummy son-of-a-bitch who promised me a tomorrow like a yummy fruitcake and delivered instead wilted lettuce, rotted cucumber, a garbage of a life. *I'm not going gently into this divorce*, but yelling and kicking all the way with blood and skin under my fingernails and hate balled up inside like a gallstone fouling up my vital functions. (7; my emphasis)

Her fury at this marriage, evoking Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good-Night", and the pain of confronting her personal past are Emily's steady companions on the "screaming highways" of her journey. Yet it is that same anger that also incites reflections on the meaning of being a Jewish-American woman that are eventually vital for Emily's escape from negativity and bitterness.

Along the way to Mexico, Emily and Sarah encounter all kinds of cultural archetypes of the 1970s: told in episodes that are at times surreal and farcical, the narrative depicts the main characters together with unsympathetic tourist families at the Pennsylvania Hershey factory (13-24) and hitchhiking Jesus freaks (35-55), getting lost in a poor African-American ghetto in Indiana (98-103) and in a bizarre retirees'

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53 Unlike Evelyn Gross Avery, I do not read Emily's journey as a running away for a "quickie divorce" (1980: 50), since it appears that at least the emotional separation between her and her husband has gone on for some time. While it is true that the novel implies that Emily goes to Mexico because divorces are less bureaucratic there, it is not a spontaneous separation Emily describes, but a long and tiresome division. Avery's reading of *Long Division* is generally a little harsh. She states, for example, that the novel depicts the journey of "an insecure, self-destructive third generation Jewish-American woman. Terrified of living, she blames her inadequacies on family and heritage." (50) Though Emily might be bitter (as anyone going through a divorce might be), she is taking control over her own future by setting out on the road. Of course, this act of taking control does not constitute an overnight, clear-cut caesura in Emily's life, but a non-linear process that is at times painful and includes self-doubt as well as blaming others.

trailer park (named “Settlement Tomorrow”) in Texas, whose inhabitants try to hold Emily and her daughter captive (131-66). As singular as they might be, every one of these (and other similarly surreal) episodes contributes towards the expression of Emily’s multiple alienations from both the mainstream and the countercultural American landscape of the early 1970s. At the Hershey factory, for instance, Emily is immediately singled out as deviating from the norm of the nuclear family:

> The other families were staring at me peculiarly; a certain hostility was clear. I was the only parent alone with a child. […] Like an unnatural mutation, I felt awkward in the normal universe. Like a pilloried adultress, or a stockaded petty thief, I felt exposed, my vulnerable pants pinned down. (17)

In the universe of early 1970s’ family tourism, Emily clearly stands out as alien, an “unnatural mutation” of the norm, implicitly convicted of adultery and immorality because she is without a husband. Emily feels “awkward”, “exposed”, and “vulnerable”: in other words, totally out of place. Her deviance from the norm further estranges Emily from “feeling-at-home in America”, initially her second motive for embarking on this cross-country trip. The same feeling occurs when passing the 4-H Club Headquarters:[54] Emily thinks of taking a tour, “but felt out of place in such a wholesome grouping. Grass-roots Americans might not welcome a divorcée from New York of immigrant stock.” (69) The narrator-protagonist implicitly knows that her Jewish legacy – “I’m only an American until they decide to move again – cremating, gassing, crating in boxcars” (8) – warns her from attaching too closely to land- and/or nation-scapes, to any soil that the 4-H Club is so keen on cultivating. Her personal quest for the future, for starting over “into new orbits” (29), makes her wonder whether “everyone else” was “nicely screwed down in one place or another” (ibid.) – an idea she first envies, but later on strongly detests.

54 An organization sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture chiefly to instruct young people in modern farming methods and other useful skills, so-called from the aim of the organization to improve head, heart, hands, and health.

"Daughters of Refugees of the Ongoing-Universal-Endless Upheaval"

From the very beginning, it is clear that her cross-country trip, "this sad journey to end the past" (8), has little to do with untrammeled wanderlust. Nevertheless, the quest paradigm is apparent every time Emily expresses an adventurous hunger for the open road that is laden with the promise of a better future, hinged on the imaginary reversal of the gendered romance of the masculine suitor and the feminine love-object: "I will go dragonslaying […] and bring back the hand of a new Prince." (10) To a certain extent, the protagonist relies on the road's mythical promise to make a clean break, start anew, and find freedom in overcoming the past (cf. 170, 183, 190). Freedom, for Emily, also implies freedom of social control, of "the eyes of friends and acquaintances off my back" (10). For the most part, of course, these promises turn out to be illusionary, as mere parts of a masculine myth that veils both its whiteness and its genderedness. On the road, Emily finds out, social control is as prevalent as in the protagonist's city environs, although varying according to geographical location and changing in scope and form. Sometimes it is merely the stares she receives, as in the Hershey factory episode, and sometimes it is her own concern for "repercussions of [her] lost reputation" (108-9) that make her aware that the social spatiality she traverses hampers unfettered movement.

Still unaware of these mechanisms of social control on the road, Emily initially searches for a being-at-home in a country that has a long tradition of inhabiting Jewish refugees as well as of valuing social and geographical mobility. Soon, however, Emily finds herself alienated from the mythic American quest for a better life, realizing that the wide open spaces of the road are not at all hospitable, but accompanied by tension, conflict, and danger. As the novel continues, these experiences increasingly lead to an enhanced awareness of the protagonist's fragmentariness – as a mother with a feminist consciousness and as an ethnically 'invisible' American, privileged by class, yet oppressed by legacy. When Emily and Sarah visit a statue called "Madonna of the Trail", a monument in honor of American pioneer women journeying West, Emily feels connected to the travels of these brave women at first, but then the statue reminds her of her own purposelessness as a reflection of Jewish women's historical dislocation (Glazer 1997: 80). Emily remarks:

> I felt jealous of the stone statue whose life had had purpose, enemy and friend – not like mine, that of a wandering Jewess, covering the globe, belonging only peripherally to one culture or another […]. Perhaps contemporary Jewish women should form their own society, Daughters of Refugees of the Ongoing-Universal-Endless Upheaval. We could meet on boats […] and not allow anyone whose ancestors had lived in less than four countries to join. (71)[55]

Throughout the journey, Emily is haunted by a collective memory of socio-spatial deprivation of Jews in general and of her Jewish foremothers' lives in particular. "The pioneer story is not her story. Like the colonized, she experiences herself not as an agent of history", Miriyam Glazer asserts (1997: 81). As a Jewish woman, she is twice deprived of historical agency and thus feels victimized, like "[Job's wife], [her] sister of ancient times, Jewish and cursed – surely the next victim in God's metaphysical game in which [Emily] was not even a principal player" (18).[56]

Though Emily's initial declaration was to find freedom in movement, "something really new, another way" (8) and "a man to come and love me wild till I can give birth again to something or other" (ibid.), the trip soon leads to a confrontation with her heritage as a 'Wandering Jewess'. In this way, the conventionally individualized quest narrative is brought into dialogue with a collective legacy of para-nomadism, understood here not literally but as a form of continual displacement generated by economic and/or political pressures (cf. ch. five). The "long division" of Roiphe's title thus refers to more than the evident divisions between husband and wife and mother and daughter (cf. her narration of giving birth as "start[ing] this division", 173). From a socio-spatial perspective, the protagonist has to negotiate a legacy of homelessness, diaspora, and exile: an age-long division from the concept of a geographical home(land), which has created manifold

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55 In her non-fiction book *Generation without Memory: A Jewish Journey in Christian America* (1981), Roiphe writes that "Jews identify with boat people everywhere" (54); Glazer argues convincingly for Roiphe's use of the boat as beyond "the colonized land of masculinized consciousness" (1997: 84).

56 In her article on *Long Division*, Suzy Durruty analyzes the role of the many biblical women that Emily calls on thoroughly and thoughtfully, though I am not convinced by Durruty's conclusion that with the help of these figures, the protagonist is able to "mend" ("comblée") her initial divisions (1995: 205).

cultural affiliations and multiple divisions *within* Emily.[57] It is the U.S.-American road that catalyzes her awareness of many of these outer and inner divisions, "the cultural chasm between the […] Jewish and the WASP America" (Gross Avery 1980: 51); but as a public space that is heavily gendered, the road also confronts her with the physical and psychical inhibitions pertaining to "unprotected", "public" women, who are seen by "Jewish law" as nothing but "dangerous temptations to men", in the words of Cynthia Ozick (qtd. in Burstein 1996: 10).

Roiphe's female hero experiences a number of transdifferential moments, in which conflicting identifications collide. As an invisible ethnic Other and a woman alone on the road, Emily's journey is marked by a distinct ambiguity that concerns her personal feelings (such as toward her own heritage – cf. Gross Avery 1980: 50) as well as her relation to the space she is traversing. The roads she travels create conflicts of cultural as well as of personal belonging, taking Emily into geographical and social spaces completely alien to her thereby confronting her with her own socio-cultural dislocation as well as with a country that itself bears many divisions.[58] Discovering America on "an educational tour" (8) sparks the main character's critical awareness of the surrounding socio-historic landscape. Emily has vowed to

> tunnel like a mole through the mountains and the plains of this artificially inseminated country till I find down under the ground, forgotten by this nation of non-spelunkers, a treasure, a constitution, a declaration of independence, a liberty bell cracked but ringing […]. (ibid.)[59]

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57 For a similar view with regard to the book's title, see also Gross Avery (1980: 50), although she does not mention Emily's geographical divisions as an important aspect in the book.

58 In Ohio, Emily observes that "[t]he road was flat and straight, bisecting the empty land into two irreconcilable halves", 42; the same metaphor of bisection occurs on page 167. On a more personal level, the separation of the road by its middle line clearly reflects Emily's divorce: what has once been a shared path becomes split "into two irreconcilable halves" (42).

59 Like in Doris Betts' road novel *Heading West*, Roiphe frequently (and sometimes ironically) relates to the Declaration of Independence; see also the end of *Long Division* or Roiphe's novel *The Pursuit of Happiness*, a "richly atmospheric novel about the Jewish immigrant experience" (Steinberg 1993: 58).

That the United States is an “artificially inseminated country” built on the Anglo invasion of Native American territory and on legal documents which, to Emily, seem archival rather than effective, is a criticism recurrent throughout *Long Division* (e.g. 83, 112), especially in the episode in which Emily and Sarah visit a Cherokee reservation in Oklahoma (118-26). Seeing the poverty-stricken reservation grounds instead of the Hollywood Noble Savages Emily has been dreaming about,[60] the rulers of the country appear as

> despisers of those who are different, at odds, colored or poor – they always are in power, making plans for the others; they have all the strength, standing like Uncle Sam, straight and tall, smiling into the future, while we […] hover about the lips, searching […] a way to become American ourselves […]. The most we can hope for is to drive the righteous Mr. America crazy. (121-2)

Her awareness of “Mr. America[’s]” historical legacy of injustice on the one hand and the asylum he provided for Emily’s immigrant grandparents on the other (13) marks the protagonist’s undecidedness in her attitude toward the United States as her “homeland”, an ambivalence that, according to Jay Halio, “is recurrent throughout much of [Roiphe’s] published work and reflects the uncertainty that many American Jews of her generation experience” (1997: 98). Being the granddaughter of Jewish immigrants, the narrator identifies with any ethnic minority she encounters (e.g. Roiphe 1972: 113), yet as a well-situated woman indistinguishable from the ‘white’ majority, she also feels repelled, even guilty of oppression at times: “Here we were, representatives of the destroying race, cultural barbarians ourselves, killing the buffalo, killing the long night of Indian memory” (ibid. 119).

Blue and Red Is White

It is not only Emily’s attitude toward the United States that is ambiguous: her emotional landscape is just as confused. The confrontation with the multiple socioscapes of the United States, always within a

[60] The way Emily relates to Native Americans, African-Americans, and “gypsies” is indicative of the 1970s, when political correctness (especially in language) was not (yet) an issue.

certain geographical context, shapes Emily's moods throughout the book, instilling in her hope and despair, harmony and unease, peacefulness and anger, as well as keen anxiety and paralyzing fear. The simultaneity of these emotions characterizes a story of multiplicities that is too divided to be synthesized into eventual coherence by narrative means. Guilt is especially prominent in this array of sentiments: like in the episode on the Cherokee reservation, Emily is frequently haunted by a feeling of guilt, either in encountering poverty and oppression from her privileged economic position, or for not fulfilling the traditional role of housekeeper-mother (e.g. 68, 73, 82).

To a large extent, Emily's mood-swings thus concern her daughter Sarah, who is not always happy about her mother's decisions in general and their road trip in particular; she would much prefer to stay in one place and not have to move on, or take a plane to Juarez (174). Emily's ire contributes to disputes and disagreements with her child, although she is very much aware of how she is dragging Sarah along, yelling at and scolding her repeatedly.

> The very second I yelled at her, I wept with guilt: my poor baby, no family, no brothers or sisters, no big dog or horse or home in the country – just a screwed-to-the-breaking-point mother, and a father removed. Poor baby, who had not chosen to come to Texas in a car with a wilting woman […]. (151)

In the first half of *Long Division*, Emily uses and arguably misuses her daughter as her anchor,[61] her "last link to the everyday world" (24) and the single person whose movements she can supposedly control: "I could move with Sarah anywhere", she says (12), inconsiderate of the girl's actual wishes: "I could take her out of […] school, and we could re-settle in Hershey, Pennsylvania, or anywhere else on the map that pleased me." (13)

An important part in *Long Division*'s plot is dedicated to the way the mother-daughter relationship develops along the road. In *Long Division*, the connection between mother and daughter is narrated not as stable, but as shifting, an evolving process taking place on the road. A key theme in the depiction of this relationship is the difference in heritage between the Jewish mother and her half-Jewish

[61] The anchor-metaphor appears on pages 24 and 65.

daughter, whom Emily "had intended […] to be the child of the future, the gold at the bottom of the melting pot" (40). Emily is stunned when Sarah, at the Jesus meeting in Ohio (the hitchhikers' destination) embraces the preacher just as the Christian congregation does, telling him – Emily assumes – that she believes in Jesus (55). On the road again, she confesses to her mother that she "just wanted to say so like everybody else" (56), thereby confronting Emily with the forces of cultural conformism, and, as a follow-up, with her "planned escape" from a legacy she evaluates as primarily negative, characterized by "a capacity to survive, to suffer" (57). Jewishness, to her, means but "[a]n endless pain, an insecurity bred into the bones […] that expect to be crunched in the next social upheaval" (ibid.).

Yet there is another aspect of her heritage as a Jewish woman against which Emily rebels merely by setting out on a road trip. In *Generation without Memory*, Anne Roiphe writes about her own mother that she "[…] was not an admirer of free motion. She was corseted, garter-belted, high-heeled, painted, waxed, coiffed, plucked. She was not one to run in the breeze like a deer or climb a tree like a squirrel" (1981: 149).[62]

On Saturday night dates as a teen, Roiphe reports how "the fellow was supposed to bring me home, lead me safely through the asphalt jungle, protect me from slithering snakes, rapists and the like" (Roiphe 1972: 73). This legacy of women's need for protection, resulting in the construction of their physical immobility and domestic confinement, resonates similarly in *Long Division*. On the one hand, Emily continually narrates the "guilt" she feels for her shortcomings as the traditional housekeeper and caretaker (e.g. 68, 73, 82, 149-50, 154, 172); on the other, she embraces transgression as an attempt to counteract spatial limitations. These attempts at resistance are portrayed mainly in two episodes in *Long Division*: the first relates to the earliest years of her marriage, when Emily frequently went swimming in the ocean, which she describes as "a strange odd tendency in a Jewish girl – we are ordinarily not athletic" (20):

[62] Interestingly, *Generation without Memory: A Jewish Journey in Christian America* apparently received mixed commentaries; especially "[t]he male establishment of Jewish reviewers were very hard on it" (Roiphe qtd. in Steinberg 1993: 58).

> Just a generation or so removed from the sheitl that covered and bound a wife's head, a Jewish woman's hair does not fly free in the breeze, but is tied in kerchiefs, ribbons, rollers, hairspray. Our bodies move in small concentric circles, from stove to bed and back again, though the mind is free […] to leap into dark chasms and run the everyday facts of life down the streets […]. (20)

Subverting the racist stereotype of the unathletic Jewess, Emily adopts *shikse* behavior – that of a gentile woman – and thus quite clearly leaves behind the ties that, by tradition, bind Jewish(-American) femininity.[63]

In a second episode, Emily, "suffering from a noble-savage syndrome" (104), contrasts her romantic vision of "Indian" women with a rather bleak image of the traditional Jewess:

> [m]ost Jewish women are twice deprived. They don't run naked in the woods following the wild spirits of nature, and they don't get to share in the legal Talmudic store; so they remain ignorant and empty, creatures bound, knotted up by rules without reason […]. (104)

Revisiting her personal history, Emily realizes how she tried to dissociate herself from these "ignorant and empty", "knotted up" women by marrying out, thus hoping to leave behind a legacy of oppression and dislocation and the "terrible tale of Jewish history" (57). However, since the Jewish tradition of homebound mothers runs parallel to the hegemonic role of women as angels of the hearth still prevalent in much of the world – "victime[s] d'une double exclusion, exclue à la fois de la tradition hellénique et de la sagesse talmudique" (Durruty 1995: 201)[64] – Emily's gentile spouse Alex kept her body just as constrained. Posing as the free-spirited artist-flâneur, he went roaming the cities, "plucking what he could from the streets", while Emily stayed home, "sat in bed like a clam with a crushed shell" and "oozed onto the sheets a little death" (45). Neither could her marriage to a gentile

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[63] In a similar fashion Emily describes her body as "no longer cold, but beautiful, mobile, the essence of woman alive in all the right organs" (81) when she is in bed with a dentist she meets in a hotel bar. The episode ends ironically: the dentist blames his impotence on Emily's bad breath.

[64] Tr.: "victims of a double exclusion, excluded simultaneously from the Hellenic tradition and from Talmudic wisdom", AG.

painter provide her with the roots she feels are missing; "under his ground no roots were pushing upwards, carrying the buds of future beets or hopeful stringbeans" (44). Upon reconsidering the past and her plans for her daughter, she now deems her marrying out a stance of "escape – a painless genocide, a pleasure-filled life that would guarantee the future would hold no terrors of persecution" (57). As a result from the "painless genocide" Emily has construed, Sarah is as far removed from her Jewish heritage as possible and thus seen by her mother as more American:

> I couldn't help feeling […] that I could drop her off at any stop along the route and she could adapt, culturally merge with her fellow Americans, more easily than I. She was the strange conformist product of a union that had temporarily merged several traditions. The result of mixing blue and red appeared to be a bland white. (83)

Culturally, then, Emily feels a certain opposition, perhaps also a certain jealousy, toward her daughter's conformism and her cultural whiteness, which is characterized also by Sarah's adoption of WASP/hegemonic stereotyping (e.g. "stinking Indians", 34). As a result, Emily's strong ambivalence toward her own motherhood is expressed constantly (e.g. 56, 82, 145, 173, 185).

Her ambivalent emotions notwithstanding, being a mother also directly influences her perception of space and her mobility within this space, especially in situations where she needs to protect her daughter. In one of the most stunning incidents of the book,[65] Sarah gets abducted by a band of ominous itinerant gypsies, whom Emily considers her "kin",

> wanderers, outsiders, stubborn, isolated persisters in a culture always alien to the countryside, always passing through, accused of crimes, persecuted, hounded and yet proud, secretly feeling superior. No wonder we rubbed shoulders on the way to the crematorium. Jews are just word-burdened gypsies. (178)

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[65] I find it odd that this episode is not commented upon once in the few published readings of *Long Division*. Since it occurs toward the end of the book and comprises a larger number of pages than any other episode, I see it as the novel's decisive moment and a major turning point in Emily's relationship to her daughter.

Upon the capture of her daughter in the desert of New Mexico, Emily feels both related to and repelled by a people that is marginalized, oppressed, and in a state of diaspora in so many ways similar to the Jews.[66] Yet, although Roiphe employs the racist stereotype of the gypsies as child-stealers in this episode, she does so in a self-reflexive and, again, ambiguous manner. The shared experience of the Holocaust, one of the most important issues in contemporary Jewish-American literature, is pertinent for Emily to see herself connected to the gypsies: "Jews and gypsies together near the border to Texas! How marvelous – we survive and travel about, no matter who despises us, who tries to eradicate our particular color, our life style" [sic] (178), Emily thinks, associating with them while feeling "curiously excluded and nervous" (179) at the same time. Having no voice of their own,[67] however, the gypsies remain enigmatic, not only to the gun-crazy New Mexican WASP who tries to help Emily fix her tire when the gypsies arrive, but even to a 'wandering Jewess'.

The abduction episode, located near the end of the novel, clearly marks the culmination of Emily's realization of her social, cultural, and ethnic dislocation. Emily faces a double loss of kin, both literally and figuratively: on the one hand, she is alienated from the gypsies as "kin" who remind her of her Jewish legacy of travel and displacement, for she herself has no clan: "I am a Jewish woman so without tribe […] that I doubt if I ever will find a home, that my exile will ever

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66 In his article on the Wandering Jew, Hyam Maccoby dissociates the relations to the soil of nomadic peoples (including the gypsies) and of Jews, making the point that the Jews, unlike the gypsies, were deprived of a homeland and thus not restless out of choice (1986/1974: 252). "The Jews, indeed, have always been great travelers", Maccoby says, "but there is a great distinction to be made between travelers and nomads. The aim of a traveler is always to return home." (253) While I heartily embrace Maccoby's admonition to distinguish between nomads and travelers as well as between nomadism and exile, his statement that nomads and gypsies "wander because they wanted to" (ibid.) is rather simplistic, neglecting economic and historical factors that also forced these peoples to move. Thus, I would argue that both Jews and gypsies have inherited a "similar but different" history of place- and restlessness (cf. also Glazer's [1994] reading of *Long Division*).

67 There only appears a single full sentence by one of the gypsies in the book, explaining Sarah's abduction: "We like your daughter, Madam. She will be happy with us." (181)

end." (168) On the other hand, she faces the loss of Sarah, who, in the context of a matrilinear (but patriarchal) tradition, connects her to her own fore-mothers. The experience totally paralyzes her and delimits her mobility: "I was […] frightened, helpless, sitting on the ground beside my car, I held my knees close to my chest and rocked myself." (182) Consecutively, Emily envisions life without child:

> Sarah, Sarah, do you want me to come for you, or do you want me to go on my way? The thought crossed my mind to leave her – impossible, but possible. Let her be her own person. Let her find her own way, gypsy or not. Cut the cords […]. Tomorrow would be mine to devour alone. […] The idea gathered force. Leave her be, and drive on […]. (184-5)

Even upon the retrieval of Sarah with the help of the police, this vision of having lost her "anchor" has affected Emily's mourning for the home she has lost and the roots she feels she has never had (114): she is now inclined to find a home on the road – almost as if the gypsies had freed her from the pressure to provide a home for her child. The legacy of domesticity no longer weighs like a shadow upon her, but has entered a process of active negotiation. Home, thus, is paranomadically de-territorialized, without Emily having to foreclose re-territorialization. Finally, Emily is able to let go of her wish to control her daughter's movements, thereby revising her relationship with Sarah (Primeau 1996: 112). "We were one piece of flesh with different movements, but united" (Roiphe 1972: 187), Emily says, thereby accepting difference as well as responsibility.

Visible and Invisible Others

Long Division's protagonist experiences cultural marginalization not only due to the traditional subordinate status of Jewish mothers, but also because she is invisible as an ethnic Other. As such, Emily feels estranged from the American socio-cultural landscape and ambivalent toward an itinerant people like the gypsies, despite of the interconnectedness she constructs at first sight. Thus, she is not only torn between "tradition and independence", as Gross Avery entitles her essay (1980), but also between other social categories that are supposed to define her as a liberal middle-class woman and a member of the

Jewish American minority. All of these socio-cultural tensions, which collide in Emily's narration, have a major impact on the novel's construction of space. In this respect, one of the most interesting episodes in *Long Division* is the Terre Haute, Indiana, story, where Emily gets lost in a black ghetto. Within a couple of paragraphs, the protagonist's perception and production of space varies enormously according to her momentary identification. First, she tells the reader, "I began to feel afraid, because I didn't know how to get out – afraid, I reassured myself, of nothing, of other human beings going about their normal day. I despised myself for feeling strange." (Roiphe 1972: 99) In this paragraph, her liberalism clashes with her fear of being trapped, enclosed, and deprived of her mobility. She summons her courage and gets out of the car to ask for directions, but agoraphobia overcomes her again a few lines later:

> I walked to the corner, feeling all eyes on me, a woman lost, a lost woman, an alien – I am not what you think, I am a refugee international socialist failure. I am not responsible for anything. Am I not responsible? I could feel the stares on the back of my legs, on my hips. (ibid.)

Realizing her gendered body and her economic privileges, Emily is seized by a panic which results in the justification that she has no responsibility for racial oppression and poverty whatsoever. But she immediately questions her own conviction, and these contradictory reactions culminate in a paradoxical narrative sequence in the following paragraph: "I held tight to my purse [i.e., her privileges, AG]. By nature, by upbringing, I am of the oppressed, not of the oppressors, but that doesn't show in my color, in my clothes, in my car." (100)

Within a couple of pages, multiple and conflicting identifications occur (via the protagonist's contradictory narration), and it is in these transdifferential moments that hegemonic constructions of space are contested and negotiated, particularly given that multiple mechanisms of exclusion collide in these textual instances. In a manner reflecting the gypsy episode, Emily is unable to take sides in the scene related above. Again, undecidability irritates her perception of space, this time by rendering her simultaneously fearful and approachable. Space must thus be produced anew, acknowledging and enduring these contradictions; correspondingly, space is created in multiplicities on the one hand and as a process that is bound to remain unfinished on

the other. The subversion pertaining to these moments of conflict lies, first and foremost, in the fact that they are constitutive of an altered perception of space and spatial relations; this change of perspective affects both the traveling protagonist's identity and that of the particular location she is traversing: therefore, *spatial agency* is not limited to individual agency (further empowerment by moving through space), but extends to the spatial network that is traversed (and thus altered).

A major effect of this traversal is that, by and by, Emily makes herself at home in spatial multiplicities and dislocations, thus increasingly rejecting the quest and embracing para-nomadism. Initially, she merely *describes* herself as a "wandering Jewess" (see pages 18, 65, 71, 103), characterized by archetypal restlessness and territorial rootlessness on the one hand, and reflecting, on the other hand, Miriyam Glazer's statement that "[e]ven that archetypal creature of the gentile literary imagination, the Wandering Jew, could have found community in any […] prayer quorum […] – not so his mother, sister, daughter, or wife" (1994: 128). Once at home in dislocation and travel, however, Emily actively *appropriates* the archetype and uses it subversively against a territoriality which is constructed in tune with hegemonic social values: on polarities between sexes, ethnicities, and classes; between centers and margins.

The protagonist's questing traversals are headed in the direction of a new beginning by approaching, in the course of the novel, the nomadic mode of travel that I examine extensively in the next chapter. Even in the beginning, Emily's geographical wanderings across America are more a necessity, a consequence of her wish to quickly divorce her husband, than a choice based on wanderlust. Thus, being on the road is not experienced as mostly adventurous and fun: "[a] wandering Jewess gets very tired", the narrator-protagonist ambiguously remarks at one point (103). That the narrator repeatedly addresses the physical and emotional fatigue of driving long hours (e.g. 29, 36, 113-4) only furthers this impression. Also, Emily learns to expect this symbolic renewal more from being on the road than from settling down in Mexico – which she (unlike the questing protagonists of *Thelma & Louise*, for instance) intends to do at no time in the novel.

The last episode, which concludes the novel in a highly ironic manner, links the promise of freedom and independence, characterizing the constitutive myths of the United States, to the reality of her

experience on the road. A Mexican border guard sells her an envelope of what he claims to be "dirty pictures – the real thing", which she opens upon arrival in Juarez.[68] In the last paragraph, Emily "pulled some paper out of the cardboard cylinder" and finds "a cheap tourist copy of the Declaration of Independence 1776, signed by John Hancock et al.": she feels "cheated again" (190).

In many respects, this ending might justify Gross Avery's statement that "Emily's desire to protect herself and her daughter is doomed to failure. Fleeing New York, her 'Nazi' husband, and her Jewish past, she makes the same mistakes, by seeking salvation in the American dream." (1980: 51) The blatant irony of the novel's last lines, however, suggests that Emily is neither a victim of her husband, whom I would much rather call macho or sexist than "Nazi", nor of the American dream. She has learned to keep a distance from both and is now telling her own story, thereby attempting to take control over her life.[69] Finally, she has kept the promise that her "world will open and the forms of things change, and there will be no returning, no hovering about the empty nest" (Roiphe 1972: 60), thereby rejecting regression to both an idealized pre-Oedipal connection to her daughter and the domestic ideal of femininity prevalent in both Anglo and Jewish contexts.

* * *

Emily's road trip across America enables her to translate psycho-spatial anti-centricity into the narrative production of a center-less physical and socio-cultural spatiality. As inner and outer space converge, the narrator-protagonist transforms these polarities into lines of flight on her own terms: while Emily's journey is initially tied to a personal goal and has a clear motivation, she transforms the journey into a collective existential condition, with any potential destination

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68 In a bizarre subplot, Emily repeatedly buys envelopes that she thinks contain pornographic pictures, a gesture that suggests her desire to appropriate the male gaze.

69 The significance of Jewish women's storytelling is noted by Glazer: "the inherited stories of Judaism were told by and for men […] and […] women today must re-invent them, refashion them, or discard them and write stories anew." (1994: 132)

continuously deferred, by embracing mobility and rejecting stasis as a state of mind. Oscillating between individual and collective levels of experience and history, her quest is interspersed with the para-nomadic as her decentering of the desire for territorial roots abandons the quest formula. Traveling the country, Emily creates home with a vengeance by becoming nomadic, by creating not a home on the road, but the road as a home. This version of the traveler has no desire to arrive, to settle: if there is any home for the nomad, it is in movement itself. All in all, Roiphe's protagonist can thus be read as developing from a quester to a nomad, contrasting these two as different ways of travel. The problematics, analytical potential, and spatiality of para-nomadic mobility are the focus of chapter five.

5. Para-Nomadic Travelers

5.1. Nomads Here, There, and Everywhere: Revisiting Theories of Nomadism

In both contemporary popular culture and cultural criticism, the variety of (con)texts in which nomads appear as rhetorical and metaphorical figurations is striking, even though this is perhaps no surprise in view of "the ubiquitous concern with figures and tropes of mobility in theoretical discussions of postcolonialism and postmodernity" (Paul 2001: 217).[1] Over the last two decades at least, the contention that 'we' increasingly live in an age of universal mobility has turned nomadism into a buzzword of – apparently – global dimensions. The ever-growing reception of the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,[2] who introduced the figuration of the nomadic into poststructural philosophy in the early 1980s, is a key factor in this development. In fact peoples on the verge of extinction, as Syed Manzurul Islam notes (2001: 3), nomads are simultaneously experiencing a metaphorical 'population explosion' these days: they live as 'nomadic intellectuals' in many (usually Western) countries at once (e.g. Braidotti 1994 or Lawrence Grossberg's "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics", 1988); as 'urban nomads', they roam the cities either as the homeless poor (James P. Spradley, 1999) or as so-called 'sofa-surfers' hopping from one friend's apartment to the next (Juliette Torrez, 1998). There are 'economic nomads' in the form of migrants and refugees (May's

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1 A search in a popular internet bookstore in July 2008 under the keyword 'nomad' resulted in more than 39,000 titles.

2 One of its main attractions being an almost universally applicably terminology on the one hand and its eclecticism on the other, Deleuzo-Guattarian theory has been used and developed in such diverse fields as philosophy, psychoanalysis, media studies, cultural and gender studies, and literary criticism, and is reflected upon by various contemporary theoreticians such as Seyla Benhabib, Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler, Manuel DeLanda, Fredric Jameson, Chantal Mouffe, Antonio Negri, Edward Said, Peter Sloterdijk, and Slavoj Žižek.

Nomadic Identities, 1999) and long-distance truck-drivers (Richard Grant's *American Nomads*, 1994), 'nomadic users' of mobile communication networks (Küpper 2001), 'nomadic' poet(ic)s and writers (Pierre Joris' *A Nomad Poetics* [2003] and Richard Powers' "Im Labor der Nomaden" [2003])[3] and, finally, restless 'nomadic' tourists in search of adventure (as the guidebook series *The Practical Nomad* [Hasbrouck 1997] testifies). One cannot help wondering what it is that all these alleged 'nomads' share, with each other as well as with traditional nomadic herdsmen and -women across the globe. The various publications on nomads suggest a certain 'chic' attached to all these 'nomadic' lifestyles, no matter whether they refer to the affluent or the subaltern. From the perspective of the (Western) writer, it might be desirable to jet around the world, from one luxurious hotel to the next, without ever growing roots, yet in reference to those less prosperous subjects on the move, i.e. the average migrant or refugee, 'nomad' sounds ideologically veiled, although evoking, in the Western mind, connotations of adventurous travel, harmony with nature, 'authentic' spirituality and/or escape from Western economic and socio-political pressures.

The ideological veiling is even heightened once the nomadic becomes associated with the mobility of the academic (Braidotti) or the jet-setter. Too rarely do contemporary 'nomadologists' distinguish between and problematize divergent forms of mobility; even less do they call into question if and how all these itinerants experience home and homelessness. With few exceptions, this often results in a conflation of, say, the homeless poor and of those traditional nomads who actually carry their homes with them and experience home in terms of movement rather than of sessility.[4] Both cultural specificity and social difference are thus glossed over. Consequently, it is pertinent to review the concept of the nomadic critically in order to be able to, in Mieke Bal's words, "productively engage" (2002: 17) it in interaction

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3 Powers' short introductory essay to the April 2003 issue of *Schreibheft: Zeitschrift für Literatur* was published in a German translation by Gerd Burger only.

4 Along with critical ethnographic work like Urbain's (2000) and Miller's (2001), one of the few exceptions is Thomas H. Macho's earlier essay on contemporary nomads, "Fluchtgedanken" (1990), which I will address again later in this chapter.

with my object of study; for concepts, Bal argues, "are never simply descriptive; they are also programmatic and normative" (ibid. 28).[5]

Within the context of critical theory and contemporary cultural criticism, the attraction of nomadic theory lies in the fact that, through its evocations of movement and counter-territoriality, 'nomadologies' seem well-suited to theorize pertinent issues of place, space, and mobility while also corresponding to poststructuralist anti-essentialist notions of border crossings, fluidity, the processual, and the like. Generally understood as a "theory that is rootless, homeless or moves across disciplines" (194), as Richard Osborne succinctly put it in a recently published reference work (*Megawords: 200 Terms You Really Need to Know,* 2002), the nomadic is

> an idea that is important in post-colonial and poststructuralist thought, in particular in its theorizing of the nomadic subject which transgresses boundaries. […] [N]omadic subjectivity is seen as fluid, transgressive and resistant to hegemonic discourses of fixity. […] To be a nomadic subject is *to be homeless, to exist in an imaginary and symbolic realm that subverts* the accepted definitions of what is and replaces them with categories of fluidity and possibility. (194-5; my emphasis)

One of the major points of criticism of nomadology relates to the distorted view (expressed in Osborne's summary) of nomads as homeless, existing in an "imaginary and symbolic realm that subverts" dominant modes of thinking. Nomadologists tend to forget that their object of study, nomads – regardless of the fact that the term is originally Greek for "pastoral tribes" – do not exist only in imaginary and symbolic realms but also in marginalized social and geographical spaces, areas that are usually excluded from the map of Western thought (cf. Patton 1988: 137 & Paul 1999: 30-1).

Before delving into these and similarly controversial issues, however, I will return first to Deleuze's and Guattari's figuration of 'nomadic' thought, paraphrased by Osborne as working to "'deterrito-

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5 Following Bal (2002), traveling concepts (like the nomadic) always need revision and critical engagement with one's object of study (rather than mere "appliance" to this object) in order to remain productive. One of the main incentives for the reconsiderations made here was Paes de Barros' monograph (2004) on women's road stories, which postulates – haphazardly in my view – "nomadic subjectivity" for all the texts the study examines.

rialise' forms of thought, to unravel and oppose dominant ideas" (194) governed by state apparatuses.[6] Thus in the following, I aim to locate the nomad's transition from the socio-geographic to the philosophical-theoretical realm in Deleuze's and Guattari's theory. For it is in their transitional move that I situate this transfiguration of the nomad, launched in order to serve then-current philosophical concerns. My inquiry centers on two questions: how nomads have been turned into metaphors and whether nomadological writings following Deleuze and Guattari manage to escape the problematic triangulation of representation, romanticization, and exoticism.

5.1.1. Back to the Routes: Deleuze & Guattari's Nomadology

As the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus* (volume one of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*),[7] *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) propagates a new form of subjectivity, de-centering the individual as made up by flows and borderless assemblages: as *haecceities* – literally translated as 'beings-here' – subjectivity is only a momentary individuation of a larger assemblage, characterized by heterogeneity, fluidity, multiplicity, and a Body without Organs (cf. Deleuze's explanation in "Brief an Uno", 2003: 191).[8] Subjects, in this view, are rhizomatic processes rather than rooted figurations; both in their interiority and exteriority, they are made up by interconnecting planes Deleuze and Guattari, with

6 A term Deleuze and Guattari use in the sense of Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation.

7 In brief, volume one (1972) presents a critique of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, which, for Deleuze and Guattari, appears as an instrument of affirmation of the dominant system and its repressive forces by means of subordinating the subject under the phallic structure of culture. As an alternative, Deleuze and Guattari create the *desiring machine*, a machinic subconscious that is not structured linguistically. Thus, the subject's main drive and force is (positive) desire rather than (negative) lack.

8 The Body Without Organs, a phrase coined by Antonin Artaud, refers to a conception of the body as a flowing, desire-producing, a-centered system – an "uninterrupted continuum" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987/1980: 154) rather than an organ-ized, goal-oriented, stable physical structure. Thus, the body is not defined by the organs it contains but as a "product of a larger mapping of forces" (Kaufman 1998: 6).

Gregory Bateson (158), call *plateaus*:[9] "*a map and not a tracing*" (12; see also Kaufman 1998: 5).[10] This conception of the subject-as-assemblage undermines the notion of the self as author/itative, unified, or controllable. Yet although Deleuze and Guattari attack the notion of subjectivity in general – understood as the achievement of individual agency and autonomy through the Hegelian master-slave dialectic in enlightenment and liberal theory – , their actual concern seems to be a broader understanding of the subject, one that is able to account for a plurality of intersecting lines of difference: by deterritorializing and decentering traditional subjectivity, human beings are now defined as theoretically limitless, ever-shifting arrays of possibilities and potentials.

The continuous deterritorializing movements of such rhizomatic assemblages of *haecceities* generate what Deleuze and Guattari call "nomadic" trajectories in chapter twelve of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1227: Treatise on Nomadology: – The War Machine" (1987/1980: 351-423).[11] Thus, one of the basic tenets underlying *A Thousand Plateaus* is that spatial concepts always parallel ways of thinking; that "arborescent" thought generates hierarchy and perpetuates an emphasis on roots and fixity, while "rhizomatic thought" produces lateral network relations. In their "Treatise on Nomadology", the nomad is translated from geographical to mental space; it is here that 'nomadic' thought is generated. Nomadic pathways instantiate the latter, recognizing stationary points along these routes, yet always subordinating these points to dynamic paths: "The life of the nomad is the intermezzo […]. [T]he nomad goes from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity; in principle, points for him are relays along

[9] *A Thousand Plateaus* itself is also structured as a network of connected plateaus, thus tempting the reader into a non-linear reading experience: "We will never ask what a book means […]. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed." (1987/1980: 4)

[10] It is no coincidence that as a historical practice, map-making has similar colonialist implications like the current nomadic discourses of the West.

[11] Deleuze and Guattari's use of war terminology is stunning and appears unreflected; particularly from a post-9/11 perspective, one cannot but think of the resemblance of Deleuze's and Guattari's much-praised warrior-herders to contemporary agents of global terrorism.

a trajectory." (ibid. 380) Therefore, the nomad's route is different from other roads:

> [E]ven though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people* […]. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite: it *distributes people* […] *in an open space* […]. (ibid.)

Following this proposition, *A Thousand Plateaus* defines nomads primarily according to their relation to space and their mode of movement rather than to movement as such: nomadic movement "holds space and simultaneously affects all of its points, instead of being held by space in a local movement from one specific point to the next" (ibid. 363). Clearly inspired by traditional herds(wo)men, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of nomads not via restlessness and journeying, but via the nomadic way of creating space as "smooth" (as opposed to "striated", linear and ordered):

> The nomad distributes himself [sic] in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle […]. The nomad knows how to wait, he has infinite patience. Immobility and speed, catatonia and rush, a 'stationary process', station as process – these traits […] are eminently those of the nomad. (ibid. 381)

Thus, the nomad's salient characteristic is to perceive even the stationary as a process, and, consequently, *being* as always a state of *becoming*. Yes, Deleuze and Guattari assert, nomads do move, but travel is not necessarily nomadic: there is "tree travel" and "rhizome travel" (ibid. 482), and only the latter is considered a trait of nomadism, for it entails unexpected lateral connections and multi-directional networks (see also my introductory chapter on spatial theory). Nomadic space, then, is an alternative space mainly because of its anti-centric, non-linear nature, which allows for multiplicities and lines of flight, for traveling in "smooth" rather than rigidly segmented, restricted space. Also, in this conception of the nomad, territoriality is no longer a basis for identity and ideological formations based thereupon: "The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (*sol*) or support." (ibid. 381) Deleuze and Guattari argue that contrary to the migrant (though migrants are explicitly conflated with nomads earlier in the book; ibid. 228) and other human itinerants, nomads do not reterritorialize (ibid. 381), since "deterritorialization […] constitutes the

[ir]relation to the earth" (ibid.), the earth itself being deterritorialized in specific locations, i.e., dissociated from evolution, history, and genealogy. Deleuze's and Guattari's emphasis on movement and smooth space wards off any reterritorializing gesture; thus, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, nomadic practices are conceptualized as acts of resistance against hegemonic control over space as well as over the subject and its socio-cultural location.

In this context, it is also important to note that sedentaries, nomads, and migrants are not envisioned in any evolutionary relation to each other; nor do they exist in any kind of "purity" (ibid. 384; see also Urbain's ontology of travel [2000: 144]). There are only hybrid forms of the sedentary, the migrant, and the nomad; yet somewhat obscurely, Deleuze and Guattari claim that because of this real-life impurity, nomads "remain an abstraction, an Idea [sic], something [sic] real and nonactual" (420).[12] This abstraction conflates the abstract and the concrete and constitutes the basis for the nomads' metaphorization in the course of their journey through academia and popular culture. While Deleuze and Guattari clearly aim to translate their ontology of the nomad into epistemology, claiming to delimit themselves from any real-life basis, many subsequent nomadologists paradoxically reconnect or merge 'nomadic' thought and nomadic existence (cf. Kaplan 91).

5.1.2. More Routes: Nomadology as Traveling Theory

Following Mieke Bal's 2002 conception of "traveling theory", nomadism is a traveling concept that has been imported into various academic and literary contexts and accordingly has acquired a discursive his-

[12] "[…] [C]'est plutôt les nomades qui restent une abstraction, une Idée, quelque chose de réel et non actuel" in the original (Deleuze/Guattari 1980: 523). This characterization relates to the three ontological planes in Deleuzian philosophy: the actual (which refers to the material), the virtual (which is real but not material), and the real (which perpetually needs to be realized). This distinction between the real and the actual goes back to his revision of the real/unreal opposition by means of the actual/virtual distinction. The virtual and actual are both real, but not everything that is virtually contained in this world is or becomes actual. Thus, the virtual (fantasies, dreams, memories, etc.) is real as it has an effect on us, although it is not actual, i.e., realized. The virtual is always real, but not (yet) actual.

tory of its own (ironically despite *A Thousand Plateaus*' problematic claim that "nomads have no history; they only have a geography", 393).[13] Developed by Deleuze and Guattari as a figure which resists spatial regulation, the nomad has frequently been embraced for its alleged subversive potential. However, nomadologists have not abandoned the representational arguments that Deleuze and Guattari sought to overthrow; Sadie Plant, for instance, describes a contemporary British free festival movement as "the most striking and literal example of nomadic resistance" (2001/1993: 1101), understanding the Deleuzian nomad as refusing to settle within existing codes and conventions (ibid. 1102).

Others use the nomad-figure to account for travel, restlessness and/or hyper-mobility as allegedly global social phenomena of the late 20th and 21st centuries.[14] In *The Songlines* (1987), *What Am I Doing Here* (1990), and *Anatomy of Restlessness* (1996), Bruce Chatwin, British travel writer and self-proclaimed nomadologist, uses the rhetorical figure of the nomad to describe his own traveling practice. Before his death, Chatwin had planned to write a book on nomadism as a universalist yearning opposed to a life constrained by time and place. Humans, according to him, wander even contrary to economic reason (cf. Holland/Huggan 1998: 167-8). Thus in Chatwin's writings, the nomad becomes a generalized metaphor for his own restlessness and (masculinist) escapism – even if Chatwin recognizes, unlike many other nomadologists, that nomads dwell in continuous movement, rather than traveling with a clear beginning and end (Urbain 2000: 150).

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13 The problematic nature of this claim, inviting primitivist and universalist interpretation, is somewhat relativized considering that Deleuze and Guattari view history as a state-controlled and state-made linear (arborescent) discourse; cf. 1987/1980: 23.

14 Cf. also the introductory sentences to a collection of philosophical essays collected by Andreas Leutzsch, *Nomaden: Interdisziplinäre 'Wanderungen' im Feld der Formulare und Mythen* (2003); oddly, the quote characterizes nomads primarily as available and flexible: "In Zeiten der Auflösung durchschaubarer Strukturen, zunehmender Mobilität und der Tendenz alles und jedes zu vernetzen, scheint die Lebensform des Nomaden wieder an Aktualität zu gewinnen. Ganze Existenzen gründen sich darauf, jederzeit verfügbar und flexibel zu sein." (3) Tr.: "In times when discernible structures are dissolving, mobility is increasing, and when there is the tendency to link everything and anything, the life-form of the nomad seems to gain in topicality again. Whole existences are based on being available and flexible all the time." (tr. AG)

In a 1996 lecture, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk speaks of the contemporary obsession with "automobilism" ("Automobilismus") as an expression of revitalized "neo-nomadic" (19) impulses that characterize the age of "late sessility" (ibid.),[15] which he attests, in a universalizing gesture, to the present state of humanity ("gegenwärtige Menschheit", 19).[16] The same ontological proposition of neo-nomadism is made in an earlier book Sloterdijk also contributed to: in *Auf, und, davon: Eine Nomadologie der Neunziger* (1990), central European philosophers like Vilém Flusser, Peter Strasser, and Thomas H. Macho view this decade (the 1990s) as an age of renewed nomadism in the West. Redefining the neo-nomadic as experiencing the world in mobile network relations (Flusser) or as a new era of itinerancy and mobility (Macho), part of the volume is exceptional in so far as it at least problematizes this mobility as a divergent social phenomenon of the 20th century:

> Wir leben im Jahrhundert der Flüchtlinge und der 'neuen Nomaden', aber auch im Jahrhundert einer – touristisch bewirtschafteten – Reisefaszination. Wir leben im Jahrhundert der Massenvertreibungen, aber auch im Jahrhundert des Hochgeschwindigkeitsrausches und einer wahnwitzigen kinetischen Euphorie, die mit expressiver Bewegungsarmut paktiert. (Macho 1990: 134)[17]

Macho recognizes the disparate experiences of mobility and accordingly suggests calling this new age "mobile" rather than nomadic, thus acknowledging the romanticized proposition entailed in the use of the latter that we are, universally and progressively, going back in history to a pre-sedentary age.

The disparate experience of tourists and less voluntary itinerants has led to a widespread discussion of travel as a cultural practice of

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15 "Spätstadium [des] Projekt[s] Seßhaftigkeit" in the original; tr. AG.

16 This view of a universal neo-nomadism is in itself problematic, excluding nomadic tribes (who have never been sedentary) as well as people with limited means of (auto)mobility.

17 Tr.: "We live in a century of refugees and 'new nomads', but also in a century of a – touristically marketed – fascination with travel. We live in a century of mass displacements, but also in a century of high-speed frenzy and a lunatic kinetic euphoria, which is in cahoots with expressive akinesia." (tr. AG)

predominantly Western cultures.[18] Within the context of Cultural Studies, Lawrence Grossberg, in an essay entitled "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics" (1988), argues with Meaghan Morris (1988) that "specific vocabularies of travel are never innocent" but "always implicated in and articulated to larger structures of ideological, cultural, and political relations" (377). In the same essay, however, his use of the nomadic seems somewhat misplaced, as it conflates people's actual movements and mobile ways of thinking:

> The task of cultural criticism is less that of interpreting texts and audiences than of describing vectors, distances and densities, intersections and interruptions, and the *nomadic wandering (whether of people in everyday life or as cultural critics)* through this […] field of tendential forces and struggles. […] The *nomadic cultural critic* finds that the strange is always and already familiar. (383, my emphasis)

It remains unclear why the (metaphorical) movements of cultural critics are labeled "nomadic" rather than "itinerant", "traveling", "vagrant", or perhaps "drifting", for example. In a footnote, Grossberg acknowledges Deleuze and Guattari as his source for a theory of the nomadic subject that "exists within its nomadic wandering through the ever-changing places and spaces, vectors and apparatuses of everyday life" (384) while also claiming that "coherent subjectivity is always possible, even necessary" (ibid.). Grossberg further digresses from the Deleuzo-Guattarian original not only by defining the nomadic primarily via movement, but also by arguing that the nomadic subject "has an effective shape as a result of its struggles *to win* a temporary *space for itself within the places that have been prepared for it*" (ibid.; my emphasis). In the same essay Grossberg comments on his and Morris' notion of the billboard (a much less problematic metaphor to describe the spatio-temporal structures of everyday life), yet his use of the concept clearly demonstrates how the nomadic has traveled from Deleuzo-Guattarian radical anti-structuralism to the concerns of Cultural Studies in the late 1980s to relocate a subject previously shattered to pieces by poststructuralist discourse.

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[18] Tourism studies have produced a lively, interdisciplinary academic discursive field; see, for example, the volumes edited by Leed, Hanna/DelCasino, Coleman/Crang, or Holland/Huggan (1998). Critical studies of travel writing are also central for this issue; see, for instance, Sara Mills' study *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (1991).

Similar concerns have provoked feminist theory and criticism to make use of the nomadic as an alternative concept for theorizing women's subjectivities (Kaplan 1996: 92). Most prominently, Rosi Braidotti's much-cited book *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994) claims the potential for a feminist politics inherent in strategies of nomadism, thereby offering a way out of the dilemma between essentialism and radical poststructural contingency. For Braidotti, the mobile nomadic subject

> functions as a relay team: s/he connects, circulates, moves on; s/he does not form identifications but keeps on coming back at regular intervals. The nomad is a transgressive identity, whose transitory nature is precisely the reason why s/he can make connections at all. Nomadic politics is a matter of bonding, of coalitions, of interconnections. (1994a: 35)

According to Braidotti, a feminist-oriented nomadism is characterized by "an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries" rather than by a "fluidity without borders" (1994a: 36). Braidotti's, similar to Tim Cresswell's argument (1996b, cf. my discussion of Cresswell in the chapter on spatial theory), uses "nomadic" transgression of such borders as a strategy: consequently, a feminist nomadism entails "the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing" (Braidotti 1994a: 36), which women can use to create new subjectivities. These subjectivities would then be founded – but not fixated – in space and time, thus allowing for political agency without having "to be settled in a substantive vision of the subject" (ibid. 34-5). Similar claims are made by Chantal Mouffe, who argues that identity is a process of "permanent hybridization and nomadization" (1994: 110). Both Braidotti and Mouffe embrace nomadic theory as generating rhizomatic constellations of multiple identities and affiliations, as a transgressive strategy that goes against fixity and limiting structures. Following this feminist turn of the Deleuzian nomad, analyses like Paes de Barros' *Fast Cars and Bad Girls* (2004) also claim nomadism as a way to create women's subjectivities and alliances as mobile, thereby rejecting any essentialist grounding of feminine identity – unfortunately without specifying or critically examining their notions of the nomadic.

To some extent, all these recastings of living human beings as abstract figurations raise the ethical dilemma of writing about nomads

as always already constituting ethnographic practice, as Syed Manzurul Islam notes (2001: 1), raising James Clifford's question: "Nomadology: a Form of Postmodern Primitivism?" (1997: 39). The complete obliteration of traditional nomadism from contemporary nomadological discourses, governed by educated Western philosophers, via the conflation of nomadic tribes and metaphorical nomadism (as just any form of resistance against dominant systems) eventually eradicates the voices of traditional nomads altogether (Manzurul Islam 2001: 1). Paul Carter, an Australian theorist of space, place, and travel, rejects nomadism for similar reasons:

> [n]omadism, whether it takes the form of Chatwin's elite romance or of [Iain] Chambers's uncritical theorizing, fails to give a satisfactory account of movement as problematic. (*Living in a New Country*, 1992, qtd. in Holland/Huggan 1998: 170)

Likewise, Jean-Didier Urbain distinguishes between *travel*, as a problematic Western concept and practice, and *movement*, arguing that nomadism is in fact the opposite of travel. Urbain cites a Touareg poet he once met who

> was opposed to this appropriation of the nomad by the Western gaze which, seeing in nomadism a model of restless wandering or of travel, denies its specificity. The nomad only becomes a traveller in the outsider's eyes; as this Touareg reminded me, people in his culture *move about within a particular territory according to an established itinerary fixed by tradition*. (2001: 150, my emphasis)

Thus it is crucial to distinguish the epistemological perspective of mobile thought and 'becoming' subjects from the ontological basis of traditional nomads when employing a term that has habitually referred to non- or semi-sedentary peoples in various parts of the world: these might in fact, like the Touaregs, consider their paths and borders as fixed by traditional customs.

It does make a difference whether one is a subaltern, voiceless, deprived nomad in Mongolia or China, or a Euro-American 'nomadic' intellectual, endowed with a multilingual education and an academic voice, if not with secure means of subsistence. To turn the intellectual into the epitome of the nomadic ("we move in and out of several cultures, political traditions, and languages: we are perfect examples of hybridity and cross-culturalism", Braidotti 1997: 25), I would argue,

also means to use the nomadic in an inappropriate metaphorical fashion (or as a fashionable metaphor, for that matter): today, actual nomads mostly do not move in and out of several cultures and countries, even if they historically did so at a time when nation-states were only emerging. Thus, this use of the nomadic entails a certain epistemological violence that evokes colonialist stances of hegemonic appropriation.[19] The nomadic refers to an actual, everyday reality characterized by the economic necessity to live in movement rather than by freedom of travel, and by hardship rather than an adventurous lifestyle of moving smoothly between cultures and societies. When Braidotti talks of herself as a nomadic intellectual, she thus projects the spatial experience of the contemporary multicultural intellectual onto nomadic lives in general: celebratory of a cross-culturalism that is considered fashionable in well-educated, multilingual circles, she simultaneously turns the nomad into a romantic, idealized metaphor, defining her predominantly by hybridity, transcultural global mobility, and agency (see e.g. Braidotti 1997: 31).[20] While Braidotti's vision of the subject is quite useful on a conceptual level, as I have argued earlier in this study, one has to find her choice of a term charged with such an orientalist semantic baggage problematical at least.

Contrary to Braidotti, Mouffe, and others, many commentators have come to disapprove of the now-prevailing overuse, and subsequent inflation (e.g. in Paes de Barros 2004) or even catachresis of the nomad as a metaphor of mobility.[21] The nomad, as developed by De-

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19 On the crucial role of the "metaphors we live by" for our structuration of reality, see Lakoff and Johnson's classic study on the construction and use of symbolic language (1980).

20 In her essay "Toward a New Nomadism", Braidotti closes by saying that "[n]omadism is […] neither a rhetorical gesture nor a mere figure of speech, but a political and epistemological necessity for critical theory at the end of [the 20th] century" (1994b: 182). While privileging the epistemological dimension of the nomadic, she thus counters her own definition of the nomadic intellectual, whose real-life experience is associated with that of nomads.

21 The unreflected overuse of geographic metaphors (e.g. in feminist theory) is harshly criticized by Geraldine Pratt (1998), arguing that there is a static aspect of geographic metaphors violating a reality that is all but static; see also Janet Wolff's (1992) criticism of metaphors of mobility, which adopts an oppositional stance by problematizing the normativity of mobility as resistance, and Paul's essay "The Rhetoric and Romance of Mobility" (2001). As mentioned previously, Paes de Barros' book (2004) locates all of the women's

leuze, Guattari, and their followers, is a problematic ethnic figure, for it seems to embody the desirability of an-Other, closer-to-nature, romantic, and idealized life: a fantasmatic existence that is imagined as countering the monotony of everyday life routines many Westerners have apparently become weary of (cf. similar points of criticism in Macho's [1990], Gedalof's [1996], and Paul's [2001] essays). It is therefore resonant with the romantic topos of the infinite journey examined in Manfred Frank's seminal study, *Die unendliche Fahrt: Die Geschichte des Fliegenden Holländers und verwandter Motive* (1995).

With a critical view of this Orientalist problematics, Caren Kaplan asks: "Can colonial spaces [such as deserts and steppes] be recoded or reterritorialized without producing neocolonialisms?" (1996: 90) Kaplan, identifying in Deleuze and Guattari a modernist critical tradition "emphasizing the benefits of distance and the valorization of displacement" (ibid. 86) concludes that the critic cannot utilize "such charged […] figures [like the nomad] without accounting for them as sites of colonial discourses, as spaces constructed by specific power relations" (ibid. 91).[22] Furthermore, Christopher L. Miller's essay demonstrates how Deleuze and Guattari's claim that their figuration of the nomad takes place on a non-representational level and has nothing to do with anthropology is thwarted by the ethnographic and historiographic sources they cite – despite their alleged anti-historicism – for chapter twelve of *A Thousand Plateaus*, without critically reflecting on these sources.[23] Miller finds that this claim "liberates Deleuze and Guattari and their followers from the ethical burden of representing real, actual nomads, who might eventually have something to say in response" (2001: 1119)[24] – this argument is reminiscent of Kaplan's,

road stories she discusses within the realm of the nomadic, even when the narrative is a goal-oriented quest.

22 While Kaplan's criticism of the nomadic in Western theory is extremely insightful, her vindication of "nomadic subjectivity" (as used by Grossberg, for instance) in the concluding pages of her chapter on nomadism comes somewhat surprisingly and abruptly. While I follow her in her claim for a historically grounded use of the nomadic, I am not entirely convinced that such grounding is sufficiently established in the essays she cites in this section of her book (1996: 99).

23 As Caren Kaplan notes, a similar argument is brought to the fore by Paul Patton (1996: 90).

24 In the context of their claim to nonrepresentation, Miller also notes the Deleuzo-Guattarian problem of authority: "the problem is the denial of author-

who in turn finds that to erase the subject position of the theorist is a classical, highly problematic anthropological gesture (1996: 88). Miller, looking at the footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus*, demonstrates how the book's "fundamental, unshakable *sympathy* for nomadism" (2001: 1140) eventually leads to the actual nomad's disappearance "into horizonless space" and historical metaphorization (ibid.). In the end Miller concludes that "*A Thousand Plateaus* sets out to 'strangle' but winds up at least partially reproducing all of the following: representation, anthropology, evolution, primitivism, universalism, dualism, Orientalism" (ibid. 1142).

Like Syed Manzurul Islam, Miller echoes a debate that questions the unproblematic nature of non-representational philosophy when using figures of the Other for abstraction. The claim not to represent (in the sense of the German *darstellen*) the world and its inhabitants – the basic epistemological tenet of non-representational philosophy – while using a term that has been connoted, ever since its Greek coinage, as highly representational, distinguishing sedentary civilization from barbaric nomads (the non-sedentary Other), conflates the abstract and the concrete a little too smoothly. For as soon as questions of representation are in some way connected to cultural constructions of alterity – and the nomad certainly denotes such a construction – they cannot be reduced to *Darstellung* alone, but, following a basic hermeneutic tenet, also have to address issues of *Stellvertretung*, the sense of 'standing for, speaking for' somebody. Thus, especially from the postcolonial viewpoint that both Manzurul Islam and Miller address, it is the mixing of the metaphorical-philosophical and the historical-ethnographic lines of argumentation of *A Thousand Plateaus* that is crucial and critical. From such a critical perspective, it seems that the nomadic is, more often than not, used as a (chronotopic) metaphor that disregards the humanity of nomads. But whether or not one accepts the Deleuzian metaphorization of the nomad as unproblematic, the overuse of the metaphor by various 'nomadologists' proves, in my view, that one needs to be careful and specific in the deployment of ethnographic terminology.

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ity, the claim to be nonauthoritarian, and the consequent failure to come to terms with the consequences of the authority that the authors put into practice." (2001: 1129)

5.1.3. From Paradoxical Metaphors to Para-Nomadism

Harking back to the Deleuzo-Guattarian definition of nomadic "smooth" spatiality, the particular relations to space of all these alleged nomads requires an in-depth examination; in all probability, one would find that while the 'nomad' poet and the academic intellectual might envision space as smooth, the subaltern refugee and the migrant worker are faced with a network of spatial striation, from border controls and surveillance mechanisms to ostracism, expulsion, and discourses of global undesirability. Certainly, these groups do not share a common space: class, race, gender, global position, age and ability clearly alter spatial relations, productions, and perceptions. A reconsideration of the nomadic in light of the problematic issues I have addressed would thus re-literalize this figuration, claiming that any critical analysis using this concept must be specific in its definition of nomadism, wary of its latent exoticism and idealization, and modest in attributing it to diverse contemporary cultural phenomena.

Therefore, an unidealized figuration of the nomadic posits nomadic space as not necessarily desirable; it can be applied only to a particular mode of movement: along circular, premeditated routes, nomadic itinerants live in movement rather than "travel" the Western way; these (here, literarily mediated) lives take place in spatial translation, and likewise, their *being* is also always in translation, in *becoming* – a Deleuzian claim adopted by Braidotti's and by my own notion of the nomadic. Also, nomadic fiction does not involve the tourist-like, ethnographic gaze characteristic of the travel narrative (e.g. Chatwin's) and many literary quests, as nomads do not continuously confront the cultural/ethnic Other in the course of their itineraries, but are themselves part of the Other-ed in the American landscape, not only as 'public' women on the road but also as unsettled, and unsettling, citizens.[25] For nomads, movement is usually a socio-economic neces-

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[25] An example from Japanese-American history illustrates the connection made between sessility and the state order quite well: in 1905, the *Journal of the Senate of the State of California* complains that "Japanese laborers […] are mere transients [who] do not buy land [or] build houses. […] They contribute nothing to the growth of the State. They add nothing to its wealth, and they are a blight on the prosperity of it and a great […] danger to its welfare." (qtd. in Daniels 1988: 137) This sentiment subsequently led to the introduction of anti-Japanese land bills, barring Japanese immigrants from owning land. Similar arguments shaping Anglo-Native American relations are cited in Heike

sity that even often constitutes their traditional way of life.[26] Movement, for them, is a mode of existence rarely chosen voluntarily as a subversive strategy – although they might attempt to use movement in a subversive manner, especially when informed by a (feminist) political agenda. Thus, nomadic movement is – and I am following the Deleuzian definition in this respect – not defined by restlessness or a desire to travel. Rather (and here I digress from Deleuzo-Guattarian non-representation), nomads do face rules and regulations of movement, not only by the limitations of the stately spatial order but also by their own traditions and/or economic necessities. As such, they are not per se subversive or revolutionary on an ontological level.

In order to distinguish a more metaphorical nomadism from traditional nomads, *para-nomadism* might be a better terminological choice than neo-nomadism, expressing a "close-to" relation between figural and actual nomads rather than echoing a questionable evolutionary development (postulated by Sloterdijk and others). Para-nomadism, as I construe it, exposes rather than veils the Western gaze that, as I have shown, always accompanies 'nomadic' thought to a certain extent. This self-reflexive potential might be worth the neologism, even if the para-nomad's heuristic value may exceed her conceptual merit. The para-nomad, I would suggest, is at least one possible way of rethinking a terminology that is fundamentally Eurocentric without abandoning its attractiveness for critical studies of subjects, spaces, and mobilities altogether.

From a strictly epistemological perspective, feminist para-nomads should be of interest not because they are supposedly free-roaming warriors, but because nomadism, even when characterized by a mobility that is premeditated, strained, or challenged, implicitly resists traditional Western binary structures such as departure and arrival, movement and rest, central and marginal, or public and private spaces. The nomad is tied to territory and her (tribe's) body in a mobile way as she continually roams this territory; from a hegemonic perspective, such bodies in motion – *moving* bodies rather than bodies *moved* from

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Paul's essay "The Rhetoric and Romance of Mobility: Euro-American Nomadism Past and Present" (2001).

26 Of course, itinerant female protagonists in literature cannot but deviate from "traditional ways of life" in patriarchal cultures, however this deviation can be understood as an engagement with the cultural heritage of gendered spaces.

point to point – might be disturbing indeed, even though nomads do not escape the striations of a globalized economy. Allowing for a community of shifting alliances and in-between subjectivities on an epistemological level (Braidotti's main claim; see also Manzurul Islam 2001: 7), thinking beyond dichotomies clearly enhances social practices of agency against the dominant social and spatial order.

Epistemological para-nomadism therefore offers to dismantle binary structures of center and margin in both a postcolonial and feminist context without denying the existence of a center altogether. Nevertheless, one needs to be alert to the fact that by their acts of moving, real-life nomads may not always eschew politico-geographic limitations and borderlines and thus might not be able to realize this potentiality of resistance. Left behind like so many others by the forces of globalized economies and networks, the Touaregs, for example, are now forced to give up their traditional economic basis of salt-production, and thus nomadism altogether; Afghanistan's Kuchi tribe needed to campaign in order to win a seat in parliament in the 2005 elections, as a recent *New York Times* article reports (Gall 2005). Thus, I follow Manzurul Islam's claim that "without bringing historical minorities into the equation and without bringing their point of view to bear on the ethical project, nomadism cannot shed its exoticism and aestheticism and become a model of liberatory practice" (2001: 4).

According to this reformulation of the nomadic as para-nomadism, the protagonists of the road stories in the following analyses embody the opposite of the vanguards of freedom of mobility and the adventurous traveler: they are forced onto the road by external (economic) coercion, which frequently translates, by way of its discursive inscription onto the body, into internal pressures. The routes of these para-nomadic women are circular and premeditated: like the nomads' paths, they are chosen under pressure more than out of pleasure. While the para-nomadic trope is a common denominator of these texts, each female itinerant re-fashions her wandering under specific ethnic, economic, and gendered circumstances.

Diane Glancy and Cynthia Kadohata narrate journeys by ethnic 'Others', minorities in the lands they traverse, and present them with a collective legacy of travel, migration, and/or displacement. In 5.2., Glancy's *Claiming Breath* (1992) and *The Voice that Was in Travel*

(1999) are read as para-nomadic road narratives informed by the resignification of a Native American legacy of coerced displacement and moments of transdifferent tensions due to a mixed heritage also with regard to gendered spatialities. As I will argue, Glancy, who is (or, rather, 'became') part Cherokee, critically engages with the forced movement of her Native American ancestors from the American East to Oklahoma and the tradition of white (male) American mobility. Similarly generated tensions of dissonant differences can also be found in Japanese-American writer Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989), analyzed in 5.3., which describes the "floating world" of motels, rest-stops, and temporary homes in which the protagonist spends most of her childhood, on the road with her extended family. In Kadohata's book, the para-nomadic movement of the protagonist also results from the forced displacement of Japanese-Americans during World War II, but the story also focuses on the legacy of immigration, on economic migration und gendered hierarchies of the public and the private.

In 5.4., Joan Didion's *Play It as It Lays* (1970) is read as an inverted version of para-nomadic agency that, unlike Glancy's and Kadohata's books, is unable to resignify involuntary movement into an empowering narrative. Didion's wealthy protagonist's inner coercion to move in temporary stints of escape is arrested in depression and a mental home. My reading of Canadian writer Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address* (1986) is located between chapters five (the para-nomadic) and six (the picaresque) because the moment of coercion characteristic of the para-nomadic road narrative develops into a powerful postmodern picaresque tale of subversion in this text.

The road stories discussed in these subchapters construct their protagonists as at home on the road, their movements as an often transgressive way of life from the point of view of a gendered, ethnic, and classed spatiality of public and private segregations, without romanticizing the characters' movements. On what terms is para-nomadic subjectivity constructed in these texts, and can such subjectivities provide for the production of an alternative, para-nomadic space? How far do multiple, often conflicting cultural differences trouble these narratives and their attempts at resignification? The key aspect of the following analyses is how the trope of para-nomadism relates to and alters ethnic, classed, and gendered spatialities in women's road narratives.

5.2. "Give Me Land Lots of Land": Diane Glancy's *Claiming Breath* and *The Voice That Was in Travel*

As I have argued in the theoretical discussion of gendered spatiality and mobility, the claiming of space, in Michel de Certeau's sense as "practiced place" (1988: 117), is of social, political, and cultural urgency for ethnic minorities in general and people of mixed descent in particular. As a matter of fact, a minority politics of spatial deprivation and regulation habitually aims at keeping ethnic *Others* 'in their place', or at rendering them publicly invisible altogether. Spatially and culturally, however, multiethnic subjects are deprived in further ways, since they are often marginalized not only by the dominant cultures but also within their respective minority communities. Theirs is an interstitial, in-between space of displacement and trespassing – always already an out-of-placeness in the material and symbolic orders. However, a spatial politics of physical as well as symbolic borders, walls, and fences can be effectively countered by un-authorized, transgressive movements, as Tim Cresswell argues convincingly in *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (1996; cf. chapter 3.3.).

For a spatial analysis of texts informed by mixed-ancestry themes, both transiency and transdifference, as heuristic concepts, offer invaluable insights, as, for people of mixed descent, the process of claiming social space (other than that assigned to the interethnic subject by a hegemonic system) involves taking into account multiple belongings and heritages. Yet these belongings always occur *transiently* in space, as routes and roads rather than as rootedness to particular localities.

American-Cherokee author Diane Glancy, a major yet also marginal voice in contemporary Native American literature,[27] perfectly exemplifies transdifferential position(ing)s in her work. In her road narratives *Claiming Breath* (1992) and *The Voice That Was in Travel* (1999), the textual spatial politics of inter-ethnicity are complicated by

[27] Although Glancy's voluminous and award-winning work establishes her, on the one hand, as a major contemporary Native American author, very little scholarship has been devoted to her writings thus far, which might have to do with her controversial status within the Native American community (addressed later in this chapter). Exceptions are essays by Karsten Fitz and Brewster E. Fitz.

the spatial restrictions and limitations structurally imposed on women in patriarchal societies. *Claiming Breath*, which won the 1991 North American Indian Prose Award, is Glancy's personal journal chronicling a year (from December to December) she spent mainly on the road, supporting her children by driving throughout Oklahoma and Arkansas to teach poetry in schools for the State Arts Council of Arkansas and Oklahoma (Abner 1995: 244); *The Voice That Was in Travel* is a short story collection that similarly portrays female characters on the road. Through para-nomadic practices of mobility, Glancy's road stories defy the binary opposition of central vs. marginal space; by emphasizing ethnic identity as a multiplicity always under construction, *Claiming Breath* and *The Voice That Was in Travel* embrace a transient concept of subjectivity.

Living in/with Transdifference

In much of her work, Diane Glancy addresses the multiple loyalties of Native and white women struggling economically, as divorced mothers, storytellers and travelers, Christian and pagan.[28] Often, these reflections occur while her lyrical I, her first-person narrative voice, and her fictional characters, all of whom continually embody cultural and personal dislocation, are on the move and on the road, searching for spaces they can claim as counter-sites, similar to the Foucauldian heterotope. The discourse of the traditional Native American as closely connected to land and territory is not an option in Glancy's writing, also because the Cherokee's traumatic removal from their territories in the East has significantly loosened the ties to the land due to the experience of violent expulsion. In Glancy's work, both physical and spiritual travel have always been significant, from the early *Traveling On* (1980) to the two books I focus on in this chapter, the journal-

[28] In Glancy's work, the Christian faith offers consolation by providing spiritual refuge. Her positive depiction of Christianity is unusual in contemporary Native American literature, yet Glancy perceives its healing power always in combination with tribal traditions and spirits (e.g. in "The Bird Who Reached Heaven", 1999a: 64, or in "Sumac", ibid. 54). That this troublesome combination creates transdifferent tension is not surprising. See also Karsten Fitz's essay "Native and Christian: Religion and Spirituality as Transcultural Negotiation in American Indian Novels of the 1990s".

chronicle *Claiming Breath* and the short-story collection *The Voice That Was in Travel*. Devising a dynamic fictional space, the mobile world of travel is the appropriate platform from which Glancy's hybrid Native American characters speak.[29]

The quandary of multiple in-between-nesses in Glancy's texts is reflected also in the fact that the author is considered a controversial representative of Native America; in discussions of her tribal status, the vexatious question of ethnic authenticity is often raised. Of course, this is largely a community issue for which there is no written documentation, but apparently, Glancy has only very slowly gained recognition by the Cherokee tribe.[30] In my view, this controversy is evidence that Glancy herself constantly swerves between Anglo and Indian loyalties (expressed also in *Claiming Breath*), and that, like her fictional characters, the author herself is located in an ethnic "danger zone" (a term coined by Rüdiger Kunow).[31]

While claiming ethnic authenticity might certainly be a political necessity for the disenfranchised in specific contexts, 'the authentic', from my perspective, can only work as an instance of strategic essentialism: as a provisional, transient claim on political grounds. Thus, I consider Glancy's work not as representing Native America or the Cherokee nation. Following Gerald Vizenor's reflections on the postindian,[32] I consider Glancy's narrative voices as performing or even simulating multiple identities; transiently, her narrators perform Cherokee-ness, White-ness, femininity, Christianity, and so on in simultaneity. "To simulate is not simply to feign", Vizenor quotes Jean

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[29] Arnold Krupat, in "Nationalism, Indigenism, Cosmopolitanism", argues for calling the "halfbreed" a Native American rather than merely a "hybrid" person (100), but the painful alienation of many of them from their tribes seems to necessitate "hybrid" at least as a qualifying adjective.

[30] I am grateful to Jeanetta Calhoun-Mish and Helmbrecht Breinig for information on Glancy's standing within Native America.

[31] While Kunow's figuration of the ethnic "comfort zone" versus the "danger zone" is perhaps too neat a binary conception, his dialectic understanding of "roots" and "routes" narratives is highly useful for an analysis of fictional space in so-called "ethnic" literatures.

[32] In *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, Gerald Vizenor argues that any 'true' representation of Native America has been rendered impossible because of the "manifest manners" with which American Indians have been depicted by Anglo-American and Western discourses (see Vizenor 2001/1994).

Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* in *Manifest Manners*, since "[s]omeone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (2001: 1983). Likewise, Glancy's diary-chronicle *Claiming Breath* talks about struggling for both her Anglo and Native heritages, emphasizing heritage as a cultural process – not as a given but as a task, to recall Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*.[33] One of Glancy's voices in "Ethnic Arts: The Cultural Bridge", a prose poem from *Claiming Breath*, for instance, speaks about *becoming* rather than *being* American, summoning the historical migration of Native Americans:

> Now Re: The ethnic land bridge
> like the Bering Strait my ancestors migrated over
> some 15,000 years ago, following the mammoth.
> I would not want to raise the Strait
> & go back to my Oriental origins, if that's where we
> came from.
> *But forward into America.*
> *I have a part of it now*
> *& it's worth the struggle it took to get it.* (64; my italics)

At first glance, Glancy refers to *Native American* history in this poem, yet two lines before the last she evokes the ideology of America as the 'promised land', a notion predominantly associated with *European* colonization and immigration to the New World: "forward into America". However, though this poetic moment of transdifference, in which migration is doubly coded as Native and white, leads the lyrical I to conceive of both ethnic heritages as legacies that have to be struggled for and over, this struggle is not presented as ongoing; by saying she "has a part of it now" and using the simple past ("it took to get it"), the poetic voice brings transdifferential tension to a halt, as if an American identity were something one could "get".

In contrast, the poem "Ethnic Arts" addresses conflicting ethnic identities as mobile, dynamic, and groundless; the lyrical I talks about "what it's like to think as a Native American" while admitting that she stands "[b]etween 2 cultures" (59), the most prominent theme in

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[33] The autobiographical dimension of this struggle is apparent in this context; in an essay Glancy entitled "Give Me Land Lots of Land", she explains that "[i]t was as difficult [to write about the white part of her heritage] as writing about the Indian." (1999b: 114)

Glancy's writing. She describes how she builds her own home-space from nothing but "a blind spot where the floor didn't meet":

> I pulled up some mud, put it on a turtle's
> back, as the creation myth says. It grew into
> land. A solid place to stay, yet capable of
> movement. The dream of it traveling. (59)

Land is no longer territorially fixed in this vision and thus does not provide stable roots, but merely "a place to stay" that should be "capable of movement". While the creation of such a place gives the lyrical I the feeling of solidity, this place must be able to shift between the "2parts" (59) of herself and her surroundings; thus, home itself becomes a bridge.[34] For Glancy, it is art that creates this "land between 2places […]. Art is the link between them." (60) Thus, the ethnic land bridge is both the artist's way of communicating cultures and the physical bridge (i.e., the Bering Strait) that has made migration, movement between (and thus within) cultures, possible. Art itself is conceived as a way of traveling between time – "the was & will" – and space "the line moving through the medicine of stars, planets" (64).

Yet "Ethnic Arts" is not only celebratory of ethnic hybridity as a cultural bridge. In the last three stanzas, the bridge is also seen as signifying separation, and as something that the poetic voice did not choose for herself to embody (cf. 65). This darker side of being in the middle ground – the concomitant tension and alienation – resonates throughout the book, especially when the voices are *not* traveling. Interestingly, being on the road equals a being-in-place for the characters and voices in both *Claiming Breath* and *The Voice That Was in Travel*, while stopping confronts them with their socio-cultural out-of-place-ness; "I hold the crossed trails of white settlers & Indians, endure two heritages, & *in these trips*, the healing of our tribes" ("Migration to Summer Camp", 1992: 42; my italics).

In *Claiming Breath*, narrated in unconventional mixtures of poetry and prose, the lyrical I traverses a distinct area of the United States – the prairie flatlands of the Midwest and the rolling hills to-

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[34] As a metaphor, the bridge has been used mainly by Chicana critics and writers; cf. Moraga and Anzaldúa's edited collection *This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1983).

ward the East. Out of economic necessity, she is driving week after week, sleeping in motels, working in isolation (cf. "February \ The Iron Cranberry", 1992: 26-31), a stranger everywhere she goes. In a manner similar to Anne Roiphe's protagonist, the narrative and poetical voices in the book reflect on the land around her as well as on her contentious identities on the road: as an Anglo-Cherokee, a divorced woman, a working mother, and a daughter in mourning (her mother dies of cancer during this year; cf. "Against Dark Clouds", 1992: 38). Her cultural, social, and emotional struggles connect the fragmented text and accompany the narrator, like the truck drivers on the lonely highways in "Ontology & the Trucker \ or, The Poem Is the Road" (1992: 11).

Moveable (W)holes

On the very first page of the book, the text in the center of the page is shaped like a capital I; it splits the page and functions as both programmatic announcement and metafictional commentary (s. p. 188).

In Glancy's conception, "some sort of a whole" can be created only through an experimental literary aesthetics which must account for its artificiality and the fact that reality ("the sky with its stars") resembles what one could call, appropriating a Deleuzo-Guattarian metaphor, "holey"-ness (1987/1980: 414) rather than a wholeness which writing, via mimesis, could somehow grasp. Still, artistic practice is privileged by Glancy as offering the means to experiment with semiotic expression, to establish an experimental, fleeting "sort of whole". In accordance with this opening proclamation, the book defies traditional Western genre expectations and boundaries by mixing and intermingling poetry and prose, journal writing and storytelling, and Native American and Anglo-Christian voices. Fragments dominate, reflecting Glancy's credo that if style is a vehicle carrying fragmented history, "the vehicle should reflect its cargo" (1999b: 118).[35] She proclaims a

[35] Glancy's stylistic innovation has been commented upon repeatedly: see Abner (1995: 245) and Elias' essay on Glancy's "Coyote Aesthetics": "a narrative technique of fragmentation that both recuperates a living oral literary tradition based in non-European tropes and serves a specifically Native American postcolonial agenda" (1999: 192).

feeling of wholeness only provisionally and fleetingly throughout the texts under consideration.

I often write about being in the middle ground between two cultures, not fully a part of either. I write with a split voice, often ex p er i m e nt i ng with language until the parts equal some sort of a whole. I would say a pencil is a buffalo migration under the sky with its stars turning like a jar-lid poked with holes. […] (1992: xiii; my italics)

It is no coincidence that figurations of wholes and holes appear together repeatedly, especially in *Claiming Breath.* When the voice in "Ethnic Arts: The Cultural Bridge" talks about art and writing as communication between cultures, she says she deals "with ghosts […] REAL ghosts" (61), and it is unclear whether she refers to the spiritual world or the cultural condition of people of mixed descent:

> The invisible ones struggling to become visible.
> To themselves as much as others.
> The tension between.
> Until the holes be made whole.
> & until the wholes be made hole
> to see the other world. (61)

Juxtaposing these wholes and holes, she describes "[t]he dependency of the incomplete & complete. The fluidity of states" (ibid.) – in other

words, the transience of identification. "January 5 \ Wrioting" is a short diary sketch that also juxtaposes the whole and the fragment – "the wholeness of writing that emerges from the fragments" (1992: 9). In a fourth example (the prose piece "October \ From the Back Screen of the Country"), the open (i.e. the hole) and the closed, as two ways of experiencing the physical space of the land, interpenetrate each other; the narration is spurred by the narrator's reaction to her mother's voice, advising her not to leave the yard, which is "to break thru the prairie into pockets of the world around me" (ibid. 66).

The open prairie and the (closed) pocket are rendered indistinguishable when she says how she feels "enclosed" "on the flat space of prairie" (66), which she shortly after describes as "[i]solated. Empty" and yet "[n]arrow" (67). She thinks "of writing from the prairie as being in a colander. As I am aligned with the holes, I see the different views thru minuscule openings. Never the whole scene." (67) So while in some moments she constructs a wholeness out there, "the fullness of this land" (68), she can never arrive at the "whole scene", being aware of her entrapments and her fragmentariness. This juxtaposition is symptomatic of the transdifferential cultural locations of her characters and poetic voices that swerve between multiple, conflicting identities without ever really feeling at home and without being able to dissolve concomitant identitarian paradoxes and contradictions. Thus, the shifting between wholes and holes is yet another deterritorializing movement, repeated continually in *Claiming Breath* – the necessary, repetitive journey of the nomad without center or end point, a becoming (w)hole: "to become hole [sic] is to deterritorialize oneself following distinct but entangled lines" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987/1980: 32).

In a similar fashion, Indian-ness in Glancy's writings is not just a socio-cultural reality characterized by distinct historical relations to space – such as an intense connection to the land, migratory movements past and present,[36] and territorial enclosure in the reservation

[36] These movements span the time from the Bering Strait migration and the forced migrations to "Indian Territory" of the 19th century, but also include the post-World-War-II urban dispersal that was actively solicited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the context of the melting pot ideology of 'whitewashing' Native Americans; Glancy's own father was one of these urbanized Natives who tried to ignore their heritage and did not pass it on to their children (cf. Thompson).

system – but also a "fugitive pose", to use Gerald Vizenor's phrase; a transient ethnic positioning.[37] This transient conception of ethnic identity is presented in metaphors and narrations of travel throughout *Claiming Breath* as well as in *The Voice That Was in Travel*, although many of the stories in the latter collection are about entrapment, the absence of mobility or 'a space of one's own' (e.g. "In the Burrito", "The Great House", "She", and "A Woman Who Sewed for Me a Dress That Sleeves Didn't Fit").

At the end of the 20-page novella that concludes *The Voice That Was in Travel*, "America's First Parade", Indian Territory is explained to mean "[s]urvival. Or struggle for survival. Or retrieval. Or reckoning with what had passed. It had a movable meaning, depending where you were in the parade" (116); in the prose poem "December 1 / Fragments / Shards" (1992: 86-7), the narrative voice relates her becoming-Indian after her divorce: "I picked up my Indian heritage & began a journey toward any-yun-wiyu, or translated from the Cherokee, 'real people'. […] I am on the journey to the any-yun-wiyu." (86) This journey is interspersed with fragments of her non-Indian identity and her *becoming* a divorced woman. From "fragments \ shards", she "had to find a homestead within [her]self, or invent one" (86), and does so by claiming the land via travel: "I found acceptance of myself \ the strength to travel prairie roads & talk about poetry in towns where farmers in the cafés stare." (87)

Glancy's characters' and poetic voices' claim to space, expressed frequently by way of para-nomadic travel, bears an ironic historical twist. The migrations and travels narrated in *The Voice That Was in Travel* and *Claiming Breath* invoke not only the traditional tribal (semi-nomadic) migrations from summer to winter camp and back, but also the collective historical trauma of Glancy's Cherokee ancestors, the Trail of Tears of 1838/39, the genocidal massacre for which the Anglo side of her ancestry holds responsibility.[38] Thus, her interethnic consciousness constructs the textual journeys in the two books – whether they are undertaken for business or vacation, in Oklahoma,

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37 Cf. Vizenor's *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998).

38 The 900-mile journey that more than 11,000 Cherokee were forced to undertake in the winter of 1838/39 is the basis of Glancy's historical novel *Pushing the Bear*, another 'road novel' told through a plurality of first-person voices.

Arkansas, Australia, or Europe – as always filled with ghosts, shadows, memories of the traumatic tribal migration, with "old visions my Indian ancestors left along the road" ("Ontology & the Trucker", 1992: 14). The road, therefore, is also the site where heritage as belonging and the experience of "not belonging" clash: "Tribal means belonging, but not belonging to civilization. This is the tension that results." ("December 29", 1992: 7)

Cafés, Cars

In a manner similar to the 'I' in the "December 28" poem from *Claiming Breath* (6), the protagonist in "America's First Parade" (1999a: 89-116), whose title ironically refers to the Trail of Tears, still feels the trail of her Cherokee ancestors within herself as "a small, hard part of her that had to keep moving because it relieved her brokenness, her separateness" (109). Told in 21 episodes, the story begins in the car of Cherokee café owner Janet, who has just bought an old truck from Yellow Bud, a local small-scale used cars dealer in Tahlequah, capital of the Cherokee reservation in Oklahoma. Her son is with her:

> [Janet] pulled away from the stoplight in the dust of the boys next to her. She slowed at the next corner, but not enough. She made the turn a little fast. He opened the door. "I'm getting out, Mom, if you don't slow down." She slowed and the truck jumped. "What's the matter?" "You got to shift." "Again?" "You got to shift all the time, Mom. Why didn't you take me with you to look at cars? Here – look. Hold the brake down. Put your foot on the clutch." He shifted to show her. […] A car behind them honked. "Why didn't you get an automatic?" "*I want to feel the power in my hands*." (90; my italics)

Driving is a means for the protagonist to "feel the power in [her] hands", to relocate herself within her movement through space, even if driving a car without automatic transmission is an awkward experience (and thus is dissociated from revving the car's engine as a gesture of affirming power or leadership on the road). In the first part of the novella, the protagonist develops a special relation to her truck, which connects her to the spiritual world. In the context of Native American negotiations of dominant American cultural practices, Helmbrecht Breinig has argued that the pickup truck is one example of the genuine appropriation of an "alien" ("fremden", tr. AG) cultural

artefact, including a shift of function of this artifact rather than a simple borrowing (2005: 375). This appropriation is eminent in Glancy's story, in which the truck is multiply coded as a vehicle of Native American spirituality on the one hand and of female empowerment on the other.

When she cannot get it started, the spirits from "the ones who walked the trail" (90) come, wearing masks on the back of their heads, and try to help her get the engine going again. Although she cannot see them in this particular situation, she starts telling the car a story – "and because of the woman's tinkering, there was an alignment between the spirit realm and the engine. The truck snorted on the road." (92-3)[39] The combustive effect gives Janet confidence in her competence to handle cars (of which her son remains thoroughly doubtful): "'WUUUUUUH!' She let out a war cry and drove down the road. Yes, she thought, *women were the warriors of the world*" (93). While the story, like "In the Burrito" (1999a: 41-2), depicts both Janet's father and her ex-husband as absent travelers whose "interest had moved on" (98) and Janet as the one who is left behind, it devises a mobility that is not at odds with familial responsibility and commitment. Janet's mobility is not that of a cross-country traveler, but one that functions within her own 'territory'. Moving around her hometown in her truck helps the protagonist to build her confidence as an independent divorced woman.

That Janet's truck is also a "spirit truck" (99) out of a past reality that sends her smoke signals from the engine and connects her to her ancestors is crucial in this context; the past becomes the present via the connecting space of the automobile that picks the spirits up and

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[39] Two traditions contextualize these recurrent fantastic elements in Glancy's writings. First, these elements are often reflective of a worldview that does not separate past, present, and future (thus ancestral ghosts are part of reality rather than imaginary). Second, the fantastic has a long history in women's writing as a strategy of opposing "consensus reality", thus constituting a self-empowering moment in women's literature; cf. Carpenter and Kolmar, eds., *Haunting the House of Fiction*, and Anne Koenen's *Visions of Doom*, in which she asserts that "[f]antasy as a mode, the discourse of the repressed, articulates and illuminates the 'underside' of a culture, challenging and correcting hegemonic constructions of gender and gender-relations" (312). In view of the quest narratives discussed in chapter three, Koenen's conclusive argument that female quests are only possible in the fantastic mode (cf. 313-4) is perhaps overstating the case.

takes them into the next world (100).[40] Even when her son eventually convinces her to sell the truck (102), Janet retains this spiritual relation and immediately transforms her newly bought automatic into another "spirit truck" (cf. 103). When she is in Yellow Bud's garage to have her first vehicle repaired, she

> offered her truck some tobacco. She offered a prayer. She had the power of the spirits. She had the visions of her ancestors. She had a truck. She'd received part ownership of Redland's Cafe when she divorced, though she felt it all should be hers because her father had started the cafe. But her father had been a vacant booth behind her. (94)

Thus, her truck functions as a means of empowerment in more than one way; not only does it create a bond between Janet, the spirit world, and the traumatic migration of her ancestors (the old 'road' of the Trail of Tears), it also literally connects her to the concrete(-ness) of the road on which she is traveling. The vehicle and the road are even imagined to constitute a dialogic relation – with the road as "a tongue" (110) actively talking to her truck and the spirits it inhabits. The road-space is clearly an active, communicative force rather than a passive background or a mere setting for the story; the dichotomy between static, feminized space traversed by a dynamic, masculinized machine is dismantled.

Via physical and dialogical relations, the vehicle extends the main character's mobility and thus her territory, both in a geographical sense and in terms of agency.[41] "Once her life had been the size of the hole in the top of the glass milk bottles they used to have in the cafe" (95), the narrator recounts; especially after her divorce, Janet feels trapped in the café, a "place [that] seemed suddenly smaller" (98). She realizes that she needs to expand in space in order to feel alive again:

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40 In this context, it is important to know that non-linearity is one in a plurality of elements characteristic to Native American conceptions of time; the past, the present, and the future are inseparable entities in this model.

41 The spatial aspect of agency is also reflected in the title of Glancy's essay "Give Me Land Lots of Land", in which the importance of "[c]reating new ground after the old was covered" (114) is emphasized.

> Well, she had to have space.
> Space.
> But it was all right here in Tahlequah. (97)

This vital extension takes place through a local intertwining of spatial and temporal factors rather than by large-scale travel: in the story, it requires the entwined reconsideration of personal, tribal, and American histories, which is also brought about by the truck via its connection to the spirit world, the world of the dead. Important in this respect is that the connection to the ancestral spirits emerges in movement; only on the road does she meet the spirits in their trucks (e.g. 96, 99), wearing masks on the back of their heads. The masks constitute a doubly-coded element in the text's transcultural negotiations as they symbolize that there is no turning away from history for the Native American protagonist – the spirits always see her – on the one hand, and for white America on the other, as non-Native readers associate masks with parades: in this way, the masks function as a reminder of America's "first parade", "[t]he trail of the ancestors no one wanted to talk about", which needs to be acknowledged lest the country be "caught up in its mask of history" (96). Thus, Janet feels the need to look back, like the masks, "so nothing could take her from behind" (96) and in order to be able to move on (cf. also 115); "[t]he only thing she didn't want was to stand still" (107).

For this reason, the protagonist decides to look for her grandmother's place where she often stayed as a child and listened to stories.[42] By now, the energetic tone of the novella has been re-tuned to correspond to the slow motion of situational recollections. Driving there, the main character "was in a parade of her memories. That was what Indian Territory meant sometimes. It was a *looking back.*" (108) Janet's looking back triggers off a number of emotional tensions and makes her question whether history is meaningful, more than "a small,

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[42] Once again, a strong autobiographical element enters the story at the point when Janet's family history is told: "Her grandma had spoke [sic] a combination of Creek and Cherokee and English. Her family had intermarried. She inherited mixed and erased bounderies [sic], merging into one another. Her family wasn't on the Cherokee rolls, but bypassed and sidestepped the toll takers." ("America's First Parade", Glancy 1999a: 109) Glancy herself also does not have an "established" Cherokee family; also, her Cherokee grandmother seems to have given her comfort when she felt out of place in non-Indian society; cf. Sonneborn (1998: 55), in spite of 'growing up white'.

hard part of her" (109), but then the protagonist concludes that it is not historical destination or teleology that matters, but change and movement for their own sake: "[s]ometimes she didn't care where she was going as long as she was going" (ibid.).

By and by, Janet comes to the conclusion that she "felt a place within her as long as she was on the move" (116), as long as she is refiguring the space around her as a moving parade: "When she looked with parading eyes, even failure and setbacks were the fuel for more migrations, more parades across time." (113) The main character is said to have these eyes from her father (ibid.), who the narrator, earlier in the story, refers to as a "parade of absences through her birthdays" (95). Through these eyes, personal and U.S. cultural history appear as "a parade of boyfriends" and "a parade of ships" (113); outer space becomes a parade, too: "There was the parade of the earth across the sky. Of planets around the sun" (ibid.). But the dark side of her father's eyes, Janet realizes, is that these eyes "saw no one but himself" (115), and so, with conscious effort, she eventually casts aside her own self-centeredness (116).

Clearly, it is the processional, performative aspect of traditional (tribal) parades that Janet appropriates for herself as a source of empowerment. A second appropriation is that of the male gaze – the eyes of her father (113). Since Janet realizes their self-indulgence, adopting the male gaze is empowering only if done in a self-reflexive, performative manner.

Thus in "America's First Parade", the protagonist is reassured, eventually, of her agency as a contemporary Native American woman, and her historical legacy of trauma is transformed by the re-writing of movement as empowering.[43] This process of de-victimization also applies to the protagonist's personal history that she reconsiders by constant self-deterritorialization, in both a physical and psychological sense. The narration of her circular, repetitive movements through space does not deny the existence of spatial centers: for instance, Janet

[43] In this context, one of the masked spirits in the story re-constructs history as a way out of the passivity of "dominance-induced victimhood" (Abner 1995: 246), re-signifying the traumatic meaning of "America's first parade" by speculating that "[m]aybe America's first parade was a trail of spirits from the sky to the earth. Maybe we came to look things over. To see if we could […] [g]et the people going again." (92; cf. also Abner's review of *Claiming Breath*, 1995: 246)

has to return repeatedly to the café, her source of income. Yet her locational practice emphasizes circles rather than centers, the road rather than the café, thus countering centricity by circularity.

Locution and Location

The title of *The Voice That Was in Travel* already hints at how *locational* practice always involves *locutional* practice as well. Evoking the title of her second short story collection, *Firesticks*, Glancy writes in the preface to *The Voice That Was in Travel* that she

> wanted to reflect the broken context of native life. A heritage nearly erased in places. *Firesticks*, the words that travel between genres, between places like headlights on a dark road, are the unifying force. In this collection, the light from the firesticks comes from the frictions between silence and voicings. The jaunty excursions into variable perspectives. The erosion of actual experience into moving emblems of realizations. (vii)

The view that language constructs rather than reflects social and cultural realities is of course deeply embedded both in Western postmodernist philosophy as well as in the Native American part of Glancy's heritage. The belief "that words have the power to actuate" (Abner 1995: 245) is also common in the works of contemporary Native American authors such as Leslie Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Linda Hogan, and Gerald Vizenor. Consequently, Glancy's narrators adopt the view that agency comes through words, and accordingly, it is words that are the medium of their spatial politics, "[c]reating new ground after the old was covered" (1999b: 114). In "December 26" from *Claiming Breath*, the poetic voice states that "[y]ou speak the path on which you walk. Your words make the trail." (1992: 4) Words construct the land and routes through it: "I also have this tall grass prairie, his prayer-ee for my territory & always in travel, in the act of migration, is the POEM." ("February \ The Iron Cranberry", 1992: 28) The function of poetry, in turn, is again linked to movement: "Poetry is road maintenance for a fragmented world which seeks to be kept together" (ibid.), a belief that echoes *Claiming Breath*'s opening proclamation that literary experimentation can join disparate linguistic

elements into a transient wholeness which is created out of the world's "holey-ness".

The narrative voice in "December 26" also makes clear that her words oppose the hegemonic spatial practice of fences and borders by calling them "non-linear non-boundaried non-fenced open-prairied words" (ibid. 4). Yet counter-hegemonic locutional practice in Glancy's writings also works against the Western politics of privileging the written word over the spoken.[44] This can be considered a transdifferential moment in Glancy, and indeed in all Native American writing: while she says that written words are not part of her (Cherokee) inheritance ("January 13", 1992: 19), it is writing that she operates with in her books and that makes her accessible to a larger audience. However, the split between the written and the spoken word itself can be considered alien to Native American writing. As Amy Elias argues, any deconstruction of the speech/writing opposition within a Native American context should rather be seen as "a statement of how the Native alternative text (the natural world and Native traditions) stands behind and sustains the phenomenal text (the printed word)" (1999: 194-5). Hence, world and text are neither separate nor a matter of mimetic relation. Still, the way words are used in Glancy's writing – in torn syntax, connected by ampersands, interspersed with Cherokee letters (e.g. in "America's First Parade"), but especially in misspelled versions (e.g. the "bounderies" in the quote in footnote 172) and nonsense anagrams or vocabulary – constitutes a conscious political gesture. Glancy shares her politics of linguistic intervention with Gerald Vizenor, as both express and address, metafictionally, transdifferential tensions in Native American writing (cf. Breinig's 2005 analysis of Vizenor in this context, 383-4).

In "January 16 \ Tomatos" (1992: 21), tomatoes turn into "a tribe" of "tamoots", "matoots", "ototams", "matotos", and "Red skinned \ ottomas"; here, the linguistic order, created by binary differ-

[44] Of course, Jacques Derrida's argument in "Plato's Pharmacy" from *Of Grammatology* runs to the contrary – i.e. that speech has always been privileged over writing in Western philosophy. In the Native American cultural context, however, one has to acknowledge the violence with which the American government has tried to dismantle oral traditions by trying to erase tribal languages (and thus, oral knowledge) via the boarding school system; Western ethnographical practice, too, has participated in this erasure by translating oral stories into written English.

ences and the split between signifier and signified, is negated, since all the letter arrangements above refer to "tomato". Other major instances of locutional intervention frequently occur when the narrator speaks about (illiterate) ancestors, oral stories, and tribal traditions, thereby evoking all the hegemonic language policies that were used to destroy Native American tribal cultures, aiming at the dispersal of American Indians all over the country so that "Indian Territory" would be shattered from within.[45] In the beginning of "Badlands" from *The Voice That Was in Travel*, for example, one of the main characters, a rhetorics teacher in South Dakota, consciously evokes the language policies that have contributed to the image of the dumb, illiterate Indian, announcing to her class that

> we're going to feel like we can't do anything. Get used to it. It's the way we'll always feel against them. We can't put a sentence together. We can't hold a straight thought. We just talk in clumps. (1999a: 9)[46]

A statement that evokes mimicry as a subversive tactics of articulation, the teacher draws on the fact that white language policies have always had a decisive component of hegemonic colonial/territorial politics; likewise, Glancy's writings link the locational and the locutional as a way to turn against this kind of territoriality. Hers is a defiant language, a language that is neither tied to the territoriality of the nation state nor to straight-forward categories of race and ethnicity. It is, in Amy Elias' words, a "Coyote Aesthetics" that cannot be pinned down – an aesthetics of escape that "particularly attack[s] colonial history" (1999: 195): "Coyote lives in alternate dimensions that offer alternative models of space and time to western paradigms; perhaps for Native American women writers, this coyote space is the space in which the subaltern may speak." (ibid.)

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45 Cf. also what Deleuze and Guattari call "minor languages" in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Minor languages are characterized not by overload and poverty in relation to a standard or major language, but by a sobriety and variation that are like a minor treatment of the standard language […]. It is a question not of reterritorializing oneself on a dialect or a patois but of deterritorializing the major language." (1987/1980: 104)

46 By telling her students that they are "[m]en of war" and "[w]omen warriors" whose "voice will be in travel" (1999a: 9), the teacher eventually manages to take a class of meek Native American high-school students to a debating contest in the Badlands, teaching them a compelling lesson in self-esteem.

Yet Glancy does not *always* write within such a coyote aesthetics and often reverts to rather traditional western forms of narration; some of her diary entries and stories, especially those which do not immediately refer to Native American contexts, use conventional writing styles and a highly linear prose form (such as "December 23 \ Alia Bowman", 1992: 1; "December 27 \ Delay", ibid. 5; "In the Burrito", 1999a: 41-2). The subversive gesture of playing and experimenting with western literary, semiotic, and orthographic conventions a coyote aesthetics would emphasize is thus frequently broken by moments of locutional, or perhaps rather stylistic, transdifference. The headers to her diary entries in *Claiming Breath* are a case in point, as Glancy frequently juxtaposes a conventional, linear succession of dates to mark the episodes with poetic titles evoking associations with Native American existence (such as "Migration to Summer Camp" or "Fragments \ Shards"). A consequence of what Glancy calls her "split" (rather than hybrid) voice, the copresence of dominant and subaltern literary strategies also characterize her texts aesthetically.

Multiple Differences: Gender

Apart from the (trans)differences that occur along the shattered lines of Glancy's dispersed ethnicities, however, her travel narrations are also marked by their acute awareness of the traditionally masculine space the road presents. This is why a plurality of intersecting differences collides on Glancy's roads, confronting the narrative and poetic voices with multiple Otherness-es. In "SHEdonism" (1992: 51), for example, the generational aspect is added to ethnic and gender differences; Glancy's voice reflects on her generation's homebound mothers in contrast to their fathers and husbands, the absent centers of the family:

> While he [her father] was at work and we were at school, my fretful, punctual mother waxed floors and baked cookies. She endured her isolation with complaint if I remember correctly. For most of those years she didn't have a car and even after she did and we were grown, she still stayed at home and felt uncomfortable with the freedom to be her own person. (ibid.)

The reader learns of an absent, drunk husband succeeding the father, but also that "[b]eing a minority also enlarged my difficulties. Maybe it's the reason I stayed married so long. I didn't know what else to do." (ibid. 52)[47] The combined difficulties of the 'doubly Other' are rendered even more explicit a few lines later: "my structure has always been one of conflict and ambivalence. Aren't all of us made of paradox and diversity, anger, hurt, hope, guilt, endurance? Aren't we all fragments of opposition, especially women?" (ibid.) Marked by transdifferential tension as a consequence of conflicting affiliations, these two passages demonstrate how Glancy's texts are frequently broken by universalizing gestures that are then again disrupted by a re-introduction of categorical specificity: "[b]eing a minority" – "[a]ren't we all" – "especially women?" Arguably, the texts' critical edge is thus softened; by stating that fragmentation concerns not just ethnic minorities or women, but in fact everybody, "SHEdonism" expresses a general view of life as an ongoing process of fragmentation and reconnection, of constant becoming, yet at the same time obscures how people marked by plural cultural differences are specifically affected by such processes.[48] This, however, does not preclude the emancipatory creative force in Glancy's text that tries to grapple with transdifference as a social and psychological phenomenon of fragmentation, pluri-affiliation, the copresence of multiple differences, and the deviance from WASP and patriarchal norms. By means of wayward mobility and by what she calls "SHEdonism", for instance, her character eventually recovers "the enjoyment of oneself as a woman" (1992: 52) who has taught herself independence.

For the main character in another short story of the same collection, "Road" (ibid. 21-8), life on the move stands for an assertion of independence that also erodes traditional concepts of femininity. Car-

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47 Considering the fact that Glancy learned of her Cherokee heritage only as an adult, this quote might sound preposterous; yet it can also be read as indicative of the difficulty to 'author' one's crisis of ethnic identity, a major concern of Glancy's writing. Self-fashioning might even be part and parcel of textual self-representation in the context of such moments of crisis.

48 In this context, Glenn Rochon's reading of Glancy's poem "Well You Push Your Mind along the Road" addresses Hegel's dialectic of Being/Nothing/Becoming, arguing that Glancy's "you" in the poem embodies thesis/antithesis/synthesis all at once: "a new self will be brought into existence and reckoned with, again and again." (2002: 60)

leen, a divorced grandmother, constantly moves in a circle from Oklahoma, where she and her "boyfriend" (ibid. 22) live, to her adult daughters in Missouri and Kansas. Even when at rest in her daughters' homes for brief amounts of time, she cannot settle down mentally, watching broadcasts on far-away places like Africa and Australia on TV. In one of these, she sees a young elephant unable to stretch his legs in order to walk; on his knees, he cannot even reach his mother in order to be nursed. The story deeply affects Carleen, reminding her of the suffocating immobility she experienced as a married woman and young mother. The painfulness of these stories of immobility goes beyond the personal, however. It is heightened by Carleen witnessing how the same thing happens to her daughters, one of them jobless, the second at home with a sick child, living "constrained in a small box of a life" (ibid. 21). Starting with Lot's daughters in the book of Genesis, Carleen observes, generations of women have been arrested in patriarchal homes, with no right to a room of their own, to move freely, or to take control of their lives. Drawing a parallel between the elephants' strong sense of relationship and their loyalty with their herd on the one hand and her own children on the other, Carleen asks: "Didn't the elephant know their own bones and when they found them they had a ceremony? She thought about her daughter who had a daughter who'd have a daughter who'd have. Weren't they bound together?" (ibid. 26) The personal is political here, extending first beyond Carleen's person to her foremothers in the past and the generations of daughters to come in the future, and second to all women who feel the suffocating narrowness of a femininity strictly tied to immobility. The protagonist herself begins to question her very femininity due to her driving abilities, asking herself whether she was

> becoming a man as she aged? She could keep up with them on the highway. She could drive with them after dark and keep going, rise early, move on. She could be part of the momentum of migration over the land. Not some wiggler over the road. (1999a: 27)

Carleen wonders that, as a woman on the road, she is so much like a man in her behavior, not fulfilling the stereotype of the woman driver as a "wiggler" (a Southern colloquial word for 'earthworm'). The paragraph is continued, however, by probing her question further. Why does she make this association, Carleen asks herself,

> why did she define that independent part of herself as a man? Her ability to drive. Her willfulness. Her self-centeredness. It was what she'd seen in men. She wasn't going to move over and make room for someone. (ibid. 28)

Swerving between masculine and feminine identifications, Carleen decides that she would try to "see her anger and her strength as part of her womanliness" (ibid.), which she associates with her caring, her gentleness, and her religiosity. Although these attributes are clearly informed by rather traditional gendered qualities, the main character is consciously trying to transgress these dichotomous cultural constructions of gender by summoning and communicating with what she thinks are her 'masculine' qualities: "it was a man's voice that emerged from her now as she traveled. She was her own friend. Women were women for a while, then the man in them took the wheel" (ibid. 28). At this point the protagonist's transgression suddenly appears limited rather than radical, as the story reveals how much Carleen relies, after all, on conventional attributions of gender roles: it is still "the man" who is considered to be driving, even if he is now part of the woman. Simultaneously, then, Carleen's character is breaking up gendered expectations by her travels – which would be considered 'unwomanly' according to the quotations above – yet reaffirming these expectations by writing automobility outside of her identification as a woman. What she physically deterritorializes in movement, in the refusal to settle down with her boyfriend, thus is metaphorically speaking reterritorialized in her figural narration – ordered again according to dominant gendered spatialities. This hegemonic reterritorialization can be read as both a strategy to deradicalize Carleen's transgression and a moment of gendered transdifference, a moment when the man/woman binary oscillates without dissolving the opposition between the two. In any case, it stands in stark contrast to *Claiming Breath*'s "SHEdonism", in which independence is written *onto* femininity, not out of it.

Finally, "Road" ends with the protagonist finding solace only in the metaphysical world, imagining God as a "God of the Road" who helps the generations of her homebound female relatives to "pull through" like Carleen herself (ibid. 29), to endure and survive. This "God of the Road" gives her strength, and the narrator attaches sacredness and a heavenly dimension to Carleen's travels: "Carleen felt as if she'd turned into the universe and was crisscrossing the stars.

Yes, if there was one road left, she'd take it herself." (ibid.) Carleen is depicted as strong and mobile in this conclusion to the story, although it remains questionable whether her turn to religion will work towards active emancipation or towards a submissive, painful form of endurance.

Like "Road", the prose piece "Ontology and the Trucker \ or, The Poem Is the Road" (1992: 11-6) also emphasizes the protagonist-narrator's bonding with the traditionally masculine community of long-distance truck drivers. In "Ontology", Glancy's narrative voice constructs truckers as her guides and protectors, sheltering her from the storm (13). She calls the text

> a tribute for truckers who like to be followed. They are the ones who […] let you know when to slow down & when to go fast. It's like finding broken pieces of my father along the road. Part Cherokee, intuitive, he was the surest guide I ever had. (11)

Although truckers do not necessarily have to be male, linking them to her father is clearly a sign that she posits them as masculine. That the highways, for her, are "a universe where my car follows the trucks" (ibid.) unmistakably places these male drivers in the lead. She even imagines their bonding as a silent love affair: "Our road game is a silent one, as though we were lovers who could not speak in public." (ibid. 14)[49] The fact that the text also emphasizes the fragility of such a relation is merely a side-effect of her narration; waving good-bye to a trucker after the narrator has followed him for hundreds of miles reminds her how nothing is permanent and how relationships vanish, how "everything has to move on" (ibid. 12). Both "Road" and "Ontology", then, are not openly subversive texts, but in conflict with the hegemonic spatial economy of the road.

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49 The romantic connotations of these temporary relationships emphasized in this simile are also detectable in the detailed descriptions of how the narrator's partners are chosen: on the one hand, she selects her company according to a speed similar to her own (1992: 13); on the other, she feels it is the truckers who decide whether she is "worthy to travel with them" (ibid. 15).

Survivance

In Diane Glancy's writing, the textual spatial politics of inter-ethnicity are complicated by the spatial restrictions and limitations structurally imposed on women in patriarchal societies. Accordingly, in her essay "Give Me Land Lots of Land", Glancy's claim to open space requires qualification: "give me land lots of land, spoken open. But even openness is sectioned" (1999b: 119). The intercultural conflicts Diane Glancy's characters and voices embody are thus further complicated by the intracultural Otherness of femininity.

Deterritorialization characterizes the spatial strategies of many of Glancy's wandering Cherokee 'cross-bloods': it is through a reconsidered version of the nomadic, through para-nomadism, that we can understand her characters' defiance of the binary opposition of central vs. marginal space. For one, their physical travels are mostly an economic necessity, just like their traveling between cultures (which Glancy calls "transveillances": "the crossing of cultures. Passages not necessarily of choice but necessity"; 1999b: 115).[50] Furthermore, by emphasizing ethnic identity as a multiplicity always under construction, *Claiming Breath* and *The Voice That Was in Travel* embrace a postindian, transient concept of subjectivity, thus working against 'natural' essentialisms and authenticities that perpetuate psycho- and socio-spatial hegemonic regulations along categorical lines of race, class, or gender. Also, their moving bodies never revolve around stable centers, but rather always de-center and re-center without ever assuming fixed locations in the texts.

Thus, the spatial politics in Glancy's writing creates ethnicity as a transient and transdifferent aspect of identity that one cannot hold onto, but which needs to be performed through spatial practices of movement. "There's no permanency here except the highway & toll gates & road construction", the speaker says in "Ontology & the Trucker" in *Claiming Breath* (1992: 12). In Diane Glancy's *road work*, her character's claim for space by means of movement through

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[50] Another way to define transveillance is as textual misrepresentation: texts that seem "outside" of a culture are taken into that culture and appropriated. Traditionally, Glancy says, Native American stories have been exported into white culture – she cites Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha" (Vizenor would perhaps call this an instance of "manifest manners"). But of course it also works vice versa, e.g. in Glancy's retelling of Bible stories (cf. Glancy 1999b).

space turns into a claim for breath, into an act of what Gerald Vizenor calls “survivance”, thereby combining survival and resistance to characterize contemporary Native American – postindian – femininity.

5.3. Floating Worlds: Para-Nomadic Dislocation and the Public-Private Divide in Cynthia Kadohata’s *The Floating World*

> What do you know, Kerouac? […] I’m the American here. I’m the American walking here. Fuck Kerouac and his American road anyway.
>
> - Wittman Ah Sing, in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Tripmaster Monkey*

> We are a wandering people, due to the nature of our lowly occupations which take us from place to place, following the seasons.
>
> - Carlos Bulosan

People of mixed descent as well as immigrants are dislocated not just within the dominant American culture but also in relation to either the minority community or to the cultural contexts left behind in the home country, respectively. Diverging spatialities of class and gender further complicate this interstitial spatiality of a multiply colonized subject, as divergent cultural norms of feminine behavior and/or of social structuring collide, thereby producing complicated views of America (see Rachel Lee’s 1999 study, esp. 140-1). On the fictional level, such collisions frequently result in transdifferential moments of narrative tension and may explain contradictions, indecisiveness, and inconsistencies in the portrait of a fictional character (as I have argued with respect to Doris Betts’ and Anne Roiphe’s protagonists). As I argue throughout this book, the telling of stories of mobility and of being on the road constitutes one way of breaking these ties that bind; even involuntary, para-nomadic movement (largely constituted by being on the road out of necessity) can be written in a way that movement is narrativized as empowering.

Japanese-American Dislocations and The Floating World

Like Diane Glancy's road stories, Cynthia Kadohata's autobiographically-inspired debut novel *The Floating World* (1989) is informed by a historical legacy of displacement and restrained mobility. Three phases of dislocation form the cultural-historical backdrop of the novel, the first being the actual immigrant experience of first-generation Japanese-Americans (or *issei*), beginning in the second half of the 19th century with main settlement areas on the West Coast. Especially after the turn of the century, anti-immigration sentiment toward the Japanese and other Asian populations accounted for semi-institutionalized segregation in education, public facilities, labor (which Lisa Lowe refers to as Asian American proletarianization, 1996: 103), church, and law. Territorial and exclusionary laws like the 1913 Alien Land Act, prohibiting Japanese-Americans from owning land, had disturbing psychological effects (Daniels 1988: 143) and insulated the *issei* generation against Americanization more than many other contemporary immigrant groups (ibid. 164).[51]

The second – and arguably pivotal – experience of Japanese-American dislocation followed during World War II, when more than 100,000 West Coast Japanese-Americans were deported to so-called relocation camps in desert areas of the West, "[g]odforsaken spots in alien climes where no one had lived before and no one has lived since" (Daniels 1988: 225). As Cynthia Sau-ling Wong (1993: 125) and others have argued, the camp experience fundamentally altered Japanese-American relations to space and mobility. Not only did it severely complicate Japanese immigrants' relationship to the United States as a new homeland, it also gravely affected their sense of cultural identity and self-esteem. Asian-American histories of oppression, of which the Japanese-American camp experience is clearly part, perhaps help explain the need for over-achieving within this "model minority", an often stereotyped phenomenon among Asian-Americans echoed also by *The Floating World*'s protagonist and her parents' expectations (Kadohata 1989: 145 or 193).

The experience of deportation has also generated among Japanese-Americans the fear of repeated dislocation (mentioned in Kado-

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51 On problematic relation of historiography and Asian American culture, see Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* (1996), esp. 104-8.

hata's novel after an illegal gambling bust in which the protagonist's father is involved, for instance, ibid. 136-7). In this context, Wong contrasts the immobility of the immigrant settlers – an expression of their desire for stability and at-home-ness in a new country – with the immobility of coerced movement related to the Japanese-American experience of internment: "the laws could undo the life's work of the Issei overnight. Whatever at-homeness the Japanese immigrants and their children managed to attain was illusory, and forced dispersal turned out to be the group's true fate." (1993: 126)

The internment of the *issei* and *nisei* (second generation) also affected third-generation Japanese-Americans, the *sansei* to which Kadohata's protagonist Olivia belongs, by creating a Japanese-American diaspora: the formerly interned were often unable to return to their former homes and thus settled in other areas of the United States (Daniels 1988: 268-86). Thus, Olivia and her family reflect the economic disadvantage many Japanese-Americans faced after World War II, now working, for instance, in temporary engagements in the agricultural sector (which frequently included seasonal traveling) or in industries like meat-processing, engagements that often foreclosed long-term settlement.

Against the historical backdrop of immigration, internment, and diaspora, a tradition of Asian-American literature focusing on movement and motion has emerged (and has for a long time been neglected by literary scholarship on American mobility, as Wong argues, 1993: 119). Kadohata's novel is located within this context: beginning in the 1950s, *The Floating World* portrays a Japanese-American family living on the road, traveling from one job and one temporary home to the next. Told retrospectively through the eyes of *sansei* Olivia, "perceptive, playful, and deceptively naïve" (Yu 2000: 121) but also full of curiosity, the story follows the narrator-protagonist's coming of age on the road in a series of rather disjointed, loosely structured – perhaps even "floating" – chapters, and ends with Olivia at age 21. Critically revising the Western tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, *The Floating World* ends not in the protagonist's acceptance of and successful integration into the dominant social order, but offers, as I argue in what follows, other modes for articulating immigrant subjectivity and community. These emerge, as Lisa Lowe has put it in her discussion of Asian American cultural politics, "out of conditions of decolonization, displacement, and disidentification – and refuse assimilation to

the dominant narratives of integration, development, and identification" (1996: 101).

Generally, the novel is marked by the multiple tensions, arising, for one, between three generations of Japanese-American immigrants – 12-year old Olivia and her three brothers, their mother Mariko and father Charlie-O (the *nisei*),[52] and her *issei* grandmother (or Obāsan)[53] – and their communal struggle to break the pattern of dislocation and alienation that has characterized the family's relationship to the United States.

The generational conflict between Olivia and Obāsan, the backdrop of the entire narrative and at the center of parts of it, is aggravated by their living together in the tight spaces of the family car and motel rooms (e.g. 66-7), with the granddaughter swinging between absolute rejection (e.g. 18) and bonding (8).[54] "Sometimes I ran from her, but I never ran hard. I didn't want her to catch and hit me, but I didn't want to lose her either" (20-1), Olivia remarks, thus expressing also how she "cannot [and does not want to!] completely free herself from the ethnic heritage represented by Obasan [sic]" (Yu 2000: 122; cf. also Grice 2002: 72). Significantly, it is after her grandmother's death (which Olivia blames on herself, not getting help in time when she collapses) that this complicated relationship is transformed and Obāsan's function as a role-model and advisor takes the fore, both in Olivia's memory and also through the former's diaries the latter consults for advice on relationships and sex. When in one entry Obāsan describes how she was naked in an argument with her (fully clad) lover, yet felt strong rather than vulnerable, her granddaughter knows:

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52 Charlie-O is Olivia's stepfather; Mariko was forced to marry him by her mother when she was pregnant with Olivia. Through most of *The Floating World*, however, Olivia calls Charlie-O "father" and "Dad" and her biological father by his first name, Jack (e.g. 193). To avoid confusion, I will use the fathers' given names here.

53 Obāsan is the Japanese name for a female relative such as a grandmother or aunt. As the narrator informs us in Kadohata's novel, the more endearing term would be Obāchan (5).

54 As Roger Daniels' historical study on *Asian America* suggests, generational tension between the *issei*, *nisei*, and *sansei* was also incited due to differences in legal status, which credited citizenship only to the American-born generation (1988: 173). On (grand-)mother-daughter relationships in Asian American literature, see Grice (2002: 35-73).

"That's what I wanted, to feel the same strength, more than I wanted love" (Kadohata 1989: 115). The fact that the dead grandmother remains such a central character in *The Floating World* indicates that the connection between the dead and the living itself is of a floating, drifting nature, with death not so much erasing the ancestral presence as enforcing it (84); this is further intensified when Olivia meets the specter of Jack, whose vending machine route she has taken on after his death at the end of the novel.

The title's *floating* might further hint at how changes in political circumstance and geographical movement render markers of identity and difference unstable (resonant perhaps even with the 'floating signifier' and the trace of the Other in Derridean deconstruction). The family's long history of naming and re-naming illustrates this:

> You can trace some of the changes in my family through the changes in our names. In 1875, for the first time, the parents of all my great-grandparents took family names […]. Before the 1870s, most commoners in Japan were not allowed family names. When the names finally were allowed, sometimes everybody in a village was ordered to take the same one […]. My mother's mother was born Satō Hisae in a village of Satōs. But though Hisae was her given name, my great-grandparents called her Shimeko, which isn't a real name. […] When Hisae's family came to the United States, her father changed their name to go with their new life. The new name was Fujiitano. Fujii had been the richest man my great-grandfahter had ever known, and Itano the happiest. Years later, in Hawaii at the start of World War II, the local school made my grandparents change their children's first names before they could enroll. Satoru, Yukiko, Mariko, Haruko, and Sadamu became Roger, Lily, Laura, Ann and Roy. Today their original names are just shadows following them. My brothers and I all have American names. (2)

The family's history is inscribed in these name changes, with the previous names remaining as personal traces of a collective past.

Adaptation and Segregation

Ranging from Obāsan's rejection of the dominant culture to vain attempts at assimilation by Mariko and Charlie-O (Yu 2000: 122), who wants the kids to call Obāsan "grandma" (6) and desperately tries to embody what he believes to be the archetypal American business

owner (Kadohata 1989: 70), each generation has developed different strategies of cultural adaptation. These strategies not only reflect how the particular generation relates to the United States, they are also intertwined with the family's futile attempts at upward social mobility (which are then projected onto Olivia, the first-born *sansei* of the family and thus the most American in her parents' view; ibid. 114 & 188).

In *The Floating World*, strategies of cultural adaptation – fragile as they may be – encompass the desire to create such a space of belonging *via* rather than *in* movement, regarding both the *issei*'s immigration from Japan and Olivia's parents' travels; Olivia is ultimately the only character who rests *in* travel. Dictated mainly by economic pressures and circumstance, the family's wandering is often unplanned for and forecloses their settling down year after year; the discourse of mobility is clearly one of necessity. Having internalized the moving condition of almost a century of continual migrancy and socio-geographic displacement, the family has turned para-nomadic; they come from "here and there" (21), and their only home is on the road, in movement (cf. also Lee 2003: 156).[55] Even though Olivia speaks of their movement as "travel", the family moves not for pleasure's or adventure's sake, but "often for three reasons" (Kadohata 1989: 4) – two of them economic, the third apparently personal:

> One was bad luck – the business my father worked for happened to go under, or the next job we headed to evaporated while we were in transit. Also, it could be hard even into the fifties and sixties for Japanese to get good jobs. […] The third reason was that my parents were dissatisfied with their marriage, and, somehow, moving seemed to give vent to that dissatisfaction. (ibid.)

The socio-economic difficulties of Japanese-American families after World War II are a major thread running through Kadohata's road narrative. In fact, Olivia's family is not the only one on the move, as we encounter other extended *nisei* families on the road, looking for jobs and homes (e.g. 19, 24), none of them escaping the temporariness of agricultural labor (what Sau-ling Wong has termed "nomadic looping", 1993: 132) or sweatshop industries (e.g. Kadohata 1989: 34,

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[55] That Obāsan tells Olivia "never to tell people where I came from or what my name was" at this point (21) is further evidence to the "floating" status of the family in the US-American landscape and its precarious social and political position.

120). In this sense, the floating world refers to a world of the collective travels of para-nomadic immigrant families, predominantly around the Northwestern states of Oregon, Washington, and California, but also extending, for instance, to the all-Japanese chicken hatcheries in Arkansas (where Olivia works part-time before she leaves for Los Angeles at sixteen, 68-136). These para-nomadic Japanese-Americans are only geographically dispersed, however, forming a translocal collective support network sustained by phone calls and gossip: "The men who spent hours on the phone always knew where there were jobs, who got married and had kids, which hatcheries were thriving." (93) For these families, travel has become a way of life, part of a profession. It is Obāsan who explicitly refers to this unstable world as "floating"; as a child, Olivia experiences a paradox stability of her family life within this world:

> We were traveling then in what [my grandmother] called ukiyo, the floating world. The floating world was the gas station attendants, restaurants, and jobs we depended on, the motel towns floating in the middle of fields and mountains. In old Japan, ukiyo meant the districts full of brothels, teahouses, and public baths, but it also referred to change and the pleasures and loneliness change brings. For a long time, I never exactly thought of us as part of any of that, though. *We* were stable, traveling through an unstable world while my father looked for jobs. (3)

Obāsan has transplanted the traditional Japanese *ukiyo* of the Edo era[56] onto her perception of the American cultural landscape: teahouses and brothels have been replaced by restaurants and motels, public baths by gas stations. Growing up, Olivia starts to realize the shadow side of her family's surface stability as she witnesses Japanese-Americans' economic instability and its accompanying psychological strains, resulting in excessive gambling (see esp. chapter ten), in drinking and substance abuse (120) as well as in mental breakdowns (e.g. of her boyfriend Tan's father, 125-7).

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[56] The Edo age (1603-1868) was marked by a strong urban citizenry (the *chonin*), in turn accompanied by a boom in book printing (which included a plethora of manuals on decency and morals for women as well as practical travel guides for the Edo tourist). Today, *ukiyo-e* ("pictures of the floating world") are well-known, representing the stylish imagery characteristic of the period. Cf. Bell 2004.

The family inhabits a variety of spheres that constantly overlap and intersect: the world of the factory, the local ethnic community, the translocal Japanese-American network, white America, or the petty criminal Asian community in L.A. (where Olivia moves to). Even the ancestral world in Japan and the world of the dead inform their lives; Olivia "felt amazed at how all those varied worlds out there co-existed, including the world I lived in" (168). With her moving mostly *through* rather than in and out of these worlds, they often appear only "randomly touching" (ibid.), even "not real" (188) to Olivia: "Watching the street, I felt very hopeful, not about anything in particular. It was a feeling cut off from all logic and reality" (165). At the same time, she realizes how quickly one of these worlds may come to the fore, as for example when her L.A. boyfriend Andy gets beaten up: suddenly "[t]he street was barren […]. I felt really scared, not exactly of what had happened but of the scope of the world, the violence" (167).

Throughout the narrative, Olivia sways between the desire to abandon her world of in-betweenness, the interstitial space she occupies and cannot escape, and the desire to leave any temporary home again. She seems to want to both stay and leave simultaneously: "My family had lived many places, and traveled many places. I thought then that Arkansas was the most beautiful place I had ever been in, yet I wanted badly to leave." (133) Ironically, these contradictory yearnings articulate the tension between the desire to participate in the American myth of unfettered social and geographical mobility on the one hand and the forces of an exclusionary hegemonic order that inhibits mobility as well as belonging on the other. Here, Kadohata's novel voices the transdifferential dilemma between conflicting yearnings that text and protagonist are unable to resolve. The Japanese-American workers at the hatchery are all outsiders, yet not even this commonality is able to create communal belonging: "being one of them was being an outsider. To be part of their group you couldn't get close to them." (132)

Not only does the temporariness of belonging and home contrast with the 1950s' domestic ideal of the American nuclear family and with the reinforced private-public spatial divide of the decade (Olivia notices, for instance, how her family was "always the only family at the motels we stayed at", 3), but even when Olivia's family settles down in Arkansas and her father starts a small business (68),

socio-spatial segregation continues to divide Japanese-America from the rural, white Arkansas society. The Japanese newcomers are very careful in their behavior, almost as if they were illegal immigrants liable to deportation; they are well aware of their precarious status in U.S. society:

> When my family was out with a relative's family, you always felt people were staring if you weren't looking. There were no blacks living in Gibson [Arkansas]; only whites and the few Japanese. We were all very quiet in public. […] We had thought of moving to a town called Ashland, but no Japanese lived there, and we didn't want to be the first. (72-3)[57]

Yet socio-geographic segregation does not stop at the color line. It moves on and divides the Japanese community itself in terms of class. The paragraph continues:

> My father said that the fourteen Japanese, including the six of us, who lived in Gibson all came from families who owned small businesses, and the twenty or thirty Japanese in the next town over […] all came from families in which someone worked as a chicken sexer. But no chicken sexers lived in Gibson, and no business-owner Japanese lived in Lee. I don't know why it was divided that way. (73)

Assimilation, for Olivia's family, refers first and foremost to acceptance among the Japanese-American community: "[o]ur assimilation into the community was easy enough. Most Japanese in Arkansas live in Gibson or Lee." (74) The juxtaposition of these sentences implies that Olivia does not refer to integration within white America but to a close-knit network of Japanese-Americans much more vital for survival: "We were bound to the Japanese in Arkansas just as my mother, father, brothers, and I were bound to each other. […] So in this way my family was rooted in a community. I felt safe." (94)

Socio-spatial divisions are not only interethnic; on an intraethnic level, both class and gender constitute a major dividing line. Charlie-O forbids Olivia's mother Mariko to work and, along with the chicken-sexer and gambler Toshi, she is one of the few Japanese

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[57] Similarly affected by hegemonic spatial regimes and the attempt to blend in with mainstream society, Obāsan frequently scolds the children when they hang out in front of motel rooms: "What will people think, with Japanese hanging around like hoodlums at night?" (27)

women in the community who subtly rebel against their assigned place by reading books "in a community where men rarely – and women never – read" (73) and by refusing the spatial divides imposed upon her. Like the "presidents' wives" she so admires (26-7), she moves away from the hearth. Her transgression causes shame and confusion in her young daughter, yet also incites Olivia's imitation of her behavior, thus Mariko also functions as a female role model:

> When the women went into the kitchen to clean [after parties], my mother remained in the living room to talk, and I felt faintly ashamed, and unsure whether I ought to stay in the living room or go into the kitchen. Usually I stayed in the living room […]. (73)

While the men's world consists largely of work, poker games, and the occasional horse race or prostitute (94), the women are depicted in their domestic caretaking roles (ibid.), and Mariko herself is not completely untouched by this ideology of separate spheres, reminding Olivia repeatedly of her kitchen chores (83). But with both Mariko and Obāsan as strong female role models – her grandmother was smoking cigars when "it had been considered scandalous for young Japanese women" (1), had run a boarding house in California (31-4) and had many affairs even at age 73 (115) – Olivia herself grows up self-confident, feels comfortable in her body and possesses a curious mind (she "liked to talk to strangers" on the road, for instance, 9). Countering the stereotype of the submissive, domestic Asian American woman, she travels to Los Angeles by bus, still in her teens, and starts a life on her own toward the end of the novel (Kadohata 1989: 153). Olivia supports herself first by working at a "fancy-shmancy lamp shop" (ibid.), then by taking over Jack's vending machine route through California, Nevada, and Arizona (183-96), thus continuing (but also significantly altering, as I will argue in the following) her family's history of a para-nomadic life on the road. Olivia's traveling constitutes a re-visiting of her ethnic group's, her family's, and her own diasporic displacement, by means of which she also re-signifies these forced movements.

The American highway – "spread[ing] itself through quiet, humid land, curling with two lanes through the Ozarks, and later opening to four lanes and passing through the centers of towns" (105) – continues to structure not only Olivia's life; it retains its function as the aorta of para-nomadic existence for the (im)migrant workers who have

gradually transformed their seasonal travels into a condition. The highway has formed an "obsessive locus" in Japanese-American literature, Sau-ling Wong notes (1993: 120), perhaps also due to its double potential to either connect or separate the parallel worlds Japanese-Americans inhabited in the 1950s – their ethnic communities and worlds of work on the one hand and the American public, which largely excludes them as sovereign citizens (cf. Park/Wald 1998: 609) yet decides over their fate, on the other. On a vacation trip to Oregon, Olivia, her Chinese-American boyfriend Andy and her brother Walker decide to drive up Highway 99, a route significant for the prior generation of Japanese-Americans of that area:

> Though […] less scenic than the ride up the coast, I'd driven on it many times as a child, so we took it up. Some of my parents' friends used to live on the east side of 99, but when the war started, there was a law that Japanese had to move west of the highway, so they packed up all their things and moved across the street. The next year they were interned. (Kadohata 1989: 171)

Although not intentionally, the fear of internment and coerced displacement is transmitted from one generation to the next and thus affects Olivia against her will:

> My parents had taught me many things they hadn't meant to teach me and I hadn't meant to learn. One of those things was fear; their big fear, during the war; and when my father was arrested; […] [their] concern that I would be all right in the future; and a hundred other interwoven fears. That was what I wanted to leave. (146-7)[58]

Their fearfulness is perhaps another cause for being on the road: by never settling down, never rooting oneself, one escapes authority and remains alert against threats by a hegemonic order.

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[58] I would disagree with Yu's interpretation that Olivia's refusal to accept this fear necessarily "implies that she will erase her Japanese identity" (2000: 122). If the erasure of "Japanese identity" is a purpose at all in the novel, it is Olivia's parents'.

Public/Private: Divisions and Revisions

It is the "pleasures and loneliness change brings" (3) that constitute the central antithetical forces throughout Kadohata's book – change certainly also referring to the process of Olivia's coming-of-age. The very limited privacy on the road, vital for the average teenager, vaguely recalls the internment experience of the *nisei* generation. Together with the precarious relations of Japanese-Americans to the public sphere in post-World-War-II America – mainly due to hegemonic constructions of racial difference and enmity prevailing after the end of the war and into the 1950s – this lack of privacy renders family life precarious.[59] Not only do they 'float' in terms of geographic space but also in terms of cultural identity, literally moving between (and often falling through the cracks of) 'Japanese-' 'American-' and 'Japanese-American-ness'.[60]

The public/private divide plays a major role in both the cultural-historical context of the time Kadohata's novel is set as well as of the time it was published. Written during another phase of anti-immigration sentiment in the United States (Park/Wald 1998: 609), *The Floating World* addresses issues of belonging topical again in the late 1980s:

> [Olivia tries to] negotiate both a domesticized femininity and a public Japanese identity. During the war the public definition of Japanese Americans as Japanese – and thus the enemy – keeps Olivia and her family from taking root as "Americans." Their position as noncitizens is signified in their failure to gain access to the private sphere. (ibid.)

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59 In chapter one of *Immigrant Acts* (1996), Lowe argues that immigration and naturalization laws have been means of policing citizenship on the one hand, yet on the other have also partaken in an orientalist discourse defining Asians as foreigners in times of U.S.-Asian conflict.

60 The tensions between a racial and national identity, described famously by W.E.B. Du Bois' notion of double consciousness, have always undermined the racial 'Other's' identification with narratives of Americanness. As Chan et al. put it: "We have been encouraged to believe that we have no cultural integrity as Chinese- or Japanese-Americans, that we are either Asian […] or American (white) or are measurably both. This myth of being either/or and the equally goofy concept of the dual personality haunted our lobes while our rejection by both Asia and white America proved we were neither […]. Nor were we half and half or more one than the other." (1982: 197)

As Park and Wald thus suggest, the denial of citizenship results in a failure to reconstruct the private in the aftermath of the internment experience, which becomes manifest in Olivia's uneasy relationship with dichotomous conceptions of the public and the private. In fact, this polar opposition is continually blurred in the book: Olivia stays in motels and cars and with family friends serving as foster parents (Kadohata 1989: 13-7), sleeps in the hatchery at times, taking her toiletry as well as her awakening sexuality into the workplace (112), and meets her boyfriend in a rusty school bus (122) or a nearby field (111). This interstitiality unmasks the ideology of the separate sphere model as clearly contextualized by the white middle classes (as Park and Wald argue in their essay), both in its historical emergence in the 19th century and its suburban heyday in the 1950s. In Kadohata's novel, the protagonist turns this exclusionary binary model upside down, as Olivia creates the privacy she is denied by actively appropriating her in-betweenness. Feeling at home in cars and motels empowers her to create public-private-interstices largely on her own terms – even in odd places such as the hatchery – and make use of them according to her own needs. Her L.A. apartment, for instance,

> gave me that old feeling of being displaced and safe at the same time, like when I used to play in the small woods back of my house at night. I could close my eyes and from any point at the edge find my way to a certain tree in the center. (155)

As Park and Wald have argued, *The Floating World* thus "offers a possible refiguration of the public and private spheres that neither relegates women of color to the private sphere nor makes them vulnerable by publicizing them" (1998: 625). The on-the-road experience has empowered Olivia to both delicately transgress spatial borders marked by the public/private divide – and therefore by a gendered economy of exclusionary spaces – and to create the paradox of transient belonging. Olivia ultimately belongs in routes and roads rather than in particular localities, ending her narration, in my view, not on a bitter note but by expressing spatial self-empowerment; the book ends with Olivia's embrace of the floating world of her in-between existence: "I tried to calculate from the night sky what time it was, but then I gave up. It didn't matter; it was high time I left." (Kadohata 1989: 196)

In sum, America is constructed in terms of "unbelonging" (Sau-ling Wong's term, 1993: 118) in *The Floating World*: the young Japa-

nese-American narrator-protagonist embodies ethnic, class, and gender differences that shape a view of America articulated in the text as "real yet floating" (Lee 2003: 157) rather than as a unified vision of home. The differences between the parallel worlds Olivia moves through are irresolvable and foreclose any unitary portrayal of the United States. Although Olivia is often troubled by this heterogeneity, she ultimately finds herself at ease only by imagining her home in homelessness. By transforming a collective ethnic experience of coerced dislocation into self-determined para-nomadic wandering, Kadohata's novel articulates the copresence of conflicting mobilities and spatialities, or, differently phrased, transdifferential tensions between these in a Japanese-American context. Proposing a home in movement and movement as home, *The Floating World* eventually creates para-nomadic interstitiality as a self-controlled, potentially liberating heterotope.

5.4. Circles and Downward Spirals: Negative Para-Nomadism in Joan Didion's *Play It as It Lays*

Unlike narrative quests, para-nomadic road stories dismiss the idea of arrival as well as of its binary opposite, departure, as the structure of the narrated journey. Quite to the contrary: what I have so far subsumed under the para-nomadic paradigm of fictionalized mobility are tales that privilege a sense of movement for movement's sake. In these narratives, the creation of a moveable home on the road can be empowering; however, there is an underside to this version of para-nomadism to be found in road narratives that end on a less optimistic note.[61]

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[61] Writing this section of my study, I am haunted by a woman I met in the smoking court of the Greyhound station in Amarillo, Texas, in April 2005. Dishevelled and drunk at five in the morning, she was on her way to Oregon where she had "folks". We had boarded the same bus when, before departure, Greyhound officials made her step out and searched her sparse belongings, apparently for alcohol. All eyes upon her, the woman started to cry as she was turned into a suspect, desperately arguing that she needed to get on this bus, having "nothing, nowhere to go". This section is dedicated to this woman, to whom I could give nothing but a cigarette and some change.

In Joan Didion's apocalyptic Hollywood novel *Play It as It Lays* (1970) – which I will briefly discuss as a contrastive foil to para-nomadic road narratives in the following – an inverted, bleaker version of such narratives emerges from an unsuccessful quest for escape. This quest is so rigidly thwarted in Didion's book, voicing a distinct postmodern condition of constant transition, that the idea of escape gradually loses its motivating force. The permanence of being-on-the-road is not embraced (as it is to some extent in Glancy's or Kadohata's road narratives) in the absence of a geographic home place or center of belonging. In such pessimistic versions of para-nomadism, for which Didion's book is exemplary,[62] the idea of home is beyond even the protagonists' *imaginary* geography.

Play It as It Lays, the earliest road narrative discussed in this study, can be characterized as an early second-wave feminist text that deals with the 1950s' legacy of female depression and psychological disorder of white women in the U.S.-American middle class, of "the problem that ha[d] no name" (cf. the first chapter of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*). The protagonist, Maria Wyeth, is trapped by trauma, loss, and despair, but nevertheless keeps moving. Maria is an unsuccessful actress who tries to keep her cool in her outward appearance while slowly breaking down on the inside – until these external/internal distinctions finally collapse. At age 30, she has lost both her parents, has been cheated on by her husband Carter Lang, an emotionally abusive film producer, and yearns for her genetically ill little daughter, Kate, who has been permanently hospitalized.[63] Maria drifts

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62 Bleak or even dystopian versions of para-nomadism constitute a minor strand of road narratives, which is the reason why this chapter is not as extensive as others in my study. In addition to Didion, Jan Kerouac's *Trainsong* (1988) could be mentioned here; perhaps more prominently, negative para-nomadism informs a number of road movies, such as *Butterfly Kiss* (1996) or *Monster* (2003).

63 Perhaps also echoing the overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward mothers and maternity among second-wave feminists in the late 1960s and 70s, Didion's narrative is full of absent mothers and solitary daughters. Maria's relation to her children, born and unborn (her husband forces her to terminate her second pregnancy), is tragically complicated; she yearns for both her daughter and her own mother, who appears repeatedly in a dream from which she wakes up crying (60-1). Although Maria's first name reflects the archetypal Christian mother, her last name is a question that, like many others, remains unanswered in the narrative: Wy-eth/why is? (an aspect Paes de Barros [2004]

into apathy and depression in the course of the novel, yet survives (unlike her only close friend BZ, who takes an overdose of sleeping pills to the soundtrack of Roger Miller's "King of the Road" while Maria holds his hand, 213). In a story characterized by Maria's emptiness and the numbness of the wealthy, sexist Hollywood society surrounding her (cf. e.g. 36), Maria "plays it as it lays" without any reason to continue doing so. In her own voice, she ends the novel saying that she knows "what 'nothing' means", and "keep[s] playing. Why, BZ would say. Why not, I say." (214) Maria does not believe in some higher meaning of life, but neither does she believe in death as a meaningful act (Winchell 1989: 98).

The protagonist in *Play It as It Lays* finds short moments of peace only in what Didion, in the essay collection *The White Album* (1979), has called "the freeway experience":

> Actual participation [in the freeway experience] requires total surrender, a concentration so intense as to seem a narcosis, a rapture-of-the-freeway. The mind goes clean. The rhythm takes over. A distortion of time occurs. (83)

Driving numbs her pain. Maria's habitual taking to the freeway is motivated by an inner compulsion, constituting an act of almost psychopathological dimensions, as the Los Angeles freeway system seems to be the only stable element in her universe (Winchell 1989: 93); for small periods of time, the road turns into a space of regeneration:

> It was essential (to pause was to throw herself into unspeakable peril) that she be on the freeway by ten o'clock. Not somewhere on Hollywood Boulevard, not on her way to the freeway, but actually on the freeway. If she was not she lost the day's rhythm, its precariously imposed momentum. Once she was on the freeway and had maneuvered her way to a fast lane she turned on the radio at high volume and she drove. […] She drove it as a riverman runs a river, every day more attuned to its currents, its deceptions […]. (15-6)

Maria attunes herself to the currents and deceptions – i.e. that there is some order that regulates space – of the freeway as her daily medication, relying on a regular dosage of it for her emotional health. From a

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can only miss because she consistently misspells Maria's last name as "Wyatt").

psychoanalytic angle, the book suggests that driving time provides her with the singular moments when she does not repress her inner drives, when she lets go of control.

Without destination, Maria's routes are circular, "the San Diego to the Harbor, the Harbor up to the Hollywood, the Hollywood to the Golden State, the Santa Monica, the Santa Ana, the Pasadena, the Ventura" (ibid.). Time and again, it is the consoling thought of the freeway that eases her emotional torture and soothes her so she can manage to sleep at night:

> [S]he imagined herself driving, conceived audacious lane changes, strategic shifts of gear, the Hollywood to the San Bernardino and straight on out, past Barstow, past Baker, driving straight on into the hard white empty core of the world. She slept and did not dream. (162)

Paes de Barros contends that only on the road can Maria "hope to recover her self and to perhaps find some alternate way to live" (2004: 136), even though this space is perhaps less "blank" and "unnamed" than Paes de Barros suggests (ibid. 135). However, in this fictional 1960s' silver screen world, where every effort to communicate is thwarted; driving is "the last illusion of control over her life" (Chabot 1980: 56).[64] Maria's isolation and solitude are aggravated by every new attempt at establishing some connection with her surroundings. Therefore, any quest for new directions and peace of mind is caricatured by Didion (Primeau 1996: 92) and turned into compulsive para-nomadism.

Her "compulsive automobility", as Hugo Caviola calls it (1991: 192), not only expresses Maria's restless need to move, but also substitutes both home and a sense of place. The romance of the nuclear family is beyond reach for Maria, who is highly uncomfortable within the domestic sphere (Winchell 1989: 94); she rejects her own house by sleeping out by the pool "in a faded rattan chaise left by a former tenant" (16).[65] The way her Hollywood surroundings as well as Silver

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64 Despite many differences to the interpretations of Chabot and Paes de Barros, see also Geherin's reading, which asserts that the car is an "appropriate symbol of her escape: self-contained and womb-like" (1974: 67).

65 Focusing mainly on Didion's famous essays (such as "On the Road" and "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" from *The White Album*), Janis Stout notes Didion's dread of immobilization in the home; yet in *A Book of Common*

Wells, a former mining town and her childhood home in the Nevada desert which is used as a nuclear test range, are portrayed in *Play It as It Lays* remind the reader of what Marc Augé would call "non-lieux", non-places: in these arid wastelands that reflect the emptiness of the novel's characters, Maria cannot create a space of belonging (see e.g. 187, 201); to speak with T.S. Eliot, they are merely a "heap of broken images" (qtd. in Geherin 1974: 75). Caviola, in his study on space in postmodern literature, observes that unlike (male) heroes, postmodern female protagonists fail to trade uprootedness for a "heroic" commitment to placelessness; due to the typical lack of social relations and stable places in postmodernist literature, they "veer toward mental collapse" (1991: 192) in a downward spiral, as Maria does. Thus, he reads Maria as a late-modernist female hero in a postmodern world, struggling to understand and relate to the world, for order and orientation (57, 193).[66] Unlike Caviola, I would suggest that Maria is well aware of the futility of this struggle: "*there is no Silver Wells*", she says at the beginning of the narrative (9), sounding, with a notable rhythmical similarity, like the reverse of Dorothy's "There's no place like home" from *The Wizard of Oz*. Hence the struggle at the heart of Didion's narrative is not one for order, but much rather for finding a way to create a viable and livable space for female subjectivity in view of postmodern disorder and fragmentation – e.g. by reveling in the deceptive order of freeway traffic and by embracing the notion of life as a game, of playfulness. It is indicative of Didion's black-humored sarcasm that the text eventually creates this kind of livable

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Prayer and *Democracy*, Stout contends, "freedom of movement is reinterpreted as the curse of movement – an inability to remain still" (1998: 203).

66 By linking this endeavor to the protagonist's gender, Caviola of course implies that women need this sense of home more vitally than men in order to stay mentally sane. He concludes that Maria represents the new type of woman of the Sixties who, by being "cut off, or freed from social norms" becomes "vulnerable" (1991: 58). However, in my reading of *Play It as It Lays*, social norms for women created in the Hollywood star system are highly oppressive, resulting in Maria's eating disorders, drug abuse, and despair. As Katherine Mills states, Didion depicts "the New Hollywood woman as a sort of commodity – the 'trophy wife' – caught in the gap between the promise and pitfalls of Women's Liberation" (1999: 186). Caviola further claims that Maria "has cut herself off from harmony with nature through the abortion of her child" (1991: 55), disregarding that the termination of her pregnancy is forced onto her and thereby creating a view of maternity as natural, woman's biological destination.

space in a mental institution; at the end, Maria is hospitalized and finds peace: "Now I lie in the sun and play solitaire and listen to the sea […] and watch a hummingbird." (10)

Mark Royden Winchell has argued that while the overall tone of the novel is "spare, bleak, nihilistic", irony and humor serve a crucial function, undercutting "the sentimental, self-pitying nihilism inherent in Maria's story" (1989: 97). Yet its recalcitrant sarcasm, in addition to the plotline, is not the only distinctive features of Didion's postmodern aesthetics. As its title already suggests, the novel also draws on a postmodernist playfulness with respect to structure and form (cf. Ronald Sukenick's understanding of postmodern literature from the 1970s): an overall disjointed, retrospective story filled with numerous narrative gaps, the individual chapters are organized in a paratactical and elliptic manner, with hardly any transition between each and many near-empty pages and blank spaces on the printed page, paralleling the "hard white empty core" of the world that the protagonist longs to make sense of, but finally accepts as impenetrable.[67] The reader has to accept emptiness and ellipsis as constitutive of the story. *Play It as It Lays* thus seems to deny the existence of a bigger picture in which all the gaps would be filled; it programmatically negates the possibility of making sense of the world through narrative. Instead, the novel emphasizes that life resembles a succession of card-game moments and situations which are never fully transparent and to which one can only react spontaneously by finding temporary relief: "Automobility symbolizes the autonomy and mobility […] that Maria loses in New Hollywood" and that gives her, if only for short periods, "solace […], meaning and direction", Katherine Lawrie Mills contends (1999: 188).

That the book, like most of Didion's work, is set in California is not surprising in this respect. Both in spatial theory and American literature, Los Angeles has emerged as the epitome of postmodern urban conglomerates in the western hemisphere. For instance, in *Postmetropolis* and *Third Space*, geographer Edward Soja has famously argued that Los Angeles is the main site of, even the main protagonist in, future developments of urban planning and environments. Los Angeles, Soja's main argument goes, is the prototype of a post-Fordist, post-

[67] On Didion's textual constructions of whiteness, which is immanently based on a displacement of the racial Other, cf. Bröck (100-14).

modern cityscape, a global city with restructured urban forms and new spatial polarities, an example of fragmented social and geographical space marked by gated communities as well as revised enactments of urbanity. The historical transformation of L.A. into a postmodern city, Soja contends throughout his work, has also affected the cultural imaginary of this urban locale – his proof for the entanglement of the "real" and the "imagined".

Spatial descriptions in *Play It as It Lays* clearly reflect on these developments, portraying Los Angeles as a series of disjointed, centerless places seemingly without connection, coexisting on a horizontal, deeply fragmented plane. Freeways become all the more important in this context, for they emerge in the book as the life veins of L.A. and its inhabitants, generating at least the illusion that connection is possible. Maria is sensitive to that "deception" (16), yet although the freeway simultaneously embodies the protagonist's sense of dislocation and irrelevance, it remains, from her perspective, the only opportunity to get away from what is demanded of her, from social expectations of upper-middle class Hollywood femininity so severe they emotionally suffocate and crush her. Gradually, Maria's driving therapy yields unexpected results; instead of finding meaning in the highways, their deceptive suggestion of order is revealed and the protagonist's autonomous self that, throughout the book, is but a frustrated promise, melts into air entirely: "By the end of a week she was thinking constantly about where her body stopped and the air began, about the exact point in space and time that was the difference between *Maria* and *other.*" (170)

The fact that Maria keeps on playing a game with no discernable name or rules evokes at least a modest amount of optimism in the end. Even though Maria ends up in a mental institution (from where her story is told), she emerges as an almost heroic player in a game without winners, just survivors. That her para-nomadic wanderings on the L.A. freeway have familiarized her with the "hard white empty core of the world" plays a major part in Maria's survival.

At times mourning the loss of home and hope in seemingly unnomadic fashion, road stories like Didion's reflect and emphasize despair in women's continuing struggles with the limitations pertaining to a narrow, profoundly gendered conception of domesticity and the public-private divide. In Didion's book, Glancy's and Kadohata's gestures of resistance are frustrated by isolation, incarceration, and death, and

feminist spatialities are generated on the level of narration and form rather than in plot development and diegesis. The protagonist in *Play It as It Lays* cannot escape; even on the road, she is in many ways doomed by the complex entanglements of a gendered domestic and public sphere. Not only do road stories like Didion's thus craft a much bleaker view of para-nomadism, they also re-articulate major dilemma negotiated in women's writing ever since the ideology of the public-private divide began to shape, to historically varying degrees, white western women's lives in the second half of the 18th century.

Exit: Para-Nomad

At one point in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly discuss the road as an example of "striated", linear, rigidly regulated space: roads are systematically structured, point into certain directions, and are controlled by the state (1987/1980: 380). The concrete of the road is a smooth, "nomadic" space, they assert, but not roads themselves. Is it possible, then, to read (fictional) roads as para-nomadic space, open for re-figurations and -articulations, that can be appropriated in movement and even fashioned subversively?

While in Diane Glancy's and Cynthia Kadohata's road stories the protagonists make use of the road experience to transform, on their own terms, an ethnic legacy of displacement as well as the gendered spaces of the American highway, Joan Didion's *Play It as It Lays* is an example of a much bleaker version of para-nomadism, in which spatial regulation inhibits any such transformation. Paradoxically, Maria Wyeth recedes to the closed, striated, and highly regulated social space of a mental institution to escape the equally claustrophobic landscape in which both the public and the domestic sphere are entangled. In this postmodern tale, female transgression no longer typifies agency or resistance against a dominant order; Maria's bare survival is the most heroic statement of the text, and only in self-imposed incarceration and seclusion can the protagonist finally rest, having relegated any reasoning to doctors and officials: "To look for 'reasons' is beside the point. But because the pursuit of reasons is their business here, they ask me questions." (3)

What Glancy's, Kadohata's, and Didion's main characters share is that on the road, they experience manifold social and psychological

regulations and restrictions that limit their movements. These regulations are conditioned not by the genderedness of the fictional road-space alone (as in Didion), but also by ethnicity and social class (Glancy, Kadohata). Although a certain desire for a better place, typical of the quest narrative, is occasionally observable here, all of these protagonists move due to coercion, none of them bound for a final destination; thus, their wanderings are para-nomadically constructed.

The familiarity of the territory in which these textual movements take place is another important fictional element in this context. The facilitation of transgression and appropriation in order to weaken the "geography of fear" can be seen as a para-nomadic strategy that also pervades quest-narratives, as I have shown, as well as many picaresque texts. As all of the protagonists discussed in this chapter feel at home in movement – even though this feeling is fleeting in the more pessimistic versions of para-nomadism – they appropriate the spatiality of the road. Yet the para-nomadic female hero does not aim to grow roots or to form permanent connections to a territory that itself can only be transiently produced as social space through repetitive articulations of fictional movement and deterritorialization. Thus, these narratives dissociate themselves from the gesture of conquest (theorized by Sara Mills [1991] and other scholars of travel writing); they produce space not as a place on the map for their protagonists to mark and entrench, but rather counter the effects of ethnic, gendered, and economic spatial dislocation in flight. In this sense, Rüdiger Kunow's conclusion to his analysis of three novels by Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Gerald Vizenor could be easily applied to the road narratives I have called para-nomadic in this chapter:

> The inconclusiveness of ethnic [and other subaltern, AG] placements in […] fluid spaces is also reflected in the trajectory of movements represented in the texts: these movements are never really "homeward bound" but instead lead to positions *in transit* […]. (2002: 216)

Both the constant transitoriness of a movement that does not lead to any stable place and the transiency of the subject are radicalized, however, once the notion of home-space itself is abandoned; this is a defining feature of the picaresque paradigm in women's road-narratives, as I will argue in the following.

5.5. Interstice: Un-Weaving the Road: Para-Nomad Meets Postmodern Picara in Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address: An Amorous Journey*

> [F]iction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners […]. [W]hen the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.
>
> - Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Dutch-Canadian novelist and critical essayist[68] Aritha van Herk's novel *No Fixed Address: An Amorous Journey* (1986) ends with the death of the protagonist by way of a gradual narrative disintegration. The novel can be read in the context of a distinct feminine version of what Linda Hutcheon has termed the "Canadian Postmodern" (1988). Hutcheon asserts that the distinctiveness of postmodern women's literature – sometimes viewed by literary criticism as women's aesthetic conservatism – is largely due to its commitment to the feminist project of creating female subjectivity that must precede the project of postmodern deconstruction. She then parallels this gendered differentiation with the national differences between contemporary Canadian and U.S.-American postmodernism: what critics see as "important to postmodernism in America – its deconstructing of national myths and identity – is possible within Canada only when those myths and identity have first been defined" (1988: 6). This is of course an important observation regarding the background of Canadian women writers' "obsession" (ibid.) with parody – of historical myth, colonial history, and western literary genres.[69] In conclusion, Hutcheon emphasizes

68 Van Herk's collections of critical essays include *In Visible Ink: Crypto-Frictions* (1991) and *A Frozen Tongue* (1992), which mainly discusses women writers' difficulties in patriarchal societies (Rocard 1995: 92).

69 Besides van Herk, Hutcheon mentions Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro in this context; Atwood's recent re-writing of the Odyssey as *The Penelopiad* (2005) confirms the ongoing vitality of this tradition. I can only summarize Hutcheon's findings here and thus would like to point out that she differentiates in detail among Francophone and Anglophone traditions and thus paints a less monolithic picture than my summary might suggest.

commonalities in women's and Canadian literature: "[p]arody and irony […] become major forms of both formal and ideological critique in feminist and Canadian fiction alike" as "they allow writers to speak to their culture, from within, but without being totally co-opted by that culture", due to the cultural "distancing" that is involved in these textual strategies (ibid. 7); hence also her reading of van Herk's novel as an insistent intertextual response to Victorian women's travelogues of the Canadian West as well as to the dominant interpretation of Canadian prairie fiction (cf. Kroetsch 1979).

Aritha van Herk's novel epitomizes this type of Canadian parodic postmodernism on a number of levels. First, *No Fixed Address* playfully engages with generic conventions – of prairie fiction, the road novel, the romance, the gothic, and the picaresque – and diegetically ridicules stereotypically gendered behavior – such as masculine sexual adventures, or the separatist radicalism of "Women First" groups and fundamentalist Christian wives. Furthermore, the text parodies the Greek myth of Arachne and Athena, its main intertextual reference.[70] Just as important is its deconstruction of colonial concepts of and approaches to geographical space, of 'discovery' and exploration as well as their implications in the Canadian context. Van Herk's text thus reflects a fundamental distrust of space as "never an easily negotiated thing" (van Herk qtd. in Rocard 1995: 91).

Before turning to the picaresque road narrative in chapter six, I am going to argue, in what follows, that *No Fixed Address* mixes paranomadic mobility and postmodern 'picarisma' (Kaler 1991) in its negotiations of space on both an intradiegetic and a metatextual level. Typical of postmodern literary strategies, these levels are engaged with each other in a playfully dialogic manner and thus cannot be separated. *No Fixed Address* is a text that unfixes binary logic, narrative conventions and securities, and questions the historical legacy of conceptions of both 'Woman' and landscape in a colonial context.

In a Deleuzian reading of *No Fixed Address*, Marlene Goldman argues that van Herk "rejects the desire to 'fix' the prairie by imposing this type of 'grid' [that Rudy Wiebe talks of in 'Passages by Land'], fashioned from a male perspective"; instead, Goldmann argues, the

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70 Parody is understood here in Linda Hutcheon's sense of "repetition with critical distance" (1988: 6), discussed in more detail in my reading of Erika Lopez' *Flaming Iguanas* in chapter 6.3.

author creates alternative relationships between women and place based "not upon the capture and mastering of the landscape, but upon the impulse toward deterritorialization (1993: 22). Goldman concludes that this gesture is an instance of Deleuzian nomadology, an "ideologically subversive stance" (ibid.; see also Howells 2004: 204). Thus, van Herk's "portrayal of women who flee to or create unmapped territory is an attempt to escape the grid which fixes the image of Woman", as Goldman puts it (1993: 23), in *No Fixed Address* as well as in its sequel, *Places Far From Ellesmere: a Geografictione* (1990).

Narrative Uncertainty

No Fixed Address presents the reader with a frame narrator who is, contrary to literary convention, far from omniscient; her lack of control and extremely limited knowledge of the story is another distinctly postmodern element in *No Fixed Address*.[71] Introduced in four italicized sections, all entitled "Notebook on a Missing Person", a second-person narrator traces Arachne Manteia[72] in what is ultimately an unsuccessful endeavor.[73] In contrast, the third-person narration that makes up the rest of the novel mostly adopts Arachne's point of view; here, the reader learns of her story as a successful underwear sales representative who travels around British Columbia and Saskatchewan in her black 1959 vintage Mercedes. This part of the story, told in 64 episodes, traces back the events from before the protagonist's birth up to her disappearance. The narrative does not follow a coherent logic or linear storyline as the episodes progress, inserting a number of fantastic elements in(to) the story and leaving many gaps: when Arachne suffers from temporary fits of amnesia (e.g. in "Ferryman", "Cedar

71 Ian MacLaren even equates the second-person narrator with the realist reader (qtd. in Goldman 1993: 29), whose efforts to plot Arachne's movements are ultimately thwarted; Eva Darias-Beautell, in an unusual (auto)biographical reading of the novel, sees her as Arachne's biographer (2001: 86).

72 Arachne's last name refers to mantics, the art of divination her mother Lanie practices, as well as to the praying mantis, the insect that devours her partner after mating (in a manner similar to Arachne 'devouring' her sexual 'road-kill').

73 On the narratological effects of second-person narration, cf. Dieter Meindl's essay "You and I: Concerning Second-Person Narrative" (1998).

Sleep", and "Aerial"), for instance, the reader, like the protagonist herself, is denied an explanation of events. In similar non-linear fashion, the narrated events continually switch between various episodes from the protagonist's past on the one hand and the diegetic present of her life as a sales representative on the other.

Arachne's mother Lanie is an orphaned British "war bride" (van Herk 1998/1986: 40-1) who emigrated to Vancouver with Private Toto Manteia and becomes a reader of tea-leaves, while Toto transforms into a "shy young man with little education and no special skills", working in a sawmill. Pregnant with Arachne, Lanie unhappily looks "into desultory life; only in movies did characters long for adventure, follow it, seize it" (63). Gabriel Greenberg, a wealthy customer of Lanie's who later bequeaths his Mercedes to Arachne, names the unborn child. Embodying the arch-angel Gabriel, he visits the pregnant Lanie at home and detects an "Arachnid", a "large spider with a belly as rotund as Lanie's" and "only seven legs. But that did not hinder [the spider's] design or ambition" (64) – once Arachne is born, she will likewise allow no obstacles to obstruct her plans. Lanie takes a job as a waitress, leaving Arachne "without a mother hovering over her progress" (66); as a consequence of this lack of parental control, Arachne grows up a runaway child, climbing fences (31) and discovering her surroundings on her own. Arachne later "isn't convinced that she has a mother; Lanie's connection to her feels tenuous and unproven" (28); yet she realizes that "[s]he and Lanie wanted the same thing" (30): freedom of mobility. In that sense, Arachne continues her mother's story.[74]

Unsurprisingly, Arachne feels stuck both in school – "relentless captivity" (135) – and the world at large, learning the limits of a gendered spatial economy at age eleven when she tries to get a newspaper route but is rejected due to her sex (143). From Toto, she learns to transgress these boundaries imposed upon her: initiating Arachne into disguise as a practice of resistance, he tricks the newspaper clerk into giving his daughter a route by getting her a boy's haircut and renaming her Raki (a nickname her mother continues to use). When she gets

[74] My interpretation of Arachne's relationship to Lanie is not quite as negative as Susanne Becker's, who, in a discussion of gothic elements in *No Fixed Address*, detects "gothic doubleness" in the novel's ever present "imprisoning mother-daughter relationship" (1992: 121).

beaten up and robbed by a neighborhood boy in the street, she realizes that "[t]his then was life. It would never change" (145) and, this time on her own, takes revenge on the boy (156).[75] She leads an all-boy gang of "misfits and discards" (155), the Black Widows, at age 15, and gets involved in petty criminality, "celebrat[ing] the end of school by stealing hubcaps that she sold" (133). At age 19, Toto throws her out when she suggests Gabriel might be her biological father (128).

She becomes a bus driver in Vancouver and falls in love with her "savior" (58) Thomas Telfer, a Calgary cartographer of upper-middle class background and lover of old maps like those that decorate his house.[76] Arachne decides to leave Vancouver "without farewell" (73) and moves in with Thomas, who helps her find the sales representative job.[77] Although Arachne refuses to wear any underwear herself, "adamantly determined not to be her own best advertisement" (6), she is the most successful seller in her company. Driving from small-town to small-town, she is happy about "traveling to travel" (the title of one chapter, 132), also almost compulsively embarking on numerous sexual adventures on the road.

During lunch break at a cemetery,[78] Arachne meets Josef, an old Serbian refugee who is infantilized by his daughter and detained at home most of the time. Having experienced displacement earlier in his

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[75] As Strobel notes, this scene is adapted from the classic Spanish picaresque *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), in which a similar street robbery initiates the hero into *picarismo* (1998: 217).

[76] Thomas' name recalls the Scottish engineer Thomas Telford (1757-1834), after whom a form of road pavement, composed of compacted and rolled stones of various sizes, was named (cf. also Hutcheon 1988: 123).

[77] Darias-Beautell convincingly argues that Thomas represents Arachne's "only hook to reality and perhaps the text's only reason for realism" (2001: 92), yet both are abandoned as the novel progresses (and Arachne ultimately leaves Thomas). That Arachne sees him as her savior, asking him also to "turn her into a respectable woman" (van Herk 1998/1986: 137), is not a plea for inner transformation but for a necessary layer of disguise, as Susanne Becker argues (1992: 123).

[78] The cemetery is a typical setting in Canadian literature, as Margaret Atwood states: a site of exploring the past for the "symbolic purposes of unity and identity" and exemplary of a "distinct archaeological motif in Canadian literature" (2004: 134). That Arachne and Josef – both with a family history of immigration behind them – are both drawn to a skull that surfaces from the ground also marks that they are both explorers of Canada and its past.

life, Josef is deprived yet again of the freedom to go and stay where he pleases. Arachne clearly identifies with him: "She knows nothing of what he speaks, but she recognizes a chord of the same bitter displacement that she remembers tasting. East-ender Raki shredded by her own time and place." (186) Arachne takes Josef with her on the road to help him escape his home 'internment' until she is arrested for "kidnapping, transportation out of the province and intent to extort" (191). Thomas bails her out and Arachne starts her flight, first going west along the Trans-Canada highway into the Rocky Mountains (198), where she gets stuck overnight in a resort hotel hosting conferences of both fundamentalist Christian women and "Women's libbers" (204). There, she tricks one woman into giving her a check for the Mercedes Arachne promises to sell to her, but she escapes in it the next morning, headed south. Without aim, she changes directions repeatedly, winding up at the dead end of an island before taking a ferry to proceed north. The last twelve episodes depart from a realist narrative mode (see e.g. Lutz/Hindersmann 1991: 15), reflecting Arachne's fragmentary consciousness, as she suffers from amnesic fits after an episode in which she eats fugu at a sushi restaurant.[79] Though the last episode, "Aerial" (52-3), suggests that two geologists she accidentally meets near Macmillan Pass ("the end of the fucking road for everybody", 250) might be undercover policemen who force her into a helicopter to take her back to the realm of the l/Law – a possibility completely disregarded by the critics – the final "Notebook" section of *No Fixed Address* presents a different story. The frame narrator's, trying to track down Arachne, finds her last traces on a dirt road:

> *A few miles up the road a flash of color makes you slam on your brakes. You slide out and step into the ditch, bend to retrieve it. The panties are gray with dust but their scarlet invitation has not faded.* Ladies' Comfort. *Another few miles and you find a peach pair, then a turquoise, then sunshine yellows. Each time you stop, shake the dust from their silky surface and toss them on the seat beside you. There is no end to the panties; there will be no end to this road.* (260; italics in the original)

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[79] Fugu is not only the name for a toxic puffer fish, but also recalls fugue, an amnesic phenomenon: the affected person seems to be conscious, to make rational decisions, but upon recovery remembers nothing. That the word stems from the Latin *fuga* ('flight') is perhaps most obvious (see also Lutz/Hindersmann 1991, who further suggest the musical fugue as yet another linguistic trace that defers hermeneutic closure).

The ambiguity of its ending is perhaps the novel's most 'carnivalesque' moment, in the Bakhtinian sense of a rupture of convention, logic, and the symbolic order (cf. *Rabelais and His World*, 1968). As I will discuss in the next chapter (6.1.), the carnivalesque has also been an important element in the picaresque literary tradition, a tradition that *No Fixed Address* has been said to act upon and play with (see, for instance, the studies of Strobel [1998] and Carrera [1994]). By denying narrative closure to Arachne's story, the frame narration highlights ambiguity instead, suspending the process of interpretation on the side of the reader: in the end, the book leaves us with questions rather than answers.

(Un)mapping

Conceptually, mapping and unmapping are central to *No Fixed Address*, as a number of critics have argued (e.g. Darias-Beautell 2001: 152-62). On the one hand, mapping produces orientation necessary for many forms of travel (especially for the sales representative's) and thus helps Arachne with her process of "learning travel" (van Herk 1998/1986: 132) – Arachne "thinks of maps, their legends, their size, their measurement of distance […], imagining the shape of the map that would lead her straight home to [Thomas'] house" (37); she caresses Thomas' maps, "covets them the way he does, images that trace out hope, mapping an act of faith, a way of saying, I have been here, someone will follow, so I must leave a guide" (94). The novel is thus consistent with Canadian literature's obsession with maps as a necessary instrument of orientation and survival, as Margaret Atwood observes in her seminal study *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* of 1972 (2004: 26-7). As Arachne becomes a professional traveler, however, she finds the maps available to her increasingly unhelpful: "the roads have potholes, signs are changed, her maps are out of date […]. Where there were once bridges, there are ferries; where there were once ferries, the road runs itself into a muddy flat of river." (van Herk 1998/1986: 23) As maps capture space and translate it onto grids on paper, Arachne realizes their unfaithfulness to what they claim to represent; the map as text cannot guide her anymore and Arachne develops a radically different relation to space. Her own version of (un)mapping subsequently contradicts Thomas' cartographies,

which appear to immobilize both territory and subject: during her flight, she wishes "she could take Thomas with her, but he is drawn by his maps, outlined by the lines that shape landscape. Arachne wants to sink into it." (214) Arachne wants to explore, not to tame geographical and psychological space – a profound difference between the settler and explorer mentalities that Margaret Atwood draws attention to: "explorers enter chaos and emerge from it; they do not try to impose order on it" (2004: 144): exploration, like picaresque travel, is also never-ending: "you can't find anything or get anywhere permanent" (ibid. 139).

In *No Fixed Address*, mapping and cartography are, though not wholly rejected, reconceptualized in a way that they do not impose state-sanctioned order and control on geographical space (cf. Hutcheon 1988: 124). The map is transformed by Arachne's "sink[ing] into" the land. The map as product and mapping as process are contrasted in Arachne and Thomas: while Thomas orders space by way of cartographic practice, Arachne's mode of creating space is rhizomatic; she does not conceive of herself as the observer, the measurer of land; rather, she collapses interiority and exteriority, subject and object space:

> From Calgary roads spider over the prairie. Arachne pores over Thomas' maps, the lines enticing her to quest beyond the city's radius. […] She is learning to travel, the pace and progression of journey, the multifarious seduction of movement. […] [Thomas] is the author of those maps but he has never known their ultimate affirmation, the consummation of the pact between traveler and traveled. He only draws them; she traces them for him, leaving the pen-line for her passing. (132)

Thomas maps the roads, Arachne drives them: "His is the product; hers is the process", as Linda Hutcheon aptly puts it (1988: 130). The land is not viewed as a separate entity from Arachne's perspective as she develops her spidery qualities of weaving space in a "centrifugal, uncentered, alternative pattern outside the requirements of 'shape' at the heart of both female underwear and cartography" (Darias-Beautell 2001: 154). Women's underwear, giving shape and tying the female body, parallels the instruments of cartography in this way in the text, as the land parallels Woman's body. Arachne's sinking into the land not in stasis but via movement, as well as her refusal to wear the

product she *represents*, is thus also her defiance of Woman's representation:

> *No Fixed Address*'s interrogation of cartography does not only imply a rejection of […] the map as paradigm of territorial control […], this questioning also signals an escape from the framing of the female body/subject. This issue of a double colonization haunts the text […], subtly alerting the reader to the complicituous relation between Western phallogocentrism and cartography. (Darias-Beautell 2001: 155)[80]

The topos of Woman as land, Man as traveler is contested by Arachne's alternative cartography. Maps, in many of van Herk's books and essays, are an important site for challenging the spatial order. With it, colonial and patriarchal legacies are confronted, and against it, alternative relations to nation, land, and geographical space are envisioned (Darias-Beautell 2001: 19). Although Arachne's spatial practice of para-nomadic wandering uses maps as a means of escape from systematized, gendered space at first (Goldman 1993: 28), she consequently radically transforms them into "map-webs", as Darias-Beautell calls them (2001: 1), emphasizing the "unbridgeable gap between drawing (the cartographer) and racing (the traveller), […] between spatial representation and the specific experience of space in the text" (ibid. 153).

Unsurprisingly, the protagonist is reluctant to adopt a 'see-all' perspective of totality on two separate occasions, in the helicopter episode at the end of the novel and when Thomas takes her on a hot air balloon for her birthday (181-2). While intrigued by the view from the balloon, her thoughts immediately drift back to the ground: she "thinks of traveling, spidering her own map over the intricate roads of the world" (182). This difference of perspective is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's famous remarks from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center, observing New York City:

> The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. […] I wonder what is the source of this pleasure of 'seeing the whole', of looking down

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80 The notion of phallogocentric cartography does not rely on a biological division of men and women into phallogocentric and non-phallogocentric practice. Women can of course also partake in hegemonic cultural enterprises – one only has to think of the tradition of female exploration and complicity in colonial projects.

> on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts. […] It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. […] The voyeur-god created by this fiction […] must disentangle himself from the murky intertwining daily behaviours and make himself alien to them. The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins. (1988: 91-3)

Arachne dislikes this kind of immobilization, with respect to both herself and to the territory she travels. As an arachnid, a spider-figure, she is a weaver rather than a viewer, "foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions" (de Certeau 1988: 93). On the other hand, spatial practice (i.e., the tactics of lived space), in de Certeau's view, resists and eludes immobilized "disciplinary space" (96; cf. chapter two in this book). Similarly, Arachne is intrigued by "webbed maps" (van Herk 1998/1986: 140), and her spatial practice consists in a weaving of a net-work of roads, a spatiality transgressing the departure-arrival dichotomy by always shooting yet another thread, resembling a spider's restlessness (see Lutz/Hindersmann 1991: 16, Darias-Beautell 2001: 101):

> Arachne travels to travel. Her only paradox is arriving somewhere, her only solution is to leave for somewhere else. Still, she returns to Thomas. The maps he draws and colors that year are unimaginably beautiful, while Arachne travels a smorgasbord of roads, turning corners at a whim, seeding the car's stately body with prairie dust. […] [S]he is drawn into a canvas; now the road curves this way, now that. […] She has never been so deep in country […]. (van Herk 1998/1986: 132-3)

In the course of the novel, this being "deep in country" marks the dissolution of Arachne's subjectivity. The collapse of self and space into each other becomes a threatening experience, resonant with the negative para-nomadism of Joan Didion's Maria Wyeth. At this point, Arachne's ultimate vanishing in space is foreshadowed: "She's relegated the leader of the Black Widows to a broom closet, […] the paper route to childhood, the bus driver to experience. She is not Raki at all but a tied and tagged creation of a world she doesn't belong to" (174). Her para-nomadic spatial deterritorialization is at odds with the world's ordering of space, so much so that Arachne's alienation leads to disappearance. As Goldman observes, the protagonist's transformation, from this rather bleak perspective, draws "relationships among

mapped and unmapped territory and female identity"; the novel "examines what happens when women do not ultimately align themselves with the State" (1993: 27). Yet Arachne's eventual disappearance is narrated neither cynically nor nostalgically as is the case with Maria Wyeth (in *Play It as It Lays*); rather, van Herk suggests the defiance of Woman's (and the landscape's) conventional textual representation, envisioning an alternative relation between women and the Canadian landscape based not on a (masculine) "erotics of space", the subtitle of Robert Kroetsch's 1979 reading of prairie fiction, nor on the literary representation of geographical space per se (Darias-Beautell 2001: 153). Here, van Herk distances herself from her mentor Kroetsch, who interprets "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction" in terms of a man/motion – woman/stasis opposition, offering a specifically Western-Canadian, feminist alternative (see Kröller 1991: 197). Instead of symbolic penetration, possession, and taming, van Herk suggests an experience of merging, a dissolution of borders to be celebrated. In addition to the novel's ending, a second episode in which this textual politics becomes evident is when Arachne and Josef visit a rock named "Wild Woman", shaped "like a word volcano": they "disappear, vanish into another element […]. Arachne looks at the sky, at the circle of world below them, and begins to dance" (189). From "this nipple of land on the breast of the world, immensely high and windswept", she briefly realizes "she can see everything, everything", but then prefers to take Josef's hand and pull "him with her, down to one of the hill's folds, flanked against the nose of the cone. And there they find the Wild Woman" (189-90). Notably, this "vanish[ing] into another element" is not depicted as an exclusively "feminine" experience, yet it is just as significant that the protagonist is accompanied by an immigrant man: the text thus suggests this approach to the land – 'becoming-land' rather than being apart from it, or inhabiting and cultivating it as exterior environment – as an alternative to hegemonic spatial practices, which rest on the exclusion of any 'Other'.

Apart from the novel's deterritorializations, another para-nomadic element consists in the protagonist's relation to travel. For an arachnid creature, life rests in the production of webs, of roads for the spider's travels and bounty-hunting; thus, like the spider's, Arachne's life on the move is compulsory rather than based on an autonomous choice for adventure. Already at an early stage in the novel, she tells

her “confidante” (124) Thena[81] that her car “drives her” (127) rather than vice versa, and that she loves her sales rep job for the mobility it provides her with, exceeding, in a circular manner resembling the spider’s weaving of her web, the limited territory of the bus routes of Vancouver and Calgary (yet remaining within specific Canadian prairie regions).

Although this territory seems to be Arachne’s natural habitat, the genderedness of travel inhibits her from feeling at home on the road:

> Arachne wishes that she were a man. Driving seems so much easier for them, reaching, turning the wheel. She wants to drive a bus because it is safe […]. Arachne loves to drive, she lives to drive, it is the only activity that convinces her that life is not static and fuzzy. […] Driving seems to be the only sensible way to deal with the world. […] She is infatuated not with machines but with motion, the illusion that she is going somewhere, getting away. (51-2)

Like her bus driving, all of her traveling jobs confront Arachne with a gendered spatiality, yet she refuses to abide by spatio-social laws, aware that as the driver she actively intervenes in this restrictive spatiality. The stereotypical masculine fetish for machines she harbors early in the novel, resonant with “a legacy of conquest” (P. Nelson-Limerick), is replaced with a fetish for motion. Driving a city bus and later her Mercedes, she takes advantage of her role as the driver – to attract men, for instance (e.g. when she picks up Basilisk, an African-American pianist, or Thomas), or to escape. As the story develops and Arachne is charged with having misused her automobility to ‘abduct’ Josef, she recognizes her own compulsion to flee, unable even to stop and face a trial unlikely to sentence her to imprisonment:

> Where is she going? If she stopped to answer that, she would stop moving, the irrevocable and intractable hum of the tires, the swish of wind through the open window, the hot smell of the car’s upholstery

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[81] The Thena-character is very close to the implied author, figuring as the major source for the researcher and insisting, in her interview, on Arachne not being dead (cf. 195); in a metafictional commentary, we further read: “Only Thena knows the whole truth. For what is a traveller without a confidante? It is impossible to fictionalize a life without someone to oversee the journey.” (125) Clearly, van Herk also follows the picaresque convention of confidante-characters here.

> and the pedals under her feet providing the impetus, the urgency to continue, follow the carved pavement, the twist of metal guard rails on and on and on. Farther, not toward but away, on the one hand the image of the old man's face […]; and on the other hand the image of he concrete cell where she spent the night, and all for giving that one old man a small escape. She does not think of where he must be now. She drives relentlessly, driving in and out of herself, a fierce evasion that can bring her nowhere but is itself enough. (222)

Perhaps a dire consequence of her extreme horror of immobility and rest, Arachne imagines a new geographical space in the north, an imagined territory she could "settle in, colonize. But what has she to offer to a raw place?" (248). The mere thought of colonization seems so at odds with herself that again, Arachne can only think of moving.[82] Wondering "if there are other roads, or if she has reached the last, the final one" (ibid.), she intuitively continues her escape north, a plot development that suggests that the notion of destination is beyond her imagination, for her movement is without aim and does not follow the logic of departure and arrival.

Two possible readings of *No Fixed Address*' ending have been proposed, one in which van Herk's female hero Arachne Manteia dies, another in which she merely disappears.[83] As contradictory as the ending's interpretations might appear at first glance, both acknowledge that the female hero cannot and will not be captured – both diegetically and narratively. Echoing postmodern detective fiction, the narrative does not fill the gaps in the story and offer a 'bigger picture' in which all questions are answered and the mystery (in this case, Arachne as "missing") is resolved. Instead, disappearance is suggested as the successful end-point of the attempt to escape the social and symbolic orders. We will never know whether the geologists are undercover policemen, whether Arachne is arrested or escapes; closure is denied to both her traveling and to her story as these become one: Arachne (and, by extension, the female subject per se) is alive only while moving;

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82 Echoed here is van Herk's uneasiness with notions of conquest, colonization, and the frontier that she has expressed in a 1995 interview (Rocard 1995: 90).

83 The former conclusion is suggested in the readings of *No Fixed Address* by Goldman (1993: 29) and Hutcheon (1988: 125), while Carrera (1994: 438) as well as Lutz and Hindersmann (1991: 19-20) point out the protagonist's defeat of death. The ending's ambiguity is acknowledged, however, by all of these studies.

the text envisions her as a figure who cannot be pinned down, who defies conventional narration and thus cannot be captured by the striated spatial and linguistic regime of the phallogocentric system.[84] Similar to the linguistic signifier in poststructuralist thought and reminiscent of Cynthia Kadohata's *Floating World*, the protagonist is a metaphor of the 'floating signifier', created by a never-ending process of deferral that will infinitely produce traces. Thus, the ending's ambiguity must necessarily remain so both on the diegetic and metatextual level: Arachne will be forever a "missing person" (e.g. 1), neither (or both) dead nor alive.[85] Her status cannot be ascertained as she is continually escaping from the l/Law of State and society (in the diegesis) as well as that of narrative closure, gender, and genre (metatextually). Not even the second-person frame narrator, who researches the protagonist's whereabouts, has any authority over Arachne's story – quite to the contrary, she is finally trapped by her object of study, who tricks the narrator to abandon her search for "*the real story*" (195) and to follow her into the unknown, just like the reader is lured from conventional beginnings into the uncertainties of postmodern fiction.[86] Again, this is a markedly gendered appropriation of a tradition of exploration, of "venturing into the unknown" (Atwood 2004: 135) in either a psy-

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[84] With Spivak (1983: 170), phallogocentrism can be defined as a structure of argument centered on the sovereignty of the engendering self and the determinacy of meaning. Jacques Derrida's emphasis on the trace works against this structure, focusing on the indeterminacy of meaning instead.

[85] As Linda Hutcheon states, this act of simultaneously rewriting and challenging subjectivity has been one of the major forces in rendering postmodernism a paradoxical enterprise for feminists (1988: 6). In this context, note also the cyclical structure of the novel, which begins and ends with the frame narrator's "Notebook on a Missing Person".

[86] Following Howells (2004: 204), I would argue here that the unknown refers much more to the "unknown" possibilities of women's textual (self-) representation than to the space where "the mapped road ends in northwestern Canada" that Hutcheon proposes (1988: 127). While it is true that the roads in the north are no longer "concrete" (in both meanings of the term) but have turned into disordered and shifting gravel paths – and thus from striated into smooth space – Arachne finds, at the end of her story, a bronze marker pin from the National Geodetic Survey in the northern wilderness, bearing Thomas' insignia. Her prior overlooking of a "valley untouched, unexplored, uncivilized" (van Herk 1998/1986: 253) is thus starkly contrasted by her realization that allegedly "blank" spaces have seized to exist, as even the "wilderness" has undergone colonization.

chological, cultural, or geographical sense, in Canadian literature (ibid. 136).

Arachnology

The un-fixing and deterritorialization of (traditional representations of) Woman also presents the context in which van Herk rewrites the mythological story of the Lydian weaver Arachne, who challenges the goddess Athena, parthogenetically conceived from Zeus' forehead, to a weaving contest in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[87] While Athena pleases the gods with her weaving, Arachne exposes the Olympian gods' lechery, which drives Athena into such a rage that she finally transforms Arachne into a spider, condemning her to continue weaving forever.[88] For one, the hostility between Athena and Arachne is rewritten in *No Fixed Address* as friendship, "in order to correct [the myth's] fatalism and its prejudiced view of female relationships" (Kröller 1991: 196-7), yet without collapsing difference:[89] Thena upholds a middle-class lifestyle, even though she is definitely more radical and disillusioned in her view of men than Arachne, thus reversing Athena's role of protecting patriarchy (Strobel 1998: 222). Yet they are "equally disillusioned with the world" (van Herk 1998/1986: 114): thus, van Herk implicitly endorses women's solidarity across lines of difference, at least on an individual level (while ridiculing feminist groups based on sameness such as the Christians conferring to "talk about women's ministry in the world", 202; notably, these groups appear in the enclosed interior of a hotel; cf. Becker 1992: 127).

Second, by sending Arachne on the road, van Herk's book has her break away from conventional ideas of domesticity, symbolized by the loom. Instead, the text "weav[es] [her] into the Canadian land-

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87 As Karin Beeler states in the introduction to the 1998 edition of *No Fixed Address*, the revision of mythical and Biblical female characters is an ongoing enterprise in van Herk's fiction and women's writing in general, an endeavor to foreground women's experiences as well as to rewrite classical representations of Woman.

88 My sources for recounting this classical story were the essay by Lutz/Hindersmann (1991: 15-6) and Darias-Beautell's study (2001).

89 The chapter in which Arachne and Thena are contrasted is entitled "And difference".

scape" (Beeler 1998: ii) and transforms the loom into the (spinning) wheel of the car. Arachne's weaving is no longer emblematic of patriarchal oppression (here, the prohibition against criticizing the father-god Zeus); she also does not wear the woven goods that have traditionally tied and bound women's bodies into separate spheres (Darias-Beautell 2001: 19) – Ladies' Comfort Ltd. underwear – but sells them. The comic un-weaving of the story of fashion as a potential accomplice in women's oppression – "*important to remember*" (van Herk 1998/1986: 3) – is therefore another emancipatory aspect of *No Fixed Address*. As we are told by the second-person narrator in the novel's prologue: "*We have forgotten our imprisonment, relegated underwear to the casual and unimportant.* […] *No art, no novel, no catalogue of infamy has considered he effect of underwear on the lives of petty rogues*" (3) – thus starts the story of van Herk's 'petty rogue' protagonist. Her condemnation to endless weaving is transformed from a verdict into an asset, ethnological nomadism into para-nomadic writing, as she captures "road jockeys", her sexual 'prey', in the imaginary net she is 'spinning' with the wheels of her black Mercedes (e.g. 19, 84), a "magic" car (127), a "blessing from the past, one talisman against her uncertain future" (58). But not only is the car a symbol of sexual and socio-spatial emancipation, allowing Arachne to expand the radius of her operations as well as her professional success, it is also erotically charged for the protagonist (Lutz/Hindersmann 1991: 17), a "vibrating machine" (van Herk 1998/1986: 208) that constantly reminds her of the erotic adventures of the road.[90]

Spider, spinning wheel, loom, and shuttle are dissociated from their historical domestic emplacement, and likewise, women's fiction is dissociated from the domestic novel, now playing with (conventionally masculine) Canadian prairie fiction and road novels, as well as with the picaresque tradition (cf. also Carrera's essay, 1994). This is the third and perhaps most significant aspect of the rewritten mythical spiderwoman Arachne: storytelling itself as the weaving and unweaving, the territorialization and deterritorialization, of words. It is

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[90] While Lutz' and Hindersmann's reading of the car in the novel as an affirmation of the American dream on the one hand and a "gender-specific refutation of the male dream" (1991: 17) sounds somewhat confused, their indication of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* as an intertext for *No Fixed Address* is important in the context of a feminine appropriation of the car as a symbol of fetishization and mobility.

perhaps not a coincidence that Nancy K. Miller, in a 1986 essay that examines theoretical works by Freud, Barthes, and J. Hillis Miller, has termed her conception of feminist textual practice "Arachnologies":[91]

> [W]e are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue – this texture – the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of [her] web. […] The subject in this model is not fixed in time or space, but suspended in a continual moment of fabrication. (1986: 270)

Recalling Roland Barthes' erasure of the author-subject, this is what Miller calls "hyphology" (*hyphos* being the tissue and the spider's web, ibid. 270). By contrasting this hyphology, then, with an "arachnology", Miller tries to bring the "writerly" back into textual practice by recasting the author-subject as a spiderwoman "*against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity" (271). Miller's essay reads like a response, from a feminist philosopher's perspective, to poststructuralist literary theory of the 1970s and 80s, which was often perceived as countering literary criticism's emerging problematization of the author/artist as a gendered being. For Miller, thus, the "task of feminist criticism [is] to read for Arachne […], for emblems of a female signature, […] to restore woman to her text" (287) and to therefore construct "a poetics attached to gendered bodies that may have lived in history" (288).[92]

At first glance at least, and against this arachnology, van Herk's novel seems to be more of a hyphological kind (Darias-Beautell 2001: 226), concerned with the textual web itself and the complete *erasure* of notions such as subject, identity, and center (cf. Strobel's reading of the novel), rather than with the embodiment of a gendered subjectivity in literature. That *No Fixed Address* attacks these concepts is certainly true; however, van Herk's staging of the 'death of the author' works not within, but rather against Barthes' framework: weaving the second-person narrator along with the reader into the making of fic-

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91 Miller's essay is referred to briefly also by Strobel (1998: 235) and extensively by Darias-Beautell (2001: 223-7).

92 Miller's claim to a "female signature" leans heavily on Hélène Cixous' notion of *l'écriture feminine* (though Cixous is not mentioned in her essay). For a reading of *No Fixed Address* in the context of French feminist theory, cf. esp. Strobel (1998: 236-55).

tion by using the (in)difference of the pronoun "you" in the "Notebook on a Missing Person", *No Fixed Address* renders the distinction between author/narrator and reader impossible (cf. Hutcheon 1988: 131-2, Strobel 1998: 248-50) – not by *erasing*, but by *interweaving* the two and thus practicing Miller's "arachnology". This parallels the interweaving of mythical and diegetic past and present – which often become indistinguishable, Arachne having "no fixed address" in this play of intra- and extra-diegetic levels. Implied author and narrator, in turn, are conflated in the first and last chapter, when it is revealed that we are following someone interested in women's fashion whose relation to Arachne is based on a newspaper article about her disappearance, the incentive not only for tracing her wanderings but also for the narration.

As the main part of the novel is the invention of a non-omniscient narrator (Strobel 1998: 231) who mostly disappears behind the story, the narrator herself has thus "no fixed address". As Katja Strobel argues, the "missing person" then refers to both Arachne and the first-person narrator, the grammatical first-person:

> Die Negation des sprechenden/erzählenden Ichs erweist sich so als Negation des Subjekts, das sich nicht nur als Ich, als Ursprung seiner Rede bzw. seines Texts und Garant seiner Bedeutung in der Ordnung der Zeichen etabliert, sondern die Geschlossenheit der grammatischen ersten Person in sein Selbstverständnis als außersprachliche Person, als einheitliches Subjekt seines nicht-sprachlichen Wollens und Handelns überträgt. Daß gerade diese Vorstellung von Subjekthaftigkeit in *No Fixed Address* radikal verabschiedet wird, zeigt sich, über die Auflösung der Figuren […] des Texts hinaus, an der Verabschiedung des Ichs als sprachlichem Repräsentanten des Subjekts […]. (1998: 233)[93]

[93] "The negation of the speaking/narrating I thus proves to be a negation of the subject, which establishes itself not only as an I, as originator of its speech or its texts and guarantor of meaning in the order of signs, but which confers the consolidation of the grammatical first person onto its self-conception as an extralinguistic person, as the unitary subject of its non-linguistic desires and acts. That it is this particular concept of subjectivity which is radically abandoned in *No Fixed Address* can be seen, in addition to the dissolution of the characters […], in the dismissal of the I as a linguistic representative of the subject […]." In the following, all translations from Strobel's book are my own.

Drawing on this reading, the "ultimate frontier" the frame narrator mentions (van Herk 1998/1986: 258) thus refers perhaps more to the potential of feminist postmodern aesthetics and literary representation than to any geographical region:

> *This is the ultimate frontier, a place where the civilized melt away and the meaning of mutiny is unknown, where manners never existed and family backgrounds are erased* […]. *You'll be nowhere, at the end of a road built by the American army* […]. *You have fallen off the edge. There is no ocean or continent beyond, only the enormity of spectrum and range and latitude of, dear God, four-dimensional nothingness.* […] *Although you know you must turn back, you continue, no longer on a quest for an ill-defined traveler but for the infinite anguish of uncivilized territory. You've lit out and now you can't stop.* (ibid. 258-9)

The quest for the female subject is abandoned for what the narrator characterizes, tongue-in-cheek, as 'uncivilized', unexplored territory, as any notion of self as a knowable identity derived from difference from an-Other is progressively denied in *No Fixed Address*; boundaries between self and other are gradually liquefied (Strobel calls this "progressive Selbstentgrenzung" ["progressive self-delimitation"]; 1998: 226). With narrative authority and unity displaced and self and subjectivity dismantled, the title of the novel refers not only to the protagonist's para-nomadic, anti-centric mobility and overall picaresque shiftiness – which disavows concepts of home, arrival, or settlement – but also to (implied) author, narrator, and (implied) reader, all of whom can only follow the traces of *difference* ("arachnological" embodiment rests, it appears, in the fact that all three dimensions are constructed as female; cf. Hutcheon 1988: 131). That these traces lead the reader into the Arctic north of Western Canada is all the more telling in view of van Herk's conception of the North as a space of polyvocality that forecloses essentialism by an often conflicting jumble of narrative and narrated voices (cf. van Herk's essay "Piloting North", qtd. in Rosenthal 2004: 306).[94]

Van Herk's un-weaving and unmaking of the traditional distinctions in literary theory and practice notwithstanding, *No Fixed Ad-*

[94] One could argue here that van Herk's is a highly idealized, romantic notion of the North, although the geodetic survey marker Arachne finds indicates otherwise, as I have argued above (for a further discussion of this issue, cf. Darias-Beautell 2001: 160).

dress subtly creates, I would argue, the "poetics attached to gendered bodies" Nancy K. Miller (1986) argues for. Not only are the main characters, narrator and author women – men are displaced from the narrative center, the center as such under erasure – the "we" of the prologue unambiguously calls upon women's representation in texture and text: "*We have come to be what we are after years of changes in cut and color, drapery and form adapted and re-adapted in variations on camouflage* […], *the goal, it is important to remember, to aid physical attractiveness, a standard inevitably decided by men*" (van Herk 1998/1986: 2). Woman has been fashioned in this way to appear as a "Leerstelle" (Strobel 1998: 233), an empty place in language, yet *No Fixed Address* uses this emptiness to create a feminine text that plays with this distinct literary and cultural legacy. Ultimately, then, the novel's critique, on a metatextual level, is of a patriarchal structuring of society in terms of hierarchies, centers and margins, presence and absence. From this perspective, flight refers to a flight from the symbolic order and thus from a society that rests upon the unambiguous location of the subject. Thus, gendered space, as a concept, must transcend physical and social space to also include the symbolic and linguistic realm in this context, as the text transgresses established gendered boundaries not only in the geographic sense (on the diegetic level) but also, metatextually, in the context of language and (women's) writing, voicing the paradox of a "doubled act of (literally) 'inscribing' and challenging subjectivity" (Hutcheon 1988: 6).

Enter Picara: Drive(s) and Amorous Journeys

In van Herk's postmodern road narrative, a number of picaresque elements, in interaction with the para-nomadic features outlined in chapter five, are constitutive of the critique of (b)orders based on phallogocentric binary relations (such as that of center vs. margin). Most obviously perhaps, Arachne is linked to the traditional female rogue by the nickname her parents use, Raki, reverberant of the English "rake", a "dissolute or profligate and usually licentious man [sic]; a roué; a libertine", according to *Webster's College Dictionary*. The nickname is programmatic in two ways: for one, Arachne's rakishness results in a series of petty crimes, from lying and dishonest moneymaking to kidnapping, characteristics also of the traditional picara

(Strobel 1998: 218).[95] Arachne has a "troublemaker's nature" (van Herk 1998/1986: 80) that renders her, together with her class background (see above) and non-conformist behavior, a social outcast; she dismisses normative gender expectations not only by her 'unfeminine' jobs, but also by her sexual and social behavior (Hutcheon 1988: 128). Her 'troublemaking' is also linked to her sexual desire, a typical element of the picaresque,[96] upon which Arachne seldom hesitates to act: she "has a needling gaze; she uses it with a disregard that has always gotten her in trouble." (van Herk 1998/1986: 10-1)

The double meaning of "drive" as verb and noun that appears repeatedly in the book points to the importance of sexual desire as a motivating force for Arachne's travels: when her friend Thena asks her what she was actually doing on the road, Arachne retorts: "'I just drive around the country. I ran into that carnival'. How can she explain her inordinate lust to drive, to cover road miles, to use up gas? There is no map for longing." (138) Again, the map is exposed in its illusory claim to truthful representation; an instrument of cartography, it is incapable of charting, directing, or merely representing female desire. Challenging prescribed social standards – in terms of both lawfulness and gender roles – van Herk's main character's unruly sexual behavior partakes in the postmodern transformation of the picaresque tradition: sex no longer functions as an instrument for upward social mobility (as it did in *Moll Flanders*, for instance), but is the postmodern picara's playground in her game of defiance. As Darias-Beautell notes, *No Fixed Address*' "questioning of literal and metaphorical framings of the female body/subject as well as its daring presentation of a politics of sexual desire provide a co-ordinated challenge to the absence of female sexuality in Western discourse" (2001: 87). Although the picaresque tradition usually has portrayed, at least to a cer-

95 My reading does not see Arachne going beyond picaresque roguery by killing a man, as Darias-Beautell suggests (2001: 96). In the revenge episodes ("Accidents of Birth" and "Ambush"), she robs and knocks out – literally immobilizes – her enemies; in the ferry episode ("Ferryman"), the "man" she stabs with a hatpin is the mythical ferryman across the river Styx; Arachne defeats him and remains, for the rest of the book, in the interstice between life and death.

96 Cf. Monteser: "The contrast between the high flights of poetry about love and the simple fact of sexual intercourse form a satirical contrast which is one of the strongest of all picaresque effects." (1975: 17)

tain extent, women's sexual behavior (a detail Darias-Beautell fails to mention here), the picara, except for a few exceptions,[97] is usually morally judged (again, cf. *Moll Flanders*). As Carrera explains:

> The picaresque, in its traditional formula, contains examples of females, but their discourses are usually filtered through the moralizing voice of a male narrator or the exemplary outcome of their adventures […]. It is only in the 20th century that a few *pícaras* begin to speak freely. But even today, the genre in its modified form is strongly associated with mobile men, as shown in the fact that *No Fixed Address* was immediately compared to Kerouac's *On the Road.* (1994: 433)

Van Herk thus transforms the picaresque also by relegating moral judgment to minor characters (such as Lanie and Thena), but also by denying closure to Arachne's errancy as well as the story that is told.[98] Thus, the narrative abstains from punishing Arachne by refusing to narratively fix her into one place.

Speaking of picaresque sexuality, it is important to note that the para-nomadic compulsion to move, resulting from Arachne's mythical sentence to endlessly weave the road like a spider as punishment for her taunting of the social order, is turned, by means of sexual desire, into a series of road adventures full of (wander)lust and pleasure. The men Arachne picks up on the road are usually attracted by her Mercedes, and she uses the stereotypical car-fetishism of men who "are led to their cars like conquerors" (van Herk 1998/1986: 125) for her own interest (thus also the car's libidinous cathexis for herself), there-

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97 Both Strobel (throughout her study) and Darias-Beautell (2001: 89) note that in its earliest Spanish versions, the picaresque sometimes was void of the moralist undertone later considered characteristic of the genre.

98 Cf. Strobel: "Im Medium einer literarischen Gattung, in der die Vagabunden zu Pikaros bzw. Pikaras werden, kann das erzählte geographische und soziale Mäandern der Figuren – bezeichnenderweise vor allem der weiblichen Figuren – auf der Ebene des Erzählens im Mäandern der Zeichen und ihrer Bedeutung nicht nur reflektiert werden, vielmehr wird hier den Leser/innen die 'vagrancy of the signifier' [Taylor Berry's term] als solche vorgeführt." ("In the medium of a literary genre in which vagabonds become picaros or picaras, the narrated geographic and social meandering of the characters – significantly predominantly the female characters – on the level of narration is not only potentially reflected in the meandering of signs and their significations; much rather, the 'vagrancy of the signifier' as such is demonstrated to the reader." [1998: 254])

by turning the logic of gendered space upside down:[99] When she leaves for Calgary with Thomas, they "trembl[e] with desire. Put them alone in an enclosed space and they begin to leak, to steam, to breathe shallow and unsteady" (77). Thomas, however, enclosed in the womb-like vessel, resents losing control: "Thomas is furious with himself for what he perceives as lack of control, an uncivilized reaction" that goes against upper-middle class decency of "social foreplay" (ibid.). He blames the car: "the car contributes, having to sit with her in this enclosed space without hope of relief for hundreds of miles. She is tantalizingly close, he is saturated in her smell" (77-8). Thomas notices Arachne's difference here in terms of what could be called class exoticism – "[n]ot the smell of women he is familiar with; they exude perfume and antiperspirant, the faint turpentine of expensive makeup […]. Not the texture of the women he has always known, but the darker glaze of those who keep their skin as substitute for fur." (78) Thomas links Arachne's body to the animal realm here, to the natural, the bestial, the wild and 'uncivilized'. In her sexual appetite, Arachne conforms to Thomas' perception, and although Thomas becomes her "Apocryphal lover" (89), a person of uncertain origins like herself whom she (thus?) fully trusts and always returns to, she will not restrain this appetite: "Occasionally Thomas' love hits hard enough to make her wish herself different; she swears she will give up road jockeys and traveling, sell the Mercedes and buy a Ford, stop taking the pill and get pregnant, subscribe to ladies' magazines" (89). Here, class and gender differences construe a moment of transdifferential conflict for the protagonist: her affiliation with Thomas (and thus middle-class norms of gender roles) runs counter to her independence as a working, sexually unbound woman. Although Thomas never pressures Arachne to marry him, the middle-class stipulation of sealing the heterosexual love-relationship by marriage nevertheless exerts distress on her. Aware of the fact that her lifestyle is at odds with middle-class respectability, Arachne nevertheless does not change her behavior; thus, she spurns love not on an emotional level but as an ideologically saturated discursive system which potentially transforms mobile, independent women into ladies' magazines' readers who "would spend hours making casseroles and buying laundry soap" (90).

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[99] As Arachne rewrites the alignment of machine and (colonial) conquest, this subversion also relates to van Herk's critique of relations to land based on colonial possession.

The Death of the Déclassée

Sexuality has lost its traditional function as a means for the picara to ascend on the social ladder, as Arachne shows no desire to belong to the (upper) middle class. Quite to the contrary, Thomas' upper-middle class background scares Arachne, his house reminding her again of her originary and perpetual social displacement (voiced already in her doubts about her parentage): "She does not belong here. She will never belong here. Respectable men do not adopt stray women who have no abilities except their bodies" (van Herk 1998/1986: 92). The poverty of the conventional picaro is matched by Arachne's interstitial social situation ("a major cause for both her vulnerability and her toughness", Hutcheon avers in *The Canadian Postmodern* [1988: 128]): always out of place, Arachne's choice, unlike van Herk's rewriting of Canadian colonial and gender narratives, is not appropriation – the creation of a feeling of social and spatial belonging by conquest, adjustment or subversion – but disguise. Remaining painfully aware of her originary displacement, Arachne merely passes while remaining displaced by a multiplicity of differences.

When Arachne attends Basilisk's piano concert, her own precarious social position is reflected back by a man of African descent who does not meet her stereotypical expecations: she had "fit […] him into the scheme of stereotypes she has absorbed, seeing him picking jazz in a café, like Sam in *Casablanca*" (van Herk 1998/1986: 57) and is suddenly stunned by the black man's talents, the "razor blades of his damnable breeding, his culture, his learnedness" (56):

> For days Arachne is shredded. She drives the bus. She eats, she sleeps with frozen limbs, knowing that she has been snatched from the edge of a chasm with nothing to spare, that the looseness in her stomach is the closest she will come. To what? Dissatisfaction? She is perpetually dissatisfied, she has always been dissatisfied. Ambition? To better herself, to culture herself? What good would it do? She only knows that she has stepped perilously close to another knowledge. And that is dangerous.
> She will drive the bus and stay out of trouble. (57)

The dangerous knowledge here, associated with the looseness in Arachne's stomach, arguably refers to the possibility of her falling in love with Basilisk – another mythical creature with a death-bearing gaze both in fable and in *No Fixed Address* (where he "doesn't charge

at her, barge into her. He just looks, as if he gets more pleasure looking at her body than he would handling it", 53). The peril, however, is one of class aspiration. Knowing she will never be able to be 'cultured' like Basilisk, Arachne resolves, at this point, to remain the silent bus driver, whose uniform keeps her at a distance from the passengers. Nevertheless, personal confrontation with members of the 'cultured' upper middle class (such a Thomas' family) is painful for Arachne:

> Arachne knows she is working-class. She has never thought of her narrow life as disabled. She is concerned with survival, self-protection. She knows what pleasure is: the coil of urgency in her breast when she's driving […]. All the other urges in her life have come from hunger: to be fed, clothed, loved, to possess this thing or that. […] The idea [of Thomas as her lover] is insidious as disease. What does she think? That she can become middle class, respectable, a wife, a mother […]? With her inclinations? With her background? (59-60)

With Thomas' help, Arachne continues her bus driver's strategy of distancing herself by surface camouflage that facilitates passing.[100] In congruence with the picaresque tradition, shape-shifting becomes her great talent, in spite of – or perhaps due to – its side effects of dissolving (female) subjectivity:

> She is herself puzzled at the persona who steps in, takes over, the mask that falls into place when she pushes open the myriad general-store doors. Is it the challenge of a role? Is it her love for disguise? Or a reversion to some innate gene that she does not know she has inherited, that of a bourgeois shopkeeper eager to do business […]? There are moments, standing in a plain dress with black pumps, her hair combed, her nails clean, jotting down an order, when she does not believe that the body she inhabits is hers. (154)

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100 Arachne's clothes, worn neither for reasons of self-expression nor aesthetic considerations, can be said to function performatively, in Judith Butler's terms, with gender (and class!) identity as merely an effect of repeated social practices (linked to women's underwear and fashion in the prologue to van Herk's novel). Arachne's unease with Thomas' help is expressed a little later: "She wonders […] if she should have let Thomas manage her […]. She is disgusted by women who need men to rescue them." (114)

By Arachne's questioning of even her origins, difference is not inscribed gradually by an external reality in the course of the novel but is always already inherent in Arachne, echoing what Gayatri Spivak (1983) has called the categorical "displacement" of Woman. Finally, Arachne metamorphoses into a spider (a reading suggested by the fugu episode, as Darias-Beautell notes [2001: 97-8], as well as by the protagonist's mythical namesake) and can even live among the dead, as seen when she confers with a drowned World-War-II soldier on the western ocean shore (cf. van Herk 1998/1986: 243-5).

Even death, the ultimate boundary or 'neither/nor' difference, is thus defied; as a metaphor for the unknown, the radically Other (cf. Strobel 1998: 228), it also unites the mythical and the fantastic with the realist narrative. Arachne's initial refusal to drive westward (cf. van Herk 1998/1986: 35) stems from her fear of enclosure and immobility associated with the coast, the fear of death as well as of returning, at least geographically, to her Vancouver past (Darias-Beautell 2001: 156). Thus, when Arachne finally decides to go west after all, her "inevitable direction" (van Herk 1998/1986: 237), it is clear that the 'death of the subject' is imminently at hand. Shortly after surviving the ferryman's rape attack, Arachne suffers another episode of amnesia; she "is afraid now that sleep might become permanent. […] If she pulls over and sleeps, will she wake up or will she be truly dead?" (ibid.) When she reaches Canada's westernmost point and meets the dead soldier, she might be 'dead' in her fictional universe, but remains neither dead nor alive in the narrative as she instead becomes a "missing" person. As such, she crosses back onto the mainland and, feeling uneasy about her journey, starts heading north: "This is the edge; not end but edge, the border, the brink, the selvage of the world. She can no longer go west. She is going north now but that will end soon; she has retraced her steps into this ultimate impasse and reached not frontier but ocean, only inevitable water." (239)[101]

Van Herk suggests that the 'death of the centered subject', implied by the acknowledgment of radical, internal difference in both

[101] Wilderness, North, water – these are the habitual settings for Canadian romances that Margaret Atwood opposes to realistic, ironic, or comic modes (2004: 137), but I would argue that van Herk consciously plays with these generic boundaries, as we can find elements of the romance, the realistic, the ironic, and the comic narrative mode in *No Fixed Address*. On the association of women and water in Canadian literature, cf. Hutcheon (1986: 220-1).

subjectivity and language, does not foreclose but rather opens up new directions in writing: North instead of West, a turn to the Canadian tradition of journeying rather than the American, experimental literary exploration rather than inscription into a masculine formula of prairie fiction and Westerns. Again, it is not a "belonging to" but a radical "decentering of" that is at stake here; the picaresque subject no longer 'authors' herself (Strobel 1998: 233) as the I dissolves into multiple lines of flight associated with female creativity and set against historical ideas of 'masculine' authorship.[102]

In this context, as Strobel also argues (1998: 219), *No Fixed Address* digresses from the classical picaresque in that Arachne's transgressions do not result from her desire to belong or a motivation for social ascent, which is exposed as impossible (cf. the above quote). Arachne demonstrates that any attempt to overcome her radical, originary difference – 'difference without identity' – by creating a home or a sense of belonging would be futile. Thus, the protagonist's changing camouflage is merely the means to pass, to quickly adapt to her surroundings, and not to become part of it:

> Die räumliche und soziale Mobilität der Pikaros […] ist [ungleich der klassischen pikaresken Bewegung von den Rändern ins gesellschaftliche Zentrum seit dem 18. Jahrhundert] in van Herks Roman in ihrer ursprünglichen Bedeutung erhalten, nämlich die Nicht-Einnahme einer festen gesellschaftlichen Position und Identität. […] Arachne [wird] als proteische Figur konzipiert, die im permanenten Rollenspiel aufgeht, […] sich vom Wechsel des Glücks und von spontanen Impulsen treiben läßt. (Strobel 1998: 220)[103]

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102 As Strobel notes (1998: 235-7), van Herk's construction of female creativity on poststructuralist terms in *No Fixed Address* is resonant with contemporary feminist philosophy's ideas on this issue, from Cixous' *écriture féminine* to Kristeva's semiotic chora. That such conceptions of creativity are linked to female desire gives further meaning to Arachne's libidinous relationship to her car, the instrument for her creation of space.

103 "The spatial and social mobility of the picaro […] is [unlike the classical picaresque movement from the margins into the center of society since the 18th century] retained in its original significance in van Herk's novel, i.e. in the non-adoption of a fixed social position and identity. […] Arachne [is] conceptualized as a protean character that is absorbed in permanent role-play, […] that lets herself be driven by change of luck and spontaneous impulses."

As social mobility, always parallel to spatial mobility in the picaresque tradition, can no longer offer a destination in the postmodern picaresque, geographical movement, too, cannot retain a clear sense of orientation. The point is to move between and across a differential order rather than upwards within that order.

Thus, the social criticism voiced by the picara does not concern concrete reality in as much as it is directed toward those structural principles that order the subject into hierarchies of classes, genders, and other social categories (see ibid.). As these lines of difference intersect throughout the novel – Arachne's displacement concerns both class and gender – they are similar targets of critique, whose initial destabilization might be seen as resulting from these transdifferential moments in which differences intersect, collide, and overlap. Thus, structural principles of center-margin (and similar binary) distinctions are destabilized:

> Arachnes fortwährende Durchkreuzung geographischer und sozialer Räume, ihre ständige Überschreitung der Markierungen, die diese Räume gegeneinander abgrenzen und in ihrer Abgrenzung identifizierbar machen, wird als subversiver Prozeß präsentiert, als Auflösung einer Ordnung, die auf Etablierung und Sicherung von Grenzen beruht. (Strobel 1998: 221)[104]

That traditional language use and storytelling is viewed as a gatekeeper of these borders becomes obvious not only in the ambiguity of the novel's title and van Herk's play with words and narrative situation, but also in the fact that Arachne herself is presented as uncomfortable with linguistic sign systems (Darias-Beautell 2001: 100), especially if institutionalized in schools and libraries (not coincidentally spaces easily associated with the charity of the ruling classes toward the working poor). In two episodes, both entitled "incursion[s] between tomes" (117, 161), Arachne's unruly behavior occurs in a library (where she is soon asked to leave) and a bookstore; a poet she sleeps with is ridiculed (167-71); paper in Thomas' home study or at the museum is used like sheets on lovers' beds. As they 'conserve' language and thus the social status quo – a consequence postulated by postmo-

104 "Arachne's continual crossing of geographic and social spaces, her recurrent transgression of demarcations which delimit these spaces and render their borders identifiable, is presented as a subversive process, as the dissolution of an order which is based on the establishment and securing of borders."

dernism's linguistic turn – these spaces associated with the written word are derided by Arachne's "ungrammatically" (83) bodily pleasures and desires.[105] In bed with the poet, she "has a hard time preventing herself from laughing" but finally says "'[t]hat was lovely'" (169) before falling asleep. Again, Arachne subtly transgresses the borders of propriety, with language used as a mere means of social disguise that facilitates transgression.[106]

The picaresque – especially in its original Spanish version, offers, to van Herk and many other contemporary writers,[107] a tradition of shape shifting and trickery as a literary strategy to dissolve such borders and markers of identity. Thus, although van Herk's protagonist in *No Fixed Address* para-nomadically creates smooth spatial webs in continual movement on the one hand, she is turned into a picara, a trickster figure that defies and escapes categorization. As such, Arachne refuses categorical, normative femininity, "refuses to carry a purse, she refuses to wear a nightgown, she refuses to thin her rather shaggy eyebrows. She refuses and refuses all impositions of childhood and mothers. She is still refusing now, even though she has learned to smile." (29) Due to her originary social displacement, especially in terms of class and gender, she is unable to settle, but turns this nomadic compulsion into a picaresque asset. Her refusal to acknowledge boundaries by way of superficial disguise, however, does not recur to a picaresque tradition that, by the 18th century, had come to embody at

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105 In the fugu episode, Arachne even loses language altogether as her tongue and mouth swell into numbness from the fish's poison; while it is initially associated with death (see Darias-Beautell 2001: 96-7) – Arachne is unsure whether she is still alive – the rest of the book breaks this association, opting instead for Arachne's (textual) life and an ongoing taunting of representation through language.

106 In this context, lying appears as an instance of verbal picaresque treachery. The narrative recounts how Arachne learned to lie in school in order to escape disciplinary sanctions: "It was then she decided that the only reliable things in the world are tangible." (van Herk 1998/1986: 134)

107 Examples of contemporary picaresque novels can be found in various national and cultural contexts. In the context of U.S.-American women's writing, much of Kathy Acker's works, Erika Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973) and *Fanny. Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones* (1980), as well as Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973) are most frequently described as picaresque; Canadian examples would include Marian Engel's *Lunatic Villas* (1986).

its heart the picara's aspirations to belong. Arachne, by opting to remain out-of-place, thus rather resembles the earlier Spanish picaresque (Strobel 1998: 219-22).

As Coral Ann Howells argues, Aritha van Herk's project to expand the imaginative territory for feminist fiction, vividly drawn out in *No Fixed Address*, set the tone for a transgressive shift in 1980s' Canadian women's literature (2004: 203). It is by way of both diegetic and narrative transgression that van Herk has un-mapped female desire and abandoned realism as well as cartography for a weaving and un-weaving of myth, fantasy, and the picaresque.

6. Ex-centric & Wayward: Picaras of the Late 20th Century

i love the aloneness of the road
when i ascend descending curves
the power within my toe delights me
and i fling my spirit down the highway
i love the way i feel
when i pass the moon and i holler to the
stars

- Nikki Giovanni,
"The Beep Beep Poem"

Always taking a place not his own, a place one could call that of the dead or the dummy, he has neither a proper place nor a proper name. His propriety or property is impropriety or inappropriateness, the floating indetermination that allows for substitution and play.

- Jacques Derrida,
on the Egyptian god Ra as an epitomous trickster figure

6.1. Constant Inconstancy: Theorizing the Picara

Unity of world and word is especially challenged in literary genres which emphasize the carnivalesque moment, which, in the Bakhtinian sense, defies regimes of logic and order, privileging instead polyvocality, ambiguity, and the foreclosure of single meanings. The picaresque has traditionally constituted such a genre, often allowing also, since its Renaissance Spanish beginnings, for a "nonheroic, nonidealized female protagonist" (Hutcheon 1988: 124) who alters male *picarismo* in order to explore feminine roguery. Studies by Linda Hutcheon and Katja Strobel have emphasized the connections between postmodernism and the picaresque tradition, as they share the parodic, satiric, and ironic impulses both as a reaction toward literary realism and as social critique: the picaresque rogue is an ancestor of the post-

modern trickster figure,[1] a shape shifter of uncertain or 'illegitimate' origins often involved in petty criminality and 'indecent' (sexual and otherwise) behavior whose travels are coerced by her displacement on the one hand (thus its relation to para-nomadism), yet desirable as an adventurous escape on the other. While often fleeing from the L/law of society, the picaresque rogue embarks on the road adventure also out of the desire to transgress social boundaries, classically between rigid class distinctions. All of these elements are used in van Herk's postmodern picareseque in order to support her feminist literary project of de-centering subjectivity and territoriality.

In what follows, I argue that picaresque wandering is the third paradigm and trope of movement structuring contemporary women's road stories. Providing a rich generic tradition of literary deviance and errancy to act upon and to revise, the picaresque, in its feminine version, serves as a source of inspiration also for a number of other genres women writers have challenged and altered in the 20th century (see Strobel's study), such as autobiography, stories of initiation, or travel writing. Conventionally speaking, the picaresque shares with the para-nomadic road narrative a defiance of a diegetic logic based on departure and arrival and an emphasis of constant 'becoming' on the road. Like the para-nomad, the picara is always on the move, always already in transit without a clear aim, although interstitial locations of departure and arrival along the road are more important for the picaresque than the para-nomadic road narrative, and at times alter plot and/or character development.

Emphasizing interstitiality as such, the picara may draw upon rogue and trickster-figures, both of whom defy and dismantle binary categories by unremittingly dislocating themselves from any place within a symbolic system based upon identity and difference. Usually in a playful and humorous manner, boundaries are transgressed and ridiculed; the trickster-picara acts out of place, outlandishly, refusing propriety. As a border crosser – Strobel uses the German "Grenzgängerin" in the title of her study – the picara is persistent only in this

[1] One could argue here that the mythical weaver Arachne is herself an ancient female shape-shifter, as she is turned into a spider by Athene. Also, as Lutz and Hindersmann point out in their reading of *No Fixed Address*, the spider not only has a distinctive meaning as the weaver of stories – and thus as a Creator – in Native American/First Nation cultures, but also as a trickster figure (1991: 20); cf. also Blaeser (1996: 138).

out-of-place-ness, in her commitment to questioning socio-spatial as well as symbolic (b)orders. To a certain extent, these are characteristics the picara shares with the quester and the para-nomad. Unlike these, however, the picara as a feminist spatial agent on the road follows *adventure* and 'the fun of the road' (though this does not preclude her encounter with the road as gendered space); her journeys are neither quests nor are they coerced.

What is additionally unique about the protagonist's unruly crossing of borders in the picaresque is that the picara's performative disguise (often in the form of masquerade, cross-dressing, or even shape shifting, as in van Herk's novel) greatly facilitates both circumvention and transgression of social laws and hegemonic (b)orders on the one hand and exposes their constructedness on the other. The picaresque character, who is usually a rather disempowered, subaltern figure, becomes an agent of subversion by acquiring trickster strategies of survival. As the trickster (linked to postmodernism and deconstruction by Gerald Vizenor in the context of Native American cultures) escapes identity, fixity, and categorization – and perhaps thus even representation as such – she displays what Rowland A. Sherrill has aptly called "constant inconstancy" (2000: 23); this characteristic, however, is not an invention of the *New Picaresque* in the subtitle of Sherrill's study but can be traced back as far as to the early modern rogue narrative.

Studies of the picaresque genre abound, and with regard to the main focus of this study, the picara's literary history can only be discussed selectively here.[2] What becomes evident, in looking at generic analyses of the picaresque like these, are the differing definitions as well as the struggles over the cultural significance of the picaresque. There are some points of agreement, however. Most scholars of the picaresque emphasize the sociohistorical backgrounds of picaresque writing as one major concern for interpretation. Also, they acknowledge the genre's ability for cultural mobility, i.e., its capability to be transplanted into and adapted to various cultural and historical con-

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[2] The following observations are based on an overview of selected writings by leading scholars of the picaresque: Alexander Blackburn, Elisabeth Frenzel (1988), Anne K. Kaler (1991), Julio Rodriguez-Luis (1979), Frederick Monteser (1975), Ulrich Wicks (1988 & 1989), and Werner Reinhart (2001), in addition to Strobel (1998) and Sherrill.

texts. Thus, the picaresque has its origins in Spain in the mid-16th century, had a literary career in 17th century German states, 18th century England and France, and in both Europe and the United States in the second half of the 20th century (see esp. Strobel's [1998], Sherrill's [2000], and Reinhart's [2001] monographs).

To a large extent, the feminine version of the picaresque – gender relating traditionally to the protagonist rather than the author – has undergone a similar geographic development, sharing major themes, motifs, and characteristics with the masculine picaresque: the protagonists' nonheroic status as a social undesirable, an outsider especially in terms of class; resulting class aspirations and petty criminality used mostly for this purpose; the traditional realist rather than idealist and usually also autobiographical mode; its use of satire and parody; the motif of disguise and deception; its "panoramic structure"; the observatory voice commenting on society; and, last but not least (horizontal) spatial in addition to (vertical) social mobility.[3]

These characteristics, at least to some extent, show a certain degree of variation in scholarly studies. That the gender difference of the picara influences the plot development, thus producing a special case of *picarísmo*, however, seems unanimously agreed upon. This assumption, too, has been set in relation to the social context of the work. As a case in point, Julio Rodriguez-Luis, in "Picaras: The Modal Approach to the Picaresque", argues that the change from the 16th to the 18th century picaresque occurred largely due to the improved status of women in society:

> A destitute woman had, of course, much less chance for success in a picaresque career than a man because of such factors as her inferior education, her absolute dependence on men, and the mistrust of the law toward her. […] *Pícaras*, as opposed to mere whores, were in fact implausible in a society which placed such heavy constraints on the social mobility of the common woman. (1979: 39-40)

Only in the 18th century, he argues, can a "believable" picara emerge, as "the natural evolution of European society permitted women to de-

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[3] I largely follow the classical "eight characteristics of the picaresque" by Claudio Guillén here, cited by Rodriguez-Luis (1979), Frenzel (1988), and others. Not among them is the picaresque struggle for survival that Monteser sees as essential (1975: 17-8).

velop more freely, thus making possible the believable portrayal of an ambition which culminates in success" (ibid. 41). It is hard to share Rodriguez-Luis' romanticized view of the Enlightenment period and not to wonder about his assumption of "European" society's "natural evolution" in that period; moreover, Luis' underlying understanding of literature as a mere "portrayal" of social conditions is certainly overly deterministic, underestimating literature's potential for social criticism and subtle cultural subversion of the status quo. It is a consequence of this assumption that in his essay he intends to "try to discover why *pícaras* do not become fully developed *pícaros*" by "determining what is not there and why" (33). Ambition and travel, for instance, are mere plot devices in the picaras' story, Rodriguez-Luis asserts, as her movement is rather geographic than social (37); likewise, the picara is "incapable of attaining any serious level of moral thinking" (33) and of the picaro's in-depth observation (34). It is from this multi-faceted lack in the feminine picaresque that Rodriguez-Luis concludes its marginal position in the genre.

Despite the obvious androcentrism and datedness of this essay (which appeared prior to the plethora of political picaresque novels published in the 1980s, as discussed in Reinhart's study), many points in Rodriguez-Luis' 1979 analysis have been addressed anew in subsequent studies on contemporary feminine picaresques, such as the picara's standing within the genre or her cultural development in the social context of women's history, especially with regard to class and spatial mobility. Unsurprisingly, one central concern of many of these studies (among them Strobel's, Kaler's, and Friedman's) is to expose the androcentric assumptions underlying traditional views of the feminine picaresque like Rodriguez-Luis' (or Monteser's [1975], for that matter).

Anne K. Kaler, in stark opposition to Rodriguez-Luis, refuses to define the picara merely as a counterpart of her male version (1991: 1), searching instead for a genuine feminine picaresque tradition that starts with the ancient Hera figure and reaches up to the contemporary "Fantasy Heroine". Proposing adventure, thievery, deception and disguise, sexual excess, lack of maternal and marital feeling, the confidante figure, and isolation and inferiority as defining elements of the feminine picaresque (ibid. 27, 41, 54), Kaler proposes the picara's autonomy, her control over her destiny, as a central concern of this tradition. Even though Kaler thus rejects a definition of the picara in terms

of a lack, her proposal of an archetypal, homogenous figuration of the picara (which is notably devoid of humor and parody)[4] and the focus on an autonomous subject conceived from Enlightenment notions implicitly undermine Kaler's endeavor (see also Strobel's reading of Kaler, 1998: 14).

Similarly, Edward H. Friedman acknowledges the picara's gendered difference, as she "fuels the myth of male superiority while contributing to its destruction, or deconstruction". Thus her "act[s] of defiance [are] double-edged, for crime and punishment kept the antiheroine's identity alive" (1987: XI). Yet by setting the male-authored picara, whose transgression is checked by an authorial masculine voice, in opposition to contemporary women's picaresques that are assumed as freed from patriarchal judgment, Friedman, like Kaler, implies not only authorial sovereignty – in stark contrast to Rodriguez-Luis' material determinism – but also subjectivity as the object of the picara's ultimate desire (Strobel 1998: 15). Regarding the latter implication, one can object that while subjectivity – a place in the symbolic order as a full legal and social subject – and the development of a 'voice of one's own' have certainly been major goals in women's writing, women's literatures, perhaps due to a more recently developed postmodern agenda, have also questioned this very notion of the subject (cf. van Herk's or Erika Lopez' texts). Also, the alleged autonomy of a literary text is as questionable as its complete determination by 'outside' social conditions it mimetically depicts or reflects. As the notion of transdifference suggests, the collision of multiple lines of difference produces polyvocal, brittle, even contradictory texts beyond authorial control – authorial voices in turn harboring a multiplicity of differences (cf. also Walz' [2005] notion of transdifference as a narratological element in literary analysis; similar ideas, as noted earlier, have been expressed in the Bakhtinian conception of polyvocality).

Picaresque mobility stands for her refusal of an identity (over-) determined by territory, class, ethnicity, and gender (Strobel 1998: 224); the refusal of such a fixed position in social and geographical space, in turn, conditions the nature of picaresque travel, "indem sich mit dem Ursprung und dem Ziel der Reise (und des Texts) auch die

4 Cf. Kaler: "Where the trickster-picaro can laugh away the cruel reality of his world with a masculine shrug, the picara does not laugh. Ever. Survival is too serious." (1991: 202)

Reisende verflüssigt" ["by the fact that, together with the place of departure and the destination (as well as the text), the traveler herself becomes fluid", tr. AG; ibid. 251]. Acknowledging, however, the heterogeneity of the contemporary picaresque exemplified in her study, Strobel concludes: "Die Pikara erscheint so als Figur, die sich zwischen der Inanspruchnahme des Subjektstatus und dessen Verneinung zugunsten der (weiblich-) lustvollen, pikaresken Dezentrierung des Selbst hin- und herbewegt" (ibid. 256).[5]

Looking at the picaresque tradition, Strobel finds that the Spanish picaresque had already expressed a similar socio-spatial anarchism in the 16th century. Therefore,

> […] liegt die Vermutung nahe, daß an den Gestalten der Pikareske das Prinzip neuzeitlicher Mobilität nicht bestätigt, sondern durch seine inflationäre Verwendung ad absurdum geführt wird: Das pikareske Herumvagabundieren steht in markantem Kontrast zu der kontrollierten, bewußt und absichtsvoll gesteuerten (Körper-) Bewegung, die als sichtbare Manifestation neuzeitlicher Selbstgestaltung gilt. (1998: 51)[6]

In the context of the American picaresque, Cathy N. Davidson has called attention to a second picaresque tradition, namely women's "domestic picaresque" (qtd. in Reinhart 2001: 97) of the 19th century. Resulting from women's extremely limited mobility in the Early Republic, it depicts the (white upper middle-class) female protagonist's *picarismo* as female quixotism in the home, with her escape usually relegated to her obsessive reading.[7] Following Strobel and Davidson,

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5 "The picara thus appears as a figure who oscillates between the claim of occupying the subject position on the one hand and its negation in favor of a (feminine) pleasurable, picaresque decentering of the self on the other."

6 "[…] one can assume that picaresque characters do not confirm the principle of modern mobility but, through its inflationary usage, render it absurd: picaresque wandering is distinctively contrasted with the controlled, deliberative, and intentionally directed (physical) movement, which is considered a visible manifestation of the modern design of self."

7 Reinhart questions Davidson's category of the domestic picaresque: he finds it "problematic" and "confusing" (2001: 97) to apply the name of the genre to what he sees as merely a special case of domestic realism. However, he acknowledges that Davidson points to the general issue of generic definition and social difference – here, the exclusion of women's contributions due to their alleged textual difference (ibid. 98). For a more inclusive account of the picaresque in this respect cf. Kröller (1991: 192).

one thus needs to qualify one of Werner Reinhart's theses – especially in the context of the feminine, ethnic, or Canadian picaresque. Arguing that the U.S.-American picaresque of the 1980s upholds a spatiality based on an American expansionist doctrine, he redefines the frontier as it appears in this literature:

> [D]er Grenzraum [wird] zu einem Ort, an dem *Differenz, Diversität und Dissens eine Heimstatt finden*. […] Mit der adamischen Flucht aus dem realen sozialen in den geographischen Raum bewahrt sich *der amerikanische Pikaro* einen Rest von Unschuld. […] Die räumliche Fluchtbewegung ist allerdings nicht nur ein Akt der Befreiung, sondern auch einer der Verdrängung. (2001: 601-2; my emphasis)[8]

This border zone, Reinhart further explains, functions as a place of a concrete utopia and thus becomes "the actual homeplace of the American picaro" (ibid. 602, "[d]er eigentliche Heimatort des amerikanischen Pikaros", in the original; tr. AG). The utopian dimension, in his view, is in turn important for the politicization of the contemporary U.S.-American picaresque (ibid.).

That Reinhart uses the masculine form in this quotation – despite his discussion of Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote* in this context – is important, as I would argue, for Reinhart indeed makes no distinction between the picara and the picaro, subsuming both under a universal model. With strong sexual expressivity as a core feature of "picarisma" (cf. e.g. Defoe's *Moll Flanders*) throughout the centuries, it is unclear why he attributes innocence to the adventurous female hero. Also, as I am going to show in the following analyses of contemporary picaresque road narratives by women, differences, in these texts, never find a home 'out there', with the texts perhaps less concerned with geographic expansionism than with the destabilization of the socio-spatial hegemony. Close to para-nomadism in this respect, contemporary picaresque travel stands in strong opposition to the traditional questing movement also characteristic of frontier expansionism, which is, in turn, centered on a civilizatory impulse as well as on ideas of spatial and social improvement, purpose, and arrival in a "concrete

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8 "[L]iminal space [becomes] a locality in which *difference, diversity and dissent find a home*. […] With the Adamic escape from real-social into geographic space, the *American picaro* retains a residual innocence. […] However, escape is not only an act of liberation, but also of repression"; my emphasis.

utopia" (see also Frenzel 1988: 636). Therefore, the picaresque also diverges from the tripartite structure of departure/journey/arrival, often favoring loosely connected episodes and adventures instead (Lackey 1997: 8).

It is a distinct characteristic of the postmodern picaresque that social improvement as a desired destination is abandoned. Even though the picaro/a has always been geographically flexible rather than bound to a certain location, social ascendance was the concrete goal of pre-postmodern picaresque protagonist's wanderings. In Reinhart's account, this is typical of the entire "American" picaresque (he cites Daniel Boorstein's famous study on the Columbiad's errancy and its opening of spaces for exploration; 2001: 101). Resonant with a generally assumed post-revolutionary spirit of the early American 1970s – post-Vietnam, post-Watergate and post-countercultural postmodern literatures, in contrast, tend to expose social aspiration as downright illusory, senseless, or unimportant. Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home* and Katherine Dunn's *Truck* (cf. chapter 6.2.) illustrate this development in a bleak manner; Aritha van Herk's Arachne Manteia, as I have argued, and Erika Lopez' queer picara (cf. ch. 6.3.), transform it in that they aim at rejecting the social ladder rather than moving along their well-trodden upward and downward steps.

The main elements crucial for the following analyses of spatiality in women's picaresque road narratives are the picara's originary displacement(s); the performance of shape shifting and trickstering; the function of ridicule and parody; the transformation of para-nomadism into adventurous vagrancy while retaining its basic defiance of the binary logic of departure and arrival; and her social as well as sexual adventures. Taken together, these foci of discussion point to the more general generic principle that the picaro/a's licentiousness refers to the transgression of customary, proper bounds, regardless of the nature of these bounds. Transgression as a metaphor of movement, then, is constitutive of women's road narratives in their questing and para-nomadic as well as their picaresque mode, and thus can be said to be constitutional for women's re- and subversions of the genre as such. It is obviously due to the genderedness of the fictionalized spatiality of the American highway that both a literal and more metaphorical transgression of the L/laws of space become vital in women's writing on the road.

6.2. Becoming-Woman after the Great Divide: Feminist Revisions of the 1960s' Countercultural Picaresque

In the context of late 1960s' counterculture, picaresque traveling experienced a heyday as a practice of dissent, often in the form of drug-sustained road adventures that were not geared toward any pre-defined destination; as a case in point, Ken Kesey's and the Merry Pranksters' famous day-glo colored bus, driven by speed addict Neal Cassady (Kerouac's model for Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*), was simply destined to be headed 'further'. This widespread countercultural phenomenon – the spontaneous journeying of poets, writers, musicians, and flocks of hitchhiking teenagers who sought to live Timothy Leary's motto of "turn on, tune in, drop out" – continued well into the 1970s, following the Sixties' violent finale.[9] Many American women affiliated with counterculture woke up to the bitter realization that sexual liberation did not mean much more than the assumption of their sexual availability; in this and similar ways, they had replicated the fate of beat generation women, who, a decade earlier, had likewise encountered the power of mainstream gender norms, pervading even subcultural formations. After the 1960s, this awareness resulted in an anger that would not only fuel feminist activism and women's liberation, but also lead to revisions and re-writings of the countercultural experience and its continuing effects on the American cultural landscape.

Against this socio-cultural background and responding to the revival of picaresque travel in the late 1960s, revisions of this form of countercultural journeying in the following decades were of major importance in women's popular music (cf., for instance, Joni Mitchell's album *Hejira*, 1976), film (e.g. the independent film *Me & Will*, in which two motorcycling protagonists embark on an adventurous search for the mythical Harley Davidson of *Easy Rider*), and literature; as the counterculture had been a predominantly white, middle-

[9] The 1967 Summer of Love was followed by a series of events that demonstrated how the countercultural revolution was 'devouring its children': the Charles Manson murders; the brutal killing of an African-American by the Hells' Angels at the Altamont rock festival; the 1968 race riots and the Chicago Democratic Convention, which ended in the 'Battle of Michigan Avenue'; as well as the drug-induced deaths of many of the countercultural icons of the decade.

class phenomenon, it was, correspondingly, mostly white women responding to their exclusion by way of 'writing back'. Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home* (1987) and Katherine Dunn's *Truck* (1990/1971), both road narratives depicting a female protagonist coming of age in a post-1960s environment, typify this response: both novels articulate the picaresque journey on the road as part of a countercultural identification doomed to bitter dissociation from romantic notions of the road trip as a liberatory act. In these books, the traditional picaresque aspiration to belong is dismantled in the course of the stories, which, unlike van Herk's or Lopez', focus not on the exploration and articulation of alternative spaces but on the prior stage of narratively appropriating the space of the road-book and thereby opening up the picaresque road discourse for exploration by a subsequent generations of women writers. Thus, while Carter and Dunn propose their protagonists' adventurous road trip as necessary for their further development – a classical motif of the story of initiation and the *Bildungsroman* – they stop short of re-writing the road as feminine space. Their cultural significance, then, lies primarily in the way these texts expose the picaresque journey as a romantic, masculine, and countercultural myth, offering few viable perspectives for female travelers.

6.2.1. Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home*

Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home* is the first-person narrative of teenager Annie, who lives in the back room of her Aunt Marie Frazelli's San Francisco bail bond office, her mother "long dead", her father "long gone, God knows where" (1987: 15). Set in the early 1980s, it portrays a search for home and belonging that, as the title of the book explains, will always happen "on other days" – any such thing resembling a destination continuously deferred and untenable.[10]

[10] The book's title is taken from the Grateful Dead song "Box of Rain" from their 1970 album *American Beauty*, a song about transition ("Walk out of any doorway / Feel your way, feel your way / Like the day before / Maybe you'll find direction / around some corner where it's been waiting to meet you"), interpersonal connection ("Look into any eyes / You'll find that you can see clear to another day"), and individual vision ("Maybe it'd been seen before / through other eyes, on other days while going home"). In the credits to her

In the book's prologue (13-28), Annie describes her childhood: one of the main themes in this section is Annie's awareness of being different from her classmates. Growing up with a range of surrogate parents – Marie, Marie's friend Jotta, and B.R. and Gloria, an African-American couple – her family situation deviates from the normative nuclear family model. Nevertheless, Annie has internalized the dominant family pattern as desirable:

> Jotta would say she had no use for the kind of woman who'd stay home all day picking up toys and cleaning baby vomit off her shoes. Marie was always telling me to bring friends from school over. I could just see Sharon and her mother walking in this dumpy office in their fancy homemade dresses. (16)

Comparing her home to her friend Sharon's, Annie expresses a sad longing for stability: "At Sharon's house it all had been fun somehow. Here everything seemed to turn into mess and trouble […]. I looked out over the room, which was like a living room except that I slept there too. It was a disaster area" (18). Going through the instability of puberty, Annie is all the more affected by living at the back of an office, where she is invisible to the customers yet lacks a 'room of her own', as well as by the only role models available to her: these are her single aunt and the former alcoholic Jotta, who seems completely dependent on her abusive, violent boyfriend Tom Cleaver, member of the Hell's Angels. When Annie accidentally inhales too much ammonia while trying to clean the "disaster area" (18), her worries jumble in her head: "My head wouldn't clear. There was Sharon's mother cooking in her cotton dress and slippers, the two men in the office looking right through me at the clock, Jotta not bringing my present for me." (18-9)

Lacking any sense of a sheltering home despite of her surrogate family's warm-hearted kindness, she is drawn to the road early on, dreaming of escape and the possibility of belonging somewhere out there; she "craned [her] neck as far down the street as [she] could" (20) and naively enjoys riding on the back of Tom's Harley Davidson:

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novel, Carter mentions that "[l]ines and phrases from the Grateful Dead lyrics are excerpted throughout this work" and "very gratefully acknowledges the role of the band and its music in fueling and firing the writing of the book". That the Hell's Angels served as the band's bodyguards is well-known, yet this appears quite paradoxical in the context of Carter's novel (see below).

> I rode a long time with him, not even thinking about falling or getting the tangles out of my hair. I couldn't make any sense of it, of Marie's not wanting Jotta to be with Tom. I could see just riding and *looking at the things he'd point to*, going fast as a rocket for the joy of holding on. (21-2; emphasis mine)

Annie vicariously experiences the feeling of freedom of mobility, which for her also denotes the possibility of change. Both Annie and Jotta are attracted to the vicarious adventures Tom offers with their concomitant illusion of freedom, although dependent in fact on his will and perception (Annie looks at the things *he* points out), even to the price of emotional abuse and various forms of punishment. His control of the motorcycle alludes to Tom's dangerous, yet magical power over women like Jotta and Annie: "his was a different kind of power. There was nothing like it. […] 'How come you can always turn that thing on like magic?' I yelled above the revving." (60-1) This evolving behavioral pattern – Annie's fascination with Tom even in situations in which she is afraid of him – continues to the very last page of the book.

Annie's first small road trips on her own lead her to the neighborhood's 'no-go areas', as she draws pleasure from perceiving herself as adventurous and disobedient:

> I wanted to take off somewhere […]. I thought I might as well shoot the works and leave by myself without asking. I knew the streets, and it was […] still daylight out […]. It was exciting to be so bad, to mess up to where I couldn't stand it anymore, then just leave and hit he streets on a real-live mission. (22)

A second recurring motivation for running away is Annie's search for her true mother, which frequently has her see Jotta in this role: at age fourteen, Annie presents Marie with a list entitled "Evidence That Jotta Is My True Biological Mother" (33), yet has to accept her list is evidence only of her wishful thinking. Significantly, her search for her mother results in getting lost: trying to find Jotta's apartment, she ends up in a 'no-go' area of "hookers" (25), men wearing "boots with tall heels" and "shiny black jackets" (ibid.), and "[o]ld people, some white and some black" (ibid.). The adolescent narrative voice is fascinated with these shady characters, yet at the same time expresses feelings of insecurity as it is getting dark. In this area, she realizes Tom is observing her – another plot element that will persist throughout the novel.

"It would be eight years and a different highway before I'd come looking for Jotta again" (28): the prologue ends, and in chapter one, the reader learns that Jotta has started a new, married life in Massachusetts (30). Annie, grown up with a sense of uprootedness, seeks escape: "push […] away – Marie and everything about the world that made me feel like I didn't belong" (51). After graduation, 18-year old Annie, always "looking like trouble" (53), embarks on the road to follow her lover, her former English teacher and blues musician, Carter, to Wyoming, defying both her aunt and Carter, who wish for her to go to college. Annie believes education will not be able to assimilate her to middle-class standards:

> You lock yourself up with books and papers for the best years of your life. You come out middle-aged and horny, but boy can you talk cute at cocktail parties. I knew these people, I'd grown up watching them trot across Bryant Street from the Hall of Justice to the office. They were good people; they deserved to be happy, and I deserved to leave them. (63)

Despite its mocking tone, this passage demonstrates that Annie defines herself in opposition to the majority, the "good people" who "deserved to be happy". It clearly voices her understanding of herself as a social outsider who does not belong with the 'respectables' of her social surroundings: "these people" are not her people, as throughout her childhood, Annie has found herself on the outside of this class she "deserved to leave", a mere onlooker who was always out of place in the town where she grew up.

Her relationship to the 34-year old divorced teacher is emotionally as abusive as Jotta's is physically, and it seems it is mostly Annie's fascination for the blues, appropriated and embodied by white outcasts in *On Other Days While Going Home*, that draws her to him:[11]

> "I got no true name," [Carter]'d sung, "no mama give me birth. Seems like I was hatched from the cold, dark, witherin' earth." I'd grabbed

[11] Interestingly, Carter reproaches Annie time and again for imitating blues diction in her language (cf. e.g. 34), while he himself does not reflect at all on his and his friends' appropriation of an African-American musical tradition. Though Annie likes The Supremes, she does not dare choose them from a jukebox: "I knew Carter had no use for those kinds of songs." (38)

> [my friend] Fitz's elbow. "Motherless child he roam. Ain't nothin' here to tie me to this des'late orphan's home." […] "Listen," I'd whispered. "This teacher. He *knows* me." (31-2)

In Homer, Wyoming,[12] Annie meets Carter's musician friends, who seem to live for booze and the blues alone. Not only is Carter, clearly suffering from depression, unable to provide Annie with any sense of home; she also realizes she "was in unusual company in more ways than one: There were no women there." (77) Thus again the odd one out, Annie soon understands her love affair has no future and takes off together with one of Carter's friends, Poppa Dad, for New Hampshire, where Poppa Dad's girlfriend Rose lives with her children George and Kimberly.[13] Soon it turns out that Poppa Dad has used Annie, who had naïvely trusted, even "loved" (151) this stranger, to give his cocaine transportation venture an unsuspicious air. Annie's disappointment is reiterated when the police discover the deal and arrest her. Surprisingly, it is Tom Cleaver who bails her out: it turns out he has been stalking her all along the way, with the aim of locating Jotta. Running away again, Annie's final destination has a telling name: Terrapin, Massachusetts, the *terra* that has *pin*ned Jotta – now pregnant and domesticated – down, and is about to do so with Annie.[14] Although Annie is fully aware now that Tom, apparently still obsessed with his former girlfriend, has followed her across the country, she puts Jotta's new life into jeopardy by leading him to her new home. The narrative arrives at its climax when Tom sets fire to the record store/residence of Hunter, Annie's sensitive, reggae-loving new boyfriend.

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[12] Clearly, Carter's use of Homer as the first stop on her journey is selected in reference to the author of the *Odyssey*, arguably the most influential travel narrative in the Western literary tradition that had an enduring effect on the gendered spatiality of the journey (Ulysses traveling, his wife Penelope faithfully waiting for him at home; cf. Pelz 1991: 174).

[13] That Kimberly suffers from a drug-induced psychosis and thus cannot care for her baby son Benny arguably draws attention to a dismal consequence of late 60s' counterculture on women's lives; from this perspective, the fact that Kimberly's situation does not stop Poppa Dad from drug dealing can be read as a bitterly sarcastic narrative commentary.

[14] Terrapin is actually the name of a (now endangered) water turtle inhabiting the Cape Cod area (after the Algonquian word torpew, for turtle); it is also a reference to the 1977 Grateful Dead album *Terrapin Station*, named in reference (and reverence) to this turtle, which in various folk mythologies is said to carry the entire material world on its back.

The pace in which *On Other Days While Going Home* draws to its close is excessively fast and the diegetic events jumbled and confused: Tom appears and tells Annie to "remember […] where you learned about love" (228); suggests he is stalking Annie not for Jotta's, but for her own sake (242); Marie reveals that Tom has forced Jotta to have an abortion in Mexico after he had found out she was carrying his child (247-8) and announces a second secret that remains untold (248); Annie persuades Jotta, deeply disturbed by the recent events, not to have another abortion (255), but instead to wait for one month, in which she prophesies Tom will not show up (256). The last page and chapter of the book suggest that Annie, as much as she would have liked to settle with Jotta and her new family, sacrifices this new-found belonging for Jotta's safety, leaving Terrapin in order to lure Tom away:

> The first hours of waiting [for Tom to follow her], I went through all the highway songs. I thought of as many as I could and put them in groups: Lonely and On the Road, Free and On the Road, On the Road Hungry, On the Road Looking. But there was no highway song for me. This was part of what I knew different now. As homely and low as they thought they could be, songs were made of charm and air, of faith in someone listening. I wanted to make something out of words while waiting, but it wouldn't be a song. It would be something just said: I grew up among women, and left everything I knew. I followed a man to a world full of men, where I could have lived out a life without ever belonging. I learned I wasn't the kind of strong I wanted to be, and that I hated weakness more than fire. I loved another woman best. So I left her, and waited. […] I saw us gunning full throttle, siren wailing, onto the highway and over the bridge, I saw us gliding with the engine silent, his motorcycle glistening like a toy. Those things I saw while waiting were more important than what it was like to leave. What mattered most was my having been there, and then, even more, my having gone. (257)

What this ending seems to suggest is, on the one hand, that Annie has realized she will not find belonging in a "world full of men" (cf. also Primeau 1996: 123). Yet in spite of these insights, Annie's resolution implies that for the sake of the safety of a world of women, exemplified by Jotta, in which she potentially could have found belonging, she must sacrifice herself to Tom so as not to cause any further "trouble".

On the other hand, like van Herk's postmodern picaresque, Annie's self-sacrifice is yet another act of self-annihilation, which un-

derstandably leaves the reader, as one reviewer puts it, "wonder[ing] […] just what she has accomplished".[15] The question of accomplishment is beside the point, however. The novel's last two chapters are perhaps the only stretches of the narrative one can call postmodern at least in part, as they play with narrative undecidability – as a case in point, Marie never reveals the second secret – and thus defy narrative and interpretative closure. *On Other Days While Going Home*, in contrast to *No Fixed Address*, does not use annihilation as an escape from an androcentric or logocentric order; to the contrary, it is this order, embodied by the Hell's Angel Tom, which ultimately annihilates a female misfit.[16]

It is here that the text's critical view of the countercultural formation can be located. It was the Hell's Angels who ended the long Summer of Love in California at the Rolling Stones' concert in Altamont; they came to stand for the violence, terror, and patriarchal control the pacifist hippies had nothing to hold against. Like the ghost of these Hell's Angels who helped terminate the 1960s' attempt at countercultural revolution, Tom haunts Annie throughout the book, constantly reminding her how she cannot escape patriarchal control. Annie is on the road across a country that makes her feel not at home but rather "like a tourist in a foreign country, listening in while the locals joked" (192); she repeatedly and with every new departure tries to escape the gendered social order, but time and again is defeated. Marie, notably the most sensible elder in the book and a first-hand witness of the late 1960s, tries to teach her niece what she has learned:

> "When you think of riding fast and living on the streets, you remember that things are different for us."
> "Different for you," I said.
> "Us," [Marie] said. "You, me, Jotta, Gloria, your girlfriends from school, the hookers on Sixth Street. You want to live on that dark side you've read about in books and heard about in songs. But what I'm telling you to remember is that it's not there for us – sleeping in bus stations, hitching rides with truck drivers, sharing stories shoulder to

15 This is a quote from the *Publisher's Weekly* review published in July 1987 (no author given).

16 That Carter's novel, by letting the female protagonist "have the last words", reflects the changes women brought to the genre of the road novel in the 1980s, as Ronald Primeau argues (1996: 123), is an interpretation that overlooks the novel's negative representation of women on the road.

> shoulder, living dime to dime. The streets are all about power, Annie, and the closest we can get is the back of a motorcycle and what they offer us in exchange for spreading our legs." […]
> "I've never heard you talk like this," I said. "I've never heard you say there was anything we couldn't do." (205)[17]

Arguably, Carter's authorial voice can be located in the down-to earth character of Marie, an experienced, rational businesswoman, rather than in Annie, who at times behaves so inconsiderately and unreasonably she cannot but lose the reader's sympathy and understanding: as a case in point, she tries to bond with Jotta in a kind of secret circle of women who understand "the magic" (198) of a violent, abusive relationship, "the thrill of not knowing what would happen next" (254).

Carter's novel displays most of the main characteristics of the picaresque – the protagonist's originary displacement as a de-facto orphan and outsider; her adventurous vagrancy, retaining the para-nomadic defiance of the departure-arrival binary by way of reiterative displacement; her spatial and sexual transgressions, and, to a certain extent, trickstering (e.g. inventing her CV when she applies for a waitressing job) and humor (which appears mostly in the form of mockery of herself and others). Annie's troublemaking nature and petty criminality (running away, stealing, faking a CV) and her association with other social outcasts living on the fringes of society also have to be read in this context. However, the textual politics of this picaresque seem to be made from a highly pessimistic, perhaps even reactionary, view of the chances of feminine rebellion and escape. The female trickster is unsuccessful, as the gendered spatiality of the road is too powerful to be outwitted; the outcast will never find happiness in dislocation, yet her continual dislocation is necessary in order to guarantee the domestic happiness for the 'homegirls'.

Annie's narrative voice is distinctly marked by transdifference: on the one hand affiliating herself with countercultural icons like the Grateful Dead, this affiliation, though voluntary, is at odds with the narrative's dismantling of countercultural formations in terms of their

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[17] As a child, Annie was taught a sense of spatial regulation and lawfulness, but also how to get around the law if one knows the right secrets: "I recognized every illegally parked car […]. I'd learned on excursions with Marie […] why they never get ticketed: the two-way hand-mike slung over the rearview mirror was a secret cue to meter maids that the driver was on a hot case, usually lunch or a Macy's white sale." (58)

gendered exclusiveness on the other hand. It is this contradictory position that produces an 'uneasy', ambiguous ending, comparable to the denouément of Doris Betts' *Heading West* and theoretically accounted for by Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *Writing beyond the Ending* (1985). The finale of Carter's novel suggests – in contradistinction to its beginning – that the road has lost its mythical promise to provide opportunities and to procure a space of regeneration and catharsis, summoned by the novel's inscription: "Come, wash the nighttime clean / Come, grow the scorched ground green".[18] The fact that the mythical cross-country journey's directions are reversed and Annie goes from west to east is the appropriate consequence. In this, spatial progress runs parallel to historical change; born in 1967 in San Francisco, the place and year of the Summer of Love, Annie closes the narrative in the touristy Cape Cod area during the conservative 1980s.

6.2.2. Trucking down the Road of Adolescence: Katherine Dunn's *Truck*

Katherine Dunn's novel *Truck* (1971), in comparison to *On Other Days While Going Home*, is much more experimental in style and diverges from the picaresque road novel structure in that most of the narrative is set at the location of departure (Portland, Oregon) and arrival (outside Gaviota State Beach in Northern Califonia), with Los Angeles as the only place in between. However, the first-person tale of a tomboyish runaway girl, Jean "Dutch" Gillis, can be seen within the genre of the picaresque road novel "in which the protagonist is cast as a resourceful and sometimes even hapless vagabond living on the edge" (Lackey 1997: 8). *Truck* belongs, according to Lackey's *RoadFrames*, among a group of writings of the 1960s and 70s which "refine and enlarge antidomestic themes in grim road noir narratives that anticipate the final collapse of the road romance" (1997: 28). Like *On Other Days While Going Home*, *Truck*'s commentary on the gendered landscape of the late 1960s counterculture from the perspective

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[18] This is a quote from the song "Cassidy's Tale", written by John Barlow for Robert Hunter's 1972 solo album *Ace*. It commemorates Neal Cassady's and Barlow's father's death as well as the birth of a daughter to Eileen Law, a close associate of The Grateful Dead. The song unites the dualities of birth and death, celebrating the return of lost spirits in the newborn.

of a fifteen-year old misfit is indeed bleak and gloomy, again reflecting the 'death' of the Sixties.[19] While its protagonist-narrator starts out as a resourceful trickster, frequently passing for a boy and following her adventurous spirit and her own will at any cost (Sherrill 2000: 226-7), Dunn's quick-witted youthful picara emerges from her adventure "invisible […]. I'm glad but it hurts" (1971: 210) at the end of the book. This development of the picara makes sense, I would argue, in view of the narrative's late-1960s post-countercultural context, which is similar to Michelle Carter's *On Other Days While Going Home* as discussed above.

Although Dutch grows up in a sheltered home with her parents and brother, she is socially alienated at school. Like *Geek Love*, Dunn's third and much more widely acclaimed novel (1989),[20] *Truck* focuses on its narrator-protagonist's physical Otherness. With her androgyny as the main reason for her loneliness, Dutch's running away is motivated by a dream of escape into a wilderness where no-one will see or bother her. The narrative starts with an italicized inner monologue: "*Going to go up on the mountain and be king. If I'm the only one up there, I'm the king* […]. *Nobody will own me anymore.*" (1) Dutch is in love with Heydorf, an older fellow student and outcast at the local high school, but is convinced he accepts her as his friend only because her femininity is physically invisible: "He lets me talk and listen and be here because there are no tits and my Levi's hang from my pelvis and my hands are scruffy" (5); "[h]e doesn't know I have a cunt. He wouldn't be here if he did" (7). After graduation, Heydorf leaves town and starts the (stereo)typical life of a beatnik-hippie, going away to study philosophy and hypnotism (6-7), wandering around the American West and living the life of a hobo. Dutch, yearning to leave with Heydorf, knows about the limited options for girls to do so – even if they can pass for a boy by their looks:

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[19] I disagree, however, with Lackey's (1997) observation on the "collapse" of the road novel, which is correct only when disregarding women's, multicultural, or queer road novels.

[20] *Geek Love* was finalist nominee for the National Book Award in 1989 and has acquired cult status as a postmodern tale about freaks, monstrosity, and the grotesque among both the reading public and in academia (the MLA bibliography lists ten essays on *Geek Love* and none on *Truck*).

> He's going. Going away and I'll be here forever, scraping excitement out of Portland, Oregon, with no one to help and no way out and I'll marry a service station attendant and never see or go or know anything or do anything or ever feel myself all over full of possibility like now because he is so possible and anything is possible now but when he goes it will be high school again and the nothing and the nothing after that in the rain because girls cannot. *Even girls who are not, because secretly they are*. And will always be trapped and I want to be free. Why couldn't girls be? (23; emphasis mine)

In a style reminiscent of Kerouac's prosody, Dutch articulates she does *not* know what it is exactly she wants to be free from, but she *does know* she "is not" (ibid.). She is horrified by seeing the women around her trapped at home, fearing she will not be able to passively endure domestication herself. Like Arachne Manteia in *No Fixed Address*, freedom of movement seems to Dutch the only possibility to feel alive. If she does not run away, she is sure

> I'll end up being a good girl and staying here. Stop going out at night. Stop walking on the tracks. Stop laying [sic] under the trestle when the freights come through. Stay here with Mama and let my hair grow. Get a job at the supermarket and never nick anything. […] Spend all my money on clothes and sit at night with Maw in front of the TV sewing my hope chest and waiting for the right Flying A man to come along. Too much. Too much to stand. I really would end up killing somebody. Feeling the knife one day and red and anger and all the lost minutes and wasted hours come pouring out. (67)

"End up", "stop", "stay", "end up killing": in order to forestall (hetero)normative white middle-class feminine development, Dutch, who seems to understand this development is socially constructed rather than natural, sees no other choice but to run away, carefully planning not to worry her parents too much by writing them a note she posts in advance. A fifteen-year old high-school student, her only way to raise money is petty crime such as selling stolen goods. She steals books and sells them at school; Dutch mentions *Don Quixote* and a study of Freud – *The Great Books: Freud* (8). By selecting these two titles, the text suggests, as Katherine Lawrie Mills has observed, "that women are burdened not simply by patriarchal society, but specifically by means of the literary canon touted by patriarchal society. Women learn to travel by converting these 'Great Books' to cold cash, but not by reading them" (1999: 278). While I agree with Mills' general ar-

gument, the appearance of *Don Quixote* also fulfills a second function, namely that of linking the text to the picaresque and the fantastic literary modes simultaneously. The fact that it is mentioned at the beginning of the novel hints at the narrative's engagement with both these modes, foreshadowing the end of the story.

After a long Greyhound ride along the coast, Dutch meets Heydorf in Los Angeles. They live in the parks of the city for a few days and then take the bus to camp on a deserted Northern California beach, where they start living like hermits. When Heydorf leaves with her money to fetch some things back in L.A. and to procure food but fails to return, Dutch, bitterly starving, waits faithfully until the police find her and, after a brief interlude at a home for juvenile delinquents, is restored to her relieved parents. For Dutch, this is not a happy end. With bleak prospects ahead ("There's no getting out of it. I don't want out but it wouldn't make any difference if I did", Dunn 1990/1971: 210), she learns that a young couple has been killed near their beach hangout, the girl raped; Dutch imagines Heydorf and herself as being involved in the crime on the very last page of the book (213). Due to Dunn's construction of parallel diegetic realities, the reader is left unsure whether there is (diegetic) truth in Dutch's fantasy, or if it is merely a violent psychic reaction to her involuntary return home.

One of the first novels to focus entirely on a young female protagonist seeking adventure on the road (Mills 1999: 277), *Truck* anticipates the anger that would soon erupt in U.S.-American women's writing in the 1970s (ibid. 278). Written in spontaneous prose – reminiscent of beat generation literature – and in a fragmented, jumbled narrative structure which does not allow the reader to clearly distinguish between reality and fantasy, inner life and outer action, the picaresque adventure turns sour: Dutch's wish to make inroads into a male tradition of outlaws, vagabonds, and hobos[21] by way of her androgyny is frustrated as soon as the 'male bonding' she tries to perform with Heydorf becomes sexually charged (149). Even though it is Heydorf who suggests "it is tougher being a girl" (136), Dutch sees her earlier fantasies of trapped adult womanhood confirmed:

[21] On the genderedness of the hobo tradition, see Tim Cresswell's extensive study on *The Tramp in America* (2001).

> [Heydorf:] "[T]here are a lot of ready-made escape routes for boys. Army and forest ranging and the merchant marine. Nobody even thinks it's that weird if a guy wants to be a hermit. All part of the male image. There's really no place in society for a woman like that. She has to either operate underground or else totally outside the society. […] Working underground is a waste […]. You're always running around maintaining a façade […]."
> [Dutch:] "Yeah, I get it. They're wifey and mothery and get their hair done and shave their legs and then they think they're accomplishing something in their secret lives by working part time or taking literature courses at night." (136)

As Katherine Mills has argued in this context, the fact that it is Heydorf who speaks *for* Dutch here, although it is *she* who craves autonomy and the freedom of mobility throughout the novel, characterizes the "anomie of all the women in the (non-)road stories of the era" (1999: 278). From the perspective of a narratology of transdifference, it seems that textual instances like the above are anchored in the discourse of the male outsider who critically distances himself from society – a discourse that reached another peak in the context of Sixties' counterculture – while similar passages simultaneously attempt to articulate the genderedness of this discourse on the level of diegesis. Written not in the aftermath of but rather antedating the heyday of second-wave feminism, *Truck* is informed by the struggle to find a voice through which to reflect American women's experiences of the 60s. That *Truck* transforms anomie into anger, as Mills also argues (ibid.), even if only in the narrator's consciousness, might be an explanation for the ambiguous final passages of the novel.

Dutch's longing for solitude and wilderness (a major topic of the book) is another result of this discursive struggle, as the text utilizes the tradition of projecting wilderness as the ultimate 'outside' of society where the symbolic order is suspended. Dunn's novel, however, also disappoints this utopian vision. That Dutch, metaphorically, transforms into an invisible person after a period of sunburn and starvation – at the end of which her skin peels fully (Dunn 1990/1971: 198-200) – is the consequence of her inner withdrawal, the defeat of her adventurousness in face of the slim chances of surviving 'outside' of society, without money or male company.

* * *

At the advent of U.S.-American postmodernity – if defined as a historical period of political disillusionment that developed in the United States in the course of the Vietnam War and the aftermath of the 1960s – spiritual and spatial quests for countercultural space are translated, in both Michelle Carter's and Katherine Dunn's novels, into gloomy picaresque adventures. In both novels, the initial search for a home on the road and for alternative spaces of living is forestalled by repeated disappointment in countercultural collectives and traditions that are exposed as a romanticized sphere of male bonding, impenetrable to 'the second sex'.

At the end of Carter's tale, the reader is left with the protagonist's suggested self-sacrifice to the "magic" of a cruel motorcyclist and the narrative indeterminacy that characterizes the concluding chapters; similarly, Dutch's violent fantasies are impossible to differentiate from diegetic reality. What remains at the end of these roads is not the importance of destination, accomplished feats, or improvement of character, which characterize the traditional story of initiation and quest; it is also not the maturation and the successful integration into society that the *Bildungsroman* conventionally ends with. On the contrary, the empowerment of the protagonists lies merely in the fact that the road, in its function as a testing ground for the negotiation of multiple differences, has taught these girls the physical and metaphorical mobility at stake in the 'survival game' of a society based on inequality and (in)difference. The reader, initially sharing the protagonists' hopes in their journeys, must thus also share their eventual disappointment – and wait for Aritha van Herk's or Erika Lopez' texts to find alternative roads and more sanguine adventures.

6.3. The Wanderlust of Crossing and Queering: Erika Lopez' *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing*[22]

> Culturally speaking, women have wept a great deal, but once the tears are shed, there will be endless laughter instead. Laughter that breaks out, overflows, a humor no one would expect to find in women – which is nonetheless surely their greatest strength begause it's a humor that sees man much further away than he has ever been seen. […] And her first laugh is at herself.
>
> - Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?"

Recovering the joyful, adventurous aspect of the picaresque in the 1990s, Puerto Rican-Anglo-American graphic and performance artist-writer Erika Lopez has created her alter ego Jolene Gertrude (aka Tomato "Mad Dog") Rodriguez as a humorous trickster-figure who parodies the quest for authentic selfhood and belonging (cf. Elliot 2000: 204). In a trilogy of illustrated novels – *Flaming Iguanas. An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing* (1997), *They Call Me Mad Dog! A Story for Bitter, Lonely People* (1998), and Lambda Literary Award finalist *Hoochie Mama: The Other White Meat* (2001) – transdifferent tensions of conflicting ethnic, sexual, and gender alliances are sustained by way of what I would like to call Lopez' queer picaresque textual politics. With this term I refer to narrative and visual strategies of generic transgression ('queer' as going against categorization), of parody and pastiche (in the sense of 'queer' as 'counterfeit'), of performative shape-shifting (the trickster element), and of self-mockery (i.e. Lopez' writing and drawing her textual alter-egos as 'queer' in the sense of odd, eccentric, disadvantaged, and suspiciously resistant to categorization and order). With the help of these strategies, Lopez' texts fundamentally ridicule cultural stereotypes and disrupt any essentialist conceptions of identity-based categorizations such as ethnicity, class, sex, and gender. Particularly prominent in her road book *Flaming Iguanas*, Lopez rewrites the tensions generated by the mul-

[22] I would like to thank my students Rebecca Maulbeck and Stefanie Ziegler for their original readings of Lopez' book, as well as my audience at the University of Hamburg, whose comments on my lecture on Lopez' work have also helped shape this chapter.

tiple differences with which her protagonist is confronted as a chance to create trans-different routes, pathways that navigate between and across cultural difference by way of the picaresque anti-heroine's journey.

Narrative PaROADy

Lopez' first-person narrator and protagonist Tomato is a struggling, yet fun-loving bisexual *mestiza* who criticizes the white male claim to hegemony by way of parodic subversion and comic ridicule. In this manner, *Flaming Iguanas* follows to some extent the so-called "ethnic picaresque" of the mid-20th century, exemplified by authors like Ishmael Reed (Reinhart 2001: 102). Lopez' first book,[23] it parodically "appropriates and revises the American male genre of literary road writing" (Laffrado 2002: 406; cf. also Enevold 2004: 86-7). This parodic revision – according to Linda Hutcheon's definition of the parodic as a "repetition with critical distance" (1985: 6) – is already present in the book's title and outlook: Lopez does not write a road novel, just something *like* it: a road novel *thing*, an "all-girl" parody of the all-American cross-country journey, illustrated and in quadratic format, with a colorful bright yellow, blue and orange cover that is dotted with little stars sparkling around the image of a coffee-colored woman sitting on a motorcycle and smiling at the prospective reader.[24]

Lopez' picaresque narrative mocks literary seriousness, infusing the road with a trickster spirit, parody, and laughter. Yet in the course of the novel, the narrator-protagonist also tones down her mockery by

23 In her web-(auto)biography, Lopez, who started out as a graphic artist, reports that when she received a grant to write she "read bad books to inspire her […], learned to ride a crappy motorcycle in a week, and rode cross country so she could at least write about doing *something*" and that she "faked her way through her first novel" (cf. http://www.erikalopez.com). Lopez admits how Tomato "is based on me, of course", but how she "can put more stuff on her and have her say more things that I can't say" (qtd. in Wilkinson).

24 One of the stars hides the nipple of her right breast, which she proudly exposes. The gesture openly plays with the reader's voyeurism: Lopez depicts the woman holding down her colorful, frilly flamenco blouse and thus implies the figure's control over what we get to see. That the nipple is covered by a little star adds another layer of visual control, this time exerted by the artist herself, who covers and uncovers as she pleases.

incorporating issues of multicultural, gender, and class conflicts in her humorous statements that are at times painful and irritating to her textual self as well as to the reader. The book thus exemplifies a distinct version of parody as playful mockery (Hutcheon 1985: 15), yet also introduces serious criticism and a self-ironic stance to this version – one reason for Lyn Elizabeth Elliot to call the book a "semi-parody" (2000: 204). "An imitation characterized by ironic inversion" (ibid. 6), Lopez' text plays with generic conventions, using "ironic trans-contextualization" (ibid. 8) to transform the road genre by reworking its established formulaic outlook and themes (such as 'a man in search of his country'; a 'heroic quest for freedom/sexual adventure/...' etc.; cf. Elliot 2000: 222-3). As Hutcheon asserts, parody thereby creates new levels of meaning, "mark[ing] the intersection of creation and re-creation, of invention and critique" (1985: 30).

Another key feature of the parodic text, according to Hutcheon's *Theory of Parody*, is the necessity of bonding with its audience: for the parody to function, it relies on creating pleasure in its readers who have to recognize it as parody by sharing its textual codes (1985: 19); even if accepted norms exist only to be transgressed in the parody, its hermeneutic status is based upon them (ibid. 95). In the context of a typically postmodern predilection for popular art forms (such as the graphic novel), the parodic mode's "appropriation (borrowing or pirating)" further "questions art's accepted status as individualized commodity" (1985: 75) as well as the notion of authorial control by acknowledging its dependence on the reader's shared background of an "accessible, textually incorporated culture" (ibid. 81).[25]

In *Flaming Iguanas,* this shared code consists mainly of a large repertoire drawn from popular culture – from references to popular literature, film, and music, to the use of pop-cultural icons and a vernacular register, all of which are used for the purpose of humorous resignification. This resignification is further linked to a confessional narrative mode fundamental for the establishment of a close, if not intimate, narrator-audience-bonding, as Lopez' alter ego's narrative voice is staged as immediate and unmediated, candid and shameless as

[25] In this respect, Hutcheon correctly adds that parody is conservative in the sense that it guarantees the continued existence of the mocked art form (1985: 75); in this case, Lopez' mockery of the road novel fills the genre with a new agenda and thus basically affirms the generic formula.

well as self-ironic.[26] The pop-cultural frame of reference also results in the use of innovative metaphors which break representational taboos regarding women's bodies and female sexuality, as well as the more serious aspirations of the multicultural quest-narrative (contrasting with, for instance, Anne Roiphe's *Long Division* (1972), or Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* [1998/1982]).

Picaresque Mockery of the Quest: On the Road with the Flaming Iguana

Although *Flaming Iguanas* focuses on its protagonist's picaresque adventures throughout the rest of the book, Jolene Gertrude's initial motivation for embarking on a cross-country motorcycle trip is not entirely free from questing aspirations. As a strategy to counter her loneliness in New York and to boost her courage and self-esteem, Jolene decides to start a biker gang, the Flaming Iguanas, find a motorcycle, and ride cross-country to visit her sick father in San Francisco. She persuades her newly-won Puerto Rican friend Magdalena "D-cup" Perez to accompany her. Initially, hesitation and doubtfulness hamper her intention to "run, live, and have no regrets" (20), and she asks herself what she is actually trying to prove:

> What was so wrong with watching TV? Why was I doing this? What was I proving? What the fuck was this myth that said you have to leave your job, your life, your tear-stained woman waving good-bye with a kitchen towel behind the screen door *so you can ride all over the country with a sore ass, battling crosswinds, rain, arrogant Volvos, and minivans?* (26; my italics)

Doubting the validity of the masculine myth of escape she alludes to and dismantles here, Jolene is nevertheless convinced that the journey will make her "more responsible, powerful, and amazing" (26). She decides she must experience the mythical American road for herself in order to judge "what was so wrong with watching TV". By applying

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[26] The confessional mode of a flawed heroine, the use of humor and self-mockery, the taboo-breaking, demystifying discourse on the body, sexuality, and relationships, as well as the intimate bonding with its audience are core features of the recently established genre of "chick-lit", with which Lopez' work is therefore generically linked.

the discursively masculine position of the "you" ("this myth that said you have to leave your job…") to herself, the narrator immediately questions the genderedness of road discourse. Thus, the reader is invited to witness Tomato's mock-performance of the masculine position in the road narrative.

At this early point in the book, Lopez dissociates Tomato's motivations from those of her male literary ancestors – Kerouac, Hunter S. Thompson, and Henry Miller – and not just implicitly; Tomato openly admits how she "just couldn't identify with the fact that they were guys who had women around to make the coffee and wash the skid marks out of their shorts while they complained, called themselves angry young men, and screwed each other with their existential penises" (Lopez 1998/1997: 27). With harsh sarcasm, this passage criticizes the ambivalent gender politics of the beat generation, whose epitomic protagonists rejected the prevalent social norms of the 1950s on the one hand, yet were by and large conservative in their views of women and homosexuality on the other hand (with the notable exception of Allen Ginsberg). Judging from the above quotation, one can observe that Tomato is well aware of the literary ancestry that will accompany her cross-country road trip even before she actually leaves (Enevold 2004: 86). In view of this cultural baggage, she deliberately neglects expectations of heroism not only by calling her plan, self-mockingly, an "embarrassingly cheesy-brown low-budget adventure" (Lopez 1998/1997: 130), but also by the mere fact that she not only articulates insecurity about her motorcycling skills but also about her ethnic and sexual identity.

The theme of multiple cultural differences is central throughout the book: born half-Anglo and half-Latina and insecure in her economic position and sexual identification,[27] Tomato wonders:

> Where the fuck was I supposed to be? I never got what I was looking for or where I was looking to go. I wasn't a good blue-collar heterosexual in a trailer home, I wasn't a real Puerto Rican in the Bronx, I

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[27] Tomato comments on economic and other hardships for the female artist as follows: "The life of a woman artist isn't exactly what anyone in her right mind would choose if anyone told you the truth of it on career day" (44), implicitly criticizing an art world traditionally dominated by male artists and female muses.

> wasn't a good one-night stand lesbian. I wasn't a good alcoholic artist, and I wasn't a real biker chick because I didn't want the tattoos. (241)

From the trailer-home heterosexual to the Puerto Rican in the Bronx, Tomato finds it is impossible for her to embody any of these types, although she apparently envies them for having a place to be and places to go. Throughout the book, she recollects her aspiration and desire to belong to one of these groups: as a child, she tried to pluck her eyebrows like the Puerto Rican women she knew (146-7) and regrets not being able to speak Spanish (29), and in a conversation with her lesbian mother, a "real strong woman" (51), Tomato tries to find out if she was perhaps a lesbian herself (172) but finally remains ambivalent in her sexual preferences (251). Her physical features are also repeatedly described as markers of her cultural in-betweenness: "gray brown" skin, large breasts, black curly hair, but "pointy nose features" that sometimes made others think she was "originally white" (54).

While initially (and retrospectively) the narrative suggests that Tomato is looking for spaces in which she would feel she belonged, it emphasizes Tomato's development into a picaresque character who has learned, on the road, to see through and outwit the rules of collectives predicated upon a rigid categorization of identities and alterities. The search for a national 'American' character and one's own 'Americanness', for instance, considered by many critics to be a major reason for geographic movement in American road literature (e.g. Primeau 1996: 15), may have motivated Tomato to replay the mythical journey in the beginning; yet, as a narrator, she relates this quest never without self-mockery and the awareness of the contingency of all collectives (e.g. when she talks about the tattoos without which one cannot be a true 'biker chick'). Thus the narration counteracts the notion of identity-based collectivity by portraying the country with a 'queer eye' that uncovers a 'queer nation'[28] to which Tomato can truly – transiently and without grounding herself in any particular sexual

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[28] I am appropriating the name of the radical direct-action organization which was founded in 1990 in New York City in order to counteract anti-gay and lesbian violence on the streets and prejudice in the arts and media as well as to increase gay, lesbian and bisexual visibility through a variety of tactics (including the reclaiming of the term queer). Their visibility actions became known as "Queer Nights Out"; another prominent slogan used by Queer Nation was "Out of the Closets and into the Streets", which also emphasizes the organization's socio-spatial agenda.

identity – belong. Thus, as Jessica Enevold has noted, the book is not content with a mere regendering of the road novel: it claims a "further expansion of the territory of subjectivity" (2004: 88), territory in between and across categories of socio-cultural differentiation rather than a 'rightful place' or the establishment of alternative social categories within the social order.

In this context of picaresque transgression, the iconography of the motorcycle plays a major role. As Ronald Primeau justly observes, the vehicle in road novels usually expresses power, speed, and status, and offers a space for adventure, sex, and success (1996: 4). In *Flaming Iguanas*, Tomato's motorcycle parodies this vehicular fetishism, expressed famously in American road narratives à la *Easy Rider* (Enevold [2004: 87-8] cites *Easy Rider* as an intertext for *Flaming Iguanas*): the protagonist rides a borrowed, out-of-fashion motorcycle inapt for showing off status and success. Performing the role of the masculine rider who aims to impress the 'biker chick' in order to get her to ride on his backseat, she mockingly believes in this downtrodden bike's power to make her attractive to other women: "I would find out how much girls found riding on the back of my bike sexy. It wasn't me. It was the bike, the ride." (Lopez 1998/1997: 181)

Consistent with her overall strategies of parody and pastiche, the narrator-protagonist also performs the role of the 'dyke on bike', but also ridicules this stereotype eventually when she wants to impress Hodie by riding up in front of her San Francisco office: "Feeling very sexy with cheap burgundy lipstick on, I walked out of the store squeezing my own butt. I made a whole ceremony of swinging my leg over the bike." (245) But her bike will not start, and so she ends up taking a bus that "smelled entirely of urine" (ibid.) to Hodie's.

As an inexperienced, unskilled biker ("Clutch? First, second, third, and fourth? What was everyone talking about?" 71) who does not even know she needs a special license to legally ride her motorcycle, she only slowly learns to ride at an average speed in the beginning of the book: "*Thirty miles [to the campground]?* At my top speed of twenty-five miles an hour – with six or seven cigarette and bathroom breaks – it'd be morning by the time we got there." (81) With the image of the biker chick in her mind,[29] her developing skills make

[29] The "biker chick" image usually relegates women to the back seat of a man's motorcycle. Here, Lopez intervenes visually when Dave, a mechanic who re-

Tomato feel strong and "cool" (189); yet these skills are also a metaphorical expression of her expanding strategies to smoothly navigate through the striated spatialities engendered by dominant discourses of identity. Again with both literal and metaphorical implications, she enjoys the feeling of transient belonging to the motorcycling community which, due to the brevity of road encounters, the element of picaresque masquerade (or even drag) in the biker's leather outfit and its counter-cultural reputation of sanctioned deviance, incites this sentiment: "I'm telling you, I felt cool just riding behind [the two guys on Harleys] on the cracked yellow highway. […] [N]ow that I was a real live biker, I *demanded notice.*" (189) However, exhilaration is followed by disappointment, as the community's rigid genderedness reminds Tomato of her originary displacement: "I wanted to see other women riding so I'd feel less like a freak, but I only ran into girls who rode on back. They never really waved or gave me cool directions. They just smiled exactly as much as their boyfriends or husbands did." (191)

The biting humor with which even the most painful events in Tomato's life are narrated pervades *Flaming Iguanas* and emotionally engages the reader: her make-believe honesty, her self-mockery and sardonic wit render Tomato's transgressions not only forgivable but exciting and enjoyable. Yet her humorous tone is just as fundamental as a strategy for disempowering cultural stereotypes. In the following passage, it is her self-mockery which brings Tomato's transdifferent predicament to the point:

> I don't feel white, gay, bisexual, black, or like a brokenhearted Puerto Rican in *West Side Story*, but sometimes I feel like all of them. Sometimes I feel so white I want to speak in twang and belong to the KKK, experience the brotherhood and simplicity of opinions. / Sometimes I want to feel so heterosexual, hit the headboard to the point of concussion […]. I want the kid, the folding stroller. Please, let me stand forever in a line with my expensive offspring at Disney World. / Sometimes I want to be so black, my hair in skinny long braids, that black guys nod and say "hey sister" […]. / I want the story, the rhythm, the myths that come with the color. Sometimes I want to live with my hand inside of a woman so I can hear her heart beat […]. Other times I wish I was born speaking Spanish so I could sound like I look without

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pairs Tomato's motorcycle, rides with her on the backseat: the passage is followed by a picture of a pair of scissors (180), suggesting the possibility (or male anxiety) of castration from the backseat.

> curly-hair apologies. But I try all that and I quit it, and I try again. (28-9)

In a play of self-conscious affiliation and disaffiliation, the narrator ridicules stereotypical representations of both dominant and minority social types in this passage, setting her (unstable and changing) desires to belong ("I want to" / "sometimes I want to") in antithetical relation to the mocking description of the images desired (e.g. the "expensive offspring at Disneyworld"). "Try" – "quit" – "try again": while opening up a variety of identifications, the passage thus emphasizes the interstitial subject's continual dislocation and the tensions arising as a result of her transdifferent affiliations; the last sentence adds temporary bitterness as a core ingredient to Tomato's humor.

In response to these transdifferential tensions, Lopez' book develops from a quest for roots – which is signified by the protagonist's desired return to her Puerto Rican father in order to anchor herself within a collective – into a picaresque "routes narrative" (Kunow 2002), which focuses on the viability *between* cultures and categories. When Tomato learns of her father's death, she realizes she has gradually abandoned her initial destination: "I hadn't decided how far I was going or where I was going." (Lopez 1998/1997: 223) As her need for collective identification decreases,[30] Tomato forgets the aim and destination of her road trip and turns into a picaresque wanderer cruising the American highways – a development interrupted only by faint memories of her desire to belong. Similarly, on the road from Philadelphia to California, Tomato's need for ethnic and sexual alignment vanishes; after Magdalena disembarks from their journey following a minor argument (93), Tomato experiences a sense of what could be called a rhizomatic community with strangers – truck-drivers, travelers, and bikers encountered by chance.

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30 Her abandonment of collective identification also paradoxically leads to a fleeting moment of cosmic belonging, a feeling based on her resentment of environmental exploitation (in which the motorcyclist nevertheless partakes!): "I breathed with the trees and felt separated from the collective human consciousness: I didn't want to conquer anything, didn't want to build cheap aluminium developments or shopping centers. I felt I belonged and would've asked for permission to stay if I'd known how […]. These unplanned moments of actually feeling like a natural part of the planet […] are so few and too far between." (195)

Although Tomato also celebrates these communities and her own interstitial, transient belonging in the course of her narrative development, convinced that hybridity will steadily increase in the future of the United States, she is well aware of the limitations imposed on the individual by the capitalist commodification of this trend: "They say I'm a child of an AT&T café olé telephone commercial future where your nose is not flat enough to offend / and not pointy enough to cut the glass ceiling. Future child, that's me." (28) Correspondingly, the text does not present an idealized, utopian vision of hybridity; voicing also the painful moments in which Tomato encounters various glass ceilings, it is less hybridity that is celebrated than the radical openness that transdifferential conflict, continual change, and narrative parody can produce.

Visual PaROADy and the Queer Mestiza

Flaming Iguanas does not limit parodic play to the diegesis and a transgressive, taboo-breaking language, both of which repeat the road formula with a critical distance. Parody is also detectable in the book's material, paginal space from front jacket to back cover, weaving together black and white graphic art and a typographically experimental text of jumbled lines and blurred fonts, as well as in its unusual quadratic formatting.[31] These graphic elements are not, as Lopez' subtitle might suggest, purely illustrative, but create another level of signification that potentially ruptures the narrative and puzzles the reader.

A major element on this level is Lopez' visual commentary on the image and iconography of the Latina by way of graphic parody

[31] The original hardcover edition was printed on brown paper, which Lopez had chosen for its similarity to wrapping paper used by the U.S. Postal Service (Laffrado 2002: 409). As an aspiring "stamp artist", she has designed a series of "penis stamps" printed at the end of the book. Commemorative stamps entitled "St. Valentine's Day Penis Massacre", "Bulimic Penis", or "Penis Descending a Staircase" ridicule phallic power visually; in the narrative, the penis-shape is appropriated for lesbian sex as Hodie, who owns a sex-toy store, offers Tomato a job: "'You mean you want me to come up with a new line of dildos?' The modern day Electra complex was playing itself out more elegantly than I could've ever imagined. And I'd be able to pay for my bike with penis money." (256)

and pastiche.[32] Bluemich and Cedeño (2005) label two of the most common Latina stereotypes "the virginal señorita" and the oversexualized "loose Latin spitfire", both serving as objects of entertainment and sexual pleasure. Often, they argue, Latinas are additionally depicted as dumb, funny, and laughable.[33] Quite fittingly, Erika Lopez fashions Tomato Rodriguez after the iconic Portuguese-Brazilian actress and entertainer Carmen Miranda in order to distort Latina stereotypes. Miranda (1909-1955) enlivened Hollywood films of the 1940s with staccato singing and frantic dancing; following her Broadway successes of the late 1930s, she was billed the "Brazilian Bombshell" and was used primarily to add 'exotic spice' to musical films, typically performing in extravagant costumes and high headgear, a hat she had designed herself, adorned by an assortment of tropical fruit (e.g. in *Nancy Goes to Rio,* 1950).[34] As Bluemich and Cedeño summarize:

> Miranda with her cute accent and tropical fruit and banana costumes, reached the epitome of the Latin women as hip-swinging, fractured English-speaking, ditsy sex objects. […] Notoriously known as "the lady in the tutti-frutti hat," her multicolored costumes and fruit-covered hats instantly mocked the folkloric costumes and customs of Brazil and Latin America in general.[35]

At this point, Lopez' illustrations intervene in the exoticist, misogynist discourse, as she gives voice to these tensions of cultural in-betweenness in her Carmen Miranda/Tomato Rodriguez portrayals in

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32 Pastiche – repetitive imitation without the "critical distance" that defines parody (cf. Hutcheon 1985: 12) – is one visual strategy of appropriation that Lopez uses for the text's overall parodic intent.

33 See Bluemich/Cedeño (2005): http://www.skidmore.edu/~g_bluemi/ common_stereotypes2.htm.

34 The blatant exoticism that shaped Miranda's American career reduced her to a pure embodiment of Latina stereotypes. The fact that Miranda suffered from severe depressions throughout her time in the United States hints at how deeply this stereotyping affected her. The impossibility of escaping the clichéd exotic sex-bomb in the States and the criticism she received for her appearances by Brazilian and Argentine authorities seems to have led to cultural dislocation and uprootedness: too exotic for Anglo-America but too Americanized to represent South America, Miranda was torn between two cultural hemispheres (see Miranda's biography by Martha Gil-Montero, 1989).

35 Cf. Bluemich/Cedeño (2005): http://www.skidmore.edu/~g_bluemi/ common_stereotypes.htm.

Flaming Iguanas.[36] The hoop earrings and fruit hat as well as the flamenco-style blouse clearly evoke the Brazilian actress; the front cover image, briefly described above, lends color to the black-and-white picture of both Miranda's filmic appearances and the stereotypical, black-and-white image of the Latina woman. From waist down, Lopez transcends the representational tradition of the semi-nude entertainer 'prostituting' herself for the pleasure of the (WASP) audience by dressing her female hero in red pants and polished black boots, echoing military uniforms or sado-masochist costumes. Together with the motorcycle, the character is thus visually empowered by the physical and social mobility suggested (Laffrado 2002: 411). Visually as well as narratively, this Miranda figure is now endowed with agency and confidence; where *Carmen Miranda* was staged primarily as an object of scopophilic gratification, *Tomato-Miranda* returns the gaze and talks back. Further, the *Tomato-Miranda* figure ruptures the differential relation between 'original' and 'copy', as the reader/spectator is unsure whether Tomato mimics Miranda or vice versa. The text thus suggests here that there is no such thing as an original, authentic Latina; by transplanting Miranda into Lopez' generation of mestizas, blending her with the picaresque narrator-protagonist, this illustrated road narrative disrupts representational claims to 'authentic' ethnic femininity altogether.

The title page of the book shows a similar drawing, this time in black and white (in accordance with the rest of the book). The Miranda-Tomato figure is posited on a wooden gate, entertaining us by playing the guitar and singing, clad in a typical country-singer fringy shirt, skirt and cowboy boots, and again, the mixed-fruit hat and large earrings. "Lopez' incongruous situating of this Carmen Miranda figure", Laura Laffrado observes,

> signals its disalignment from Latina stereotypes. Her conflation of images of the cowgirl, country-western music, and Latina women confounds our stereotypic expectations of Latina locations and activities. Positioned outdoors, alone, and confident, Tomato Rodriguez an-

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[36] It should be noted here that Lopez' resignification of the Carmen Miranda image was preceded historically by drag shows of American World-War-II soldiers overseas, which rendered Miranda an icon of gay subculture (cf. Allan Bérubé's *Coming Out Under Fire: the History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*, 1990).

> nounces underrepresented possibilities of Latina agency and independence. (2002: 411)

In this context, one might perhaps speak of *mestiza* rather than "Latina agency" and independence (Smith 2001: XV), knowing that the main character/narrator is of mixed Anglo-Latina descent. These heritages are translated visually into the combination of the Anglo country outfit with typical Carmen Miranda attributes in the image discussed above. In any case, the gate Tomato-Miranda sits on certainly alludes to the borderland trope, perhaps the most important metaphor in Latino/a and Chicano/a writing in the second half of the 20th century. The daughter of an absent Puerto Rican father overly present in Tomato's physical features and an Anglo mother who raised her, Tomato develops during her road trip what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has called a "new mestiza" consciousness from her interstitial position on the fence, in the borderland of ethnic identities. Like the new mestiza, Tomato cannot (and does not want to) be located fully in the 'here' or 'there' of the border zones, transcending dualistic relations: thus, Anzaldúa's (1987) conception of this in-between position must also be seen in relation to sexuality (and possibly other social categories). Developed against the background of her own multiple cultural displacements as a working-class Chicana lesbian, Anzaldúa's notion of a mestiza consciousness, however, ultimately attempts "to work out a synthesis" (1987: 80) or thirdspace hybridity, but in order to do so, must bear conflicting subject positions: "This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together." (ibid. 79) It is from the sustenance of contradictions – which can be located also within Anzaldúa's writing (Yarbro-Bejarano 1994: 24) – that she develops "a new paradigm that permits the expansion of categories of analysis in such a way as to give expression to the lived experience of the ways race, class, and gender converge" (ibid. 6). As a consequence, border zones remain ambiguous by definition, opening up possibilities while at the same time confronting potentially painful oppositions:

> The topography of the borderland is not only a space of multiple oppression but also a potentially liberatory space […]. [T]he *new mestiza* [is] constituted by […] acts of crossing and recrossing the border […]. *Mestiza* consciousness is a constantly shifting process […]. This consciousness embraces multiple voices and multiple positionings in rela-

> tion to gender, class, sexuality and membership of competing cultures […]. (Fellner 2005: 102-3)

"To live in the borderlands", Anzaldúa herself writes, "means you are […] caught in the crossfire between camps […] not knowing which side to turn to, run from; […] it often produces a feeling of being torn between different subject positions" (1987: 216). This characterization certainly captures Tomato's initial quandary well; however, and diverging from Anzaldúa's much-celebrated conception of a hybrid mestiza that ultimately annihilates the predicament of transdifferential identifications by producing a new, albeit fragmented, unity, Lopez' figure responds to pain with humor, (self-)mockery, and sarcasm. Conceiving Tomato as a trickster-picara, Lopez instead focuses on the new mestiza's transdifferential and queer aspects, from which she develops her performative parody of the border.

The term 'queer' is understood broadly here, in the sense of shaking up dualisms and notions of categorical purity, authenticity, or normalcy. (Regardless of its elasticity and resistance to definition, the term cannot be used for post-identity agenda without acknowledging its roots in lesbian and gay studies and activism.) Its greatest potential, in my view, lies in its provocative embrace of the ambiguous, indefinable, even the inappropriate, as an oppositional practice to any kind of dualism and conceptual order – and it is in this light that a queer agenda can be disclos(et)ed also in the picaresque literary tradition. Certainly, I would thus argue, there is no reason to confine the use of queer theory to issues of sexuality alone.[37] Indeed, a major development in queer theory has been the challenge to account for transdifferent dissonances based on the intersection of sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, class, and gender (Sedgwick 1990: x, Warner 1993: vii & xvii).

Tomato, a bicultural bisexual biker at times easy, at other times uneasy, about her confused ethnic and sexual identities, can therefore be read as a postmodern queer picara, a post-identity model to overcome a life in images, a life full of fear "that she has no names / that

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[37] For a recently published overview that conceives of the term in a similarly broad manner see Hark, who understands the queer critique of normalizing discourses as extending also to the questioning of other binary relations relevant for the social order (such as true/false, un-/natural, public/private, etc.; 2005: 295).

she has many names / that she doesn't know her names / She has this fear that she's an image / that comes and goes" (Anzaldúa 1987: 43).[38] By way of her queer agenda and her new mestiza consciousness, the inter-cultural picara is equipped to create mobile spatialities of dissonance and dissent. Similarly, Lopez' graphic novel (de-)scripts multiple subjectivities in a transgressive travel narrative, which is vital to sustain multiplicity as well as transience; thus, she defies the expectation that autobiography declare a coherent I, opting instead, by way of visual and narrative performance, for a range of potential identifications (Laffrado 2002: 423; Solomon goes even further and proposes, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, to view Lopez' narrative 'I' as a mere "heuristic device", 2002: 209).[39]

In *Flaming Iguanas*, Lopez takes her readers on a verbal and graphic tour through Tomato's particular mestiza universe: on the one hand, she has the protagonist sing Don McLean's "American Pie" and the national anthem when she is scared (Lopez 1998/1997: 104), thus mocking U.S.-American hymns – one popular, one official – by way of irony and parody; on the other hand, she articulates Tomato's childhood attraction to the Puerto Ricans because the narrator-protagonist "wanted to be one" (147). Out of touch with her Latina father and thus with her minoritarian cultural heritage, Jolene/Tomato looks for Latina role models in the streets and beauty parlors of Puerto Rican New York: "I wanted to belong / look like the other women in the grocery store" (146). As a child, she

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[38] Note that the quote ends on a line emphasizing not only the historical changeability of images and stereotypes, but also a latent agency implied in the new mestiza's physical as well as metaphorical coming and going. Issues of space and agency – with the border zone as a continuing spatial referent on both metaphorical and geographical levels – have a long tradition in Chicana literature and criticism; Trujillo (1993), Quintana (1996), and Brady (2002), for instance, stress issues of domesticity, interstitiality, and spatial expansion, respectively.

[39] In this context, Laffrado calls the text a "performance of multiplicity", citing Chéla Sandoval's observations in "Mestizaje as Method": "The cruising mobilities […] demand of the differential practitioner commitment to the process of metamorphosis itself: this is the activity of the trickster who practices subjectivity-as-masquerade, the oppositional agent who accesses differing identity, ideological, aesthetic, and political positions." (qtd. in Laffrado 2002: 424)

> had a guardian angel I named "Chiquita" because I wanted to get in touch with my Puerto Rican heritage and have a Puerto Rican guardian angel, and the Spanish word I knew was from the bananas, so I called her "Chiquita". My childhood guardian angel wore fruit on her head, felt sorry for me like a tragic TV show, and got me out of all sorts of scary shit […]. As I got older and too cool for her, she packed the fruit in her suitcase and moved on. (107-8)

Across pages 108 and 109, Lopez has drawn, in succession from left to right, a compass, a peach, cherries, a pineapple, grapes and a strawberry on their way toward an open suitcase. Not knowing her Puerto Rican family or any Spanish, Jolene, as text and image jointly express, is positioned as a displaced cultural orphan who adopts a guardian angel that embodies Latina culture for the little girl. Her in-betweenness, however – conditioned by her Anglo features, lack of Spanish language skills, and *mestizaje* – remain a "barrier[…] to telling her story through Latina scripts and, consequently, to membership in an identity group" (Laffrado 2002: 408). Thus, the narrative voices in *Flaming Iguanas* offer disparate and multiple autobiographical possibilities: "In crossing genres and media to extend the tradition of Americans writing life on the road" (ibid.), Lopez has created an intermedial space that adds emphasis to the narrator-protagonist's transgressive interstitiality.

Interestingly, the fact that Chiquita is merely a banana trading company's brand name does not concern little Jolene; even as a child, cultural belonging does not require authenticity for Tomato, but rests in performative acts – such as the oft-repeated Spanish name (meaning 'the little one') of her guardian angel or the shaved-off eyebrows drawn back in thin black lines like the Puerto Rican women around her (147). Later, Tomato continues this Latina self-fashioning by reinventing her first name, eating Latino-style (17 & 63) and using Spanish words.[40] The name of her one-girl motorcycle gang is similarly connected to her Latina heritage:

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[40] This usually happens in Tomato's descriptions of women and of sex: she calls her sister Elena "pollo" (54) for the color of her skin, her first lesbian affair Hodie "Hooter Mujer" (248) for her large breasts, and even alters Spanish grammar by using the Spanish word for snipe, *chocha* (151, 216) for 'vagina' (the Spanish *chocho*); obviously, Lopez did not want to use a masculine noun to describe a female sexual organ. The fact that Spanish vocabulary is often used in the context of feminine sexuality and bodies makes use, perhaps too eagerly, of the stereotype of the Latina sex bomb.

> "I've always wanted to be in a gang called Flaming Iguanas in honor of our flamboyant little South American brothers and sisters who are penned in like tiny lizard cows, but want to run free. All because the locals think they taste like chicken and take up less space."
> [Magdalena:] "Iguanas don't run, Tomato."
> "That's my point. Since they can't, we will run *for* them. Feel the fire of death and time nipping at our butts, making us run, live, and have no regrets. I bet you cows and iguana food-prisoners have many regrets." (20)

This passage evokes a certain analogy between the situation of the iguana and the American Latino. As Oscar Hijuelos remarks in his preface to *Iguana Dreams*, iguanas usually go unnoticed, sitting underneath stone heaps and shrubs, and are highly adaptable to their surroundings – some specimen can even change their skin color (1992: xi). Tomato feels connected to these creatures because the fact that they take up so little space puts them at a disadvantage (and in danger) against larger breeding stock. Put this way, Tomato's obsession with the iguana – the "iguana thing" (21) she has going on[41] – can also be read as a satirical comment on heteronormativity, with the 'hidden' homosexual as both endangered by not taking up more space, yet simultaneously protected by a survival tactics such as camouflage invisibility. In addition, the oxymoronic ambivalence of the Flaming Iguana emphasizes both the negative and the empowering aspect of the metaphor, with the flames of fire connoting its destructive component as well as intensity and passion. Thus it is already in the title that the transdifferent tensions, which appear throughout the text, are hinted at: painful moments of conflicting identifications and affiliations. Simultaneously, the performative parody Lopez creates from these moments is also foreshadowed.

Tomato's love for the iguana "food-prisoners" also emphasizes that spatial expansion and freedom of mobility are the top priorities of her road trip agenda, proclaimed in the book's preface, which she also narrates:

> Magdalena and I are gonna cross America on two motorcycles. We're gonna be so fucking cool, mirrors and windows will break when we pass by. […] [W]omen wearing pink foam curlers in passing RVs will

[41] Cf. also Tomato's iguana 'cross-dressing'; Magdalena talks about "that green spiky hat you always wear looks like an iguana" (21). Also, her love for exotic hats obviously connects the protagonist to Carmen Miranda.

> desire us […]. The sun wouldn't dare melt us because it would be a big, huge, major mistake. We'll be riding the cheapest motorcycles we can find / stopping every forty-five minutes for gas. Truck stop waitresses will wink and jam dollar bills in our happy little beautifully tanned fists, but we'll whisper "no thanks," because we don't need it / we'll live off the fumes from our estrogen. And we'll be spitting out mango pits like fucking bullets if anyone says anything about our huge Latin American breasts. (s.p.)[42]

Her mission statement expresses how Tomato does not want to fight or plead for spatial agency and recognition: rather than as a means to bargain for space, estrogen and mango pits – metaphors for the female Latina body – are weapons to defend a position of spatial agency claimed as rightfully hers.

Dismantling the Culture of Fear

In *Flaming Iguanas*, humor and parody do not, however, obviate the seriousness of the various concerns the text investigates. Much rather, the use of a humorous narrative voice can be seen as a means to facilitate the articulation of painful feelings like loneliness, uncertainty, or alienation. The interplay between serious subject matter on the one hand and picaresque playfulness and disruption on the other becomes evident, especially in the first seven chapters which express the difficulties accompanying Tomato's claim to space and the impossibility of a position outside dominant discourses of gendered space. The female body is refigured here as being inscribed by these discursive forces when Tomato's almost agoraphobic fear of the journey is articulated. For one, she admits she needs Magdalena's company because she "was too chicken to go on [her] own" (22): "We'd go together and save each other from a world that seemed full of the kind of serial killers they make compassionate TV movies about." (ibid.) In the course of the narrative, Tomato then discerns the cultural geography of fear as responsible for her initial agoraphobic fantasy of "discreetly jump[ing] down a flight of stairs and break[ing] my legs so I wouldn't have to go" (25). These contradictory impulses – her eagerness to depart vs. her fear of doing so – result from the fact that Tomato is sub-

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42 The opposite page shows a watermelon and a cantaloupe, clearly a pun on Magdalena's and Tomato's "huge Latin American breasts".

ject to, painfully aware of, and in opposition to dominant cultural constructions of female socio-spatial confinement (Laffrado 2002: 416); they can also be explained by the ambiguous position of a female biker simultaneously drawn to the masculine myth of the open road yet held back by socio-cultural as well as physical restraints.[43] Visiting the Grand Canyon, she confronts a similar fantasy, but the humorous tone of the passage immediately makes clear Tomato will not give in to it:

> "*C'mon... Jump...Jump...*" [the Canyon] whispers like a very large baking pan. It's hard to be free / I'm so scared to do whatever I want. It's like the gravel in the road or the oil slicks and trucks that I've never actually experienced crashing into myself, but other people have warned me about. I'm afraid of crashing yet I want to blaze through life, so I live by pithy double-dare one-liners [like "Carpe Diem!"] that I pull into as parking spaces, but can't back out of. (110)[44]

In a gendered parody of the lines "I'm free / to do what I want" from the song "I'm Free" by the Rolling Stones,[45] this passage problematizes this claim. In the same chapter, the narrator-protagonist realizes how her fears are part of a culturally institutionalized discourse of fear – in which media representation plays a major role:

> There is this myth that if you're a woman traveling alone people will instantly want to kill you. This is an example of where you shouldn't listen to anybody. So much of the way we live and the decisions we

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43 Tomato refers to her "D-cups" as an obstacle of bodily activity (99) and repeatedly makes her lack of physical strength responsible for her "battles" with her motorcycle (e.g. 195-6).

44 Tomato's fear of death is a recurrent theme in *Flaming Iguanas*: "I think about death too much […]. I've got to get to some kind of spiritual point where I won't give a shit and blow through life without thinking one day these are gonna be ancient times." (158-9) As Primeau and others have noted, road novels often address such fundamental questions, thereby opening a "dialogue about who we are, where we've been, and where we might yet still go" (Primeau 1996: 16). Retrospectively taking pride in her successful venture, Tomato finally stops worrying: "I felt alone and I loved America […]. I'd really, really done it. I'd made it and I felt the peace of living in the here and now and not worrying about where I'd be tomorrow or in fifty years." (237)

45 The song starts "I'm free to do what I want any old time / I'm free to do what I want any old time / So love me, hold me / love me, hold me / I'm free any old time / to get what I want" (from the Rolling Stones' 1965 *December's Children* album).

> make in this world are based on fear. […] I highly doubt you'd find a *traveler* pumping you full of psycho-killer fear. No. Only people who stay at home and watch too much TV will pump you full of that shit. (111-2)

As she gains the confidence of a female biker who temporarily succeeds at unmasking a discourse that installs women at home or on the back of motorcycles (191), Tomato, as both narrator and protagonist, reclaims the traditionally masculine space of the road by way of parodic repetition. Her credo is never to act "vague" and to "take up space because it's not a school dance" (112). This strategy finally makes her "feel alone in the best way" (185) – competent, courageous, and strong (200).

"The louder you laugh and the farther apart you plant your feet, the more respect you'll get" (112) aptly sums up Tomato's road philosophy, based on strategies of queer intervention in gendered spatial practices. The text's claiming of space seems incompatible with the spatial separatism characteristic of feminist/lesbian/Latino/a political agendas of the 1970s and 1980s.[46] And accordingly, Tomato's road narrative does not counter mainstream spatiality with exclusionary alternative zones, but reconstructs the United States as a queer nation. While on the road, the protagonist's interest is neither in the landscape nor its mythical markers – Route 66 is merely a welcome diversion to "busy [her]self with romantic thoughts of all the famous people who'd ridden the same road" (206), and an Amarillo sunset is described by "the striated clouds [that] covered the purple sky like the stretch marks on my hips" (209) – a ruthless parody of romantic descriptions of the American night that can be found in Kerouac, for instance.[47] Instead,

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46 In this context, Enevold (2004: 87) also notes Lopez'/Tomato's ambivalence toward her mother's generation's feminism, which is illustrated by her ridiculing of some of its core manifestos such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Ellen Frankfort's *Vaginal Politics* (1972), and Erika Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973; cf. Lopez 1998/1997: 27).

47 Cf. the last paragraph of Kerouac's *On the Road*: "So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars'll be out […]." (1976/1957: 307)

Tomato enjoys encountering queer relationships on road and road-sides, "funny couple[s]" (209) such as a French lesbian who married a gay man with a liking for straight guys so she could stay in the country (ibid.), two inseparable Canadians bikers both named John, and finally her father's lesbian wife Hodie, with whom she "br[eaks] on through to the other side" (219) of heteronormativity – thus even queering the Doors' famous song lines ("Break on Through," from their 1967 debut album).

Tomato's desire for a relationship with a woman is not idealized by the narrative. When Tomato visits her mother to talk about her lesbian relationship, Lopez' text immediately subverts her protagonist's romantic view of lesbian relationships:

> "I'm wondering if I should be a lesbian. You and Violet get along so well. You both are like friends, and well, that's what I want. Like you probably totally trust each other and stuff. I think it's a woman thing. You both really know how to be sensitive with each other." (*swoosh – bam!*) Violet slid back the sliding glass door […] and yelled across the deck.
> "Jane! I thought you were going to buy the turkey! Where's the damn turkey?" (173-4)

Jane and Violet pick a fight that ends in "another therapy appointment" (175) and Tomato's realization that they both actually live "in denial" (176). Mocking 'lesbian' identity, she is relieved when, the morning after her first sexual experience with Hodie, she "didn't feel like a member of a lesbian gang […], didn't feel this urge to subscribe to lesbian magazines, wear flannel shirts, wave DOWN WITH THE PATRIARCHY signs in the air, or watch bad lesbian movies to see myself represented" (251).[48] Here, again, the text undoes "lesbian" as an objective, empirically determinable category in favor of performative acts of sexual and personal association (Solomon 2002: 212). Dissociating herself from the identity-based activism of previous generations of American homosexuals, Tomato jocosely demands "a Bisexual Female Ejaculating Quaker role model" (ibid.) to represent her. A third instance in which the narrative uses a post-identitarian queer eye

48 This critique of "bad lesbian film" might arguably hark back to queer theory's critique of representation as an expression of some 'inner' truth or identity (Hark 2005: 290) rather than as a repeated performance that constructs – and potentially interrupts – social discourse.

is when Tomato, implicitly dissociating sex, gender, and sexual preference, recounts her affair with "a nice boy in the spring I could practice lesbian sex with" (220; cf. also Solomon 2002: 210).[49]

Lopez' visual and narrative exaggerations of stereotypical Latina/biker/lesbian/feminist representations can be read as a strategy to unveil ideas of identity as always based upon confining stereotypes. Interrupting such stereotypes (e.g. by the placement of stereotypical images of women in unexpected environments), she does not aim her criticism at *Latina* femininity exclusively,[50] but attacks various models of normative femininity and feminine sexuality throughout *Flaming Iguanas*. From the 1950s' iconography of the housewife happily cleaning her kitchen (44 & 52) and smiling cowgirls (70 & 77) to nuns (96), nurses (98), cheerleaders (76), and Marylin Monroe (99) – such images are distorted either by lascivious, transgressive gestures such as smoking (99), raised forefingers (98) and fists (231), or by figural expressions (the bull-riding cowgirl on p. 70 says "wish I'd worn panties"; two women proudly present the word "Bullshit", 28). Lopez visually counterpoints these images also by adding props such as handguns (77 & 122), or by juxtaposing them with visual and/or verbal comments: the happy housewife is immediately followed by a pair of hands tied up with ropes (44-5) or titles such as "naked method actors and the rumors started about them" (113), suggesting the opposite of happy domesticity. Furthermore, Lopez intermingles these traditional icons with pictures of unruly women – a pirate girl (231), a uniformed woman on a motorcycle laughing out "Heh, heh, heh, heh!" (189), as well as Robert Crumb's Devil Girl in acrobatic poses (138, 182, 235); on the last page, Devil Girl performs a handstand on her motorbike, below which Lopez prints "after", thus celebrating Tomato's acrobatic feat of riding cross-country.[51] These queer(ed) images create a herit-

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[49] In other instances, her 'queer eye' imagines American icons of masculinity such as the park ranger as part of a closeted "queer nation", "out for a quiet, unheterosexual fuck in the woods" (195).

[50] Much of the deconstruction of Latina stereotypes is based on Lopez' culinary imagery. It would exceed the scope of this chapter to analyze food imagery in *Flaming Iguanas* beyond its relevance for the book's queer strategies in constructing spatial agency. On the role of food in Latina/o literature, see Martín-Rodriguez, "The Raw and Who Cooked It: Food, Identity and Culture in U.S. Latino/a Literature" (2000).

[51] This picture contrasts the "before"-image on the first page of the book, a huge tomato that references the protagonist's self-chosen pseudonym. A core ingre-

age of picaresque misfits like Tomato, who says of herself that "[i]t's tough being born without an 'appropriate' barometer" (52). Thus interfering with classic icons of the 'All-American Girl', Lopez creates visual(ly) transgressive spaces in which 'anything goes' and binary oppositions are ridiculed by her joining of antithetical oppositions. The graphic dimension of *Flaming Iguanas* could therefore be characterized as a queer visual picaresque intermedially buttressing its narrative dimension.

With her multidimensional text, defying categorization and emphasizing performance and process rather than representation, Lopez can be positioned in a broader artistic counter-discourse that links her, for instance, to the ethnic and gender interventions of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco. Both these artists have, since the late 1980s, fought the commodification of ethnic minorities by dominant discourses, devising a performative aesthetics that abandons classical strategies of representation in favor of an emphasis on the artificiality, mediation, and fetishization of the Other in what one can call corporate multiculturalism. Like Fusco's, Lopez' language is informed by the "intersubjective and performative uses of language – their local, vernacular expressions and imaginative, vivacious capacity for resistance and transformation" (Fisher 2001: 225).[52]

In sum, *Flaming Iguanas* articulates transdifferential moments of conflict, which usually demarcate a crisis of identity and self-esteem, as a source of queer empowerment. Thus, the book dodges categorizations of ethnic, gender, and sexual differences, while at the same time disrupting generic and literary conventions: as Laffrado as-

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dient of Latino food, the tomato, along with raw fruit and vegetables in general, is used in Latina/o literature and poetry "to represent the elemental, sensual pleasure associated with them, thus relating food and sexuality" (Martín-Rodriguez 2000: 44). Cf. also Lopez' various images of flan, which, topped with a cherry or other dark garnishments, often take the shape of a woman's breast (39, 57, 207).

52 With Emily Hicks, who draws on both Deleuze/Guattari and Anzaldúa, Lopez' text could also be placed in the "border writing" tradition of "minor literature". Hicks defines border writing as an "operation" rather than a definition, based on any bi- or multicultural experience, on multi-dimensional texts, narrative non-linearity, and decentered subjects (1988: 47). From this angle, *Flaming Iguanas* 'deterritorializes' the major language (here, visual and narrative codes) by way of ironic "trans-contextualization" (Hutcheon 1985: 8), a defining element of parody.

serts, "Lopez links the disruption of conventional female self-representation to the visual disruption of the conventional appearance of the page" (2002: 408). Lopez' "road novel-thing", while arguably presenting a story of homosexual initiation, defies the teleology of 'finding' an identity, making sure that Tomato's lesbian affair is "not 'progress', […] not part of an evolutionary sequence […], nor […] the mark of a new, stable, instantiated identity" (Solomon 2002: 214-5). Rather than a quest for ethnic and sexual identity, *Flaming Iguanas* thus abandons, by way of its narrative and visual queer picaresque strategies, centered essence in favor of transgressive performativity. Ultimately, the book can be read as an attempt to de-script difference in order to surmount a politics of identity characteristic of prior generations of Latina, lesbian, and feminist activists. While this politics is not completely delegitimized in the text, the discursive critique expressed by Lopez attacks the easily commodifiable 'authentic' Otherness that resulted from identity-based strategies of intervention, even if only as an involuntary side effect.[53] In view of the multiple affiliations and conflicting cultural groundings that inform the text, the space-making project of *Flaming Iguanas* seeks instead to think the politics of difference anew by way of performativity and shape shifting, parodic tricksterism, and transgressive *picarisma*.

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[53] Gomez-Peña and Fusco have both addressed this problematic in two of their recent publications (*Ethno Techno*, 2005, and *The Bodies That Were Not Ours,* 2001, respectively).

Conclusion

After the movie *Thelma & Louise* had been released in 1991 and had become an immediate box-office success in the United States, a popular t-shirt spelled out that the film was read as a statement of women's empowerment by many of its (predominantly female) viewers: "I saw *Thelma & Louise* – so back off!" Even if critical responses to the film have been highly controversial, there can be no doubt that this road movie made a critical difference in the public negotiation of gender roles, social and sexual power relations, space, and mobility. By declaring that women had a right not to be approached as sexual objects without their consent, the t-shirt thus not only references the importance of a spatial agenda for emancipatory discourses, but can also be understood as a materialization of such discourses. In such a Foucauldian conception of discourse as articulation, materialization, and practice, women's road narratives have been conceived in my study as literary articulations and textual materializations of the gender/space/mobility nexus, and as textual interventions in dominant conceptions thereof.

Since the 1970s, American women writers have appropriated, parodied, and subverted the genre of the road novel. Their road narratives have taken up and reconfigured traditional generic themes such as the quest for new beginnings or picaresque adventure; simultaneously, a number of new themes have been introduced, such as the forced mobility following economic necessity, the 'geography of fear' (Gill Valentine), the rewriting of mother-daughter-relationships as well as alternative conceptions of family. There is clearly no single, unified narrative that guides all the road texts I have discussed in this study; in fact, they are shaped by heterogeneous cultural frameworks. However, some similarities persist.

Women's road narratives question femininity as tied to home and hearth and probe the boundaries of gendered spatialities by means of transgression. Responding to their various historical, cultural, social, and geographical contexts, these works critically relate to the

strong ties between ideas of mobility and American foundational myths like those of the Promised Land and the Golden West, demonstrating how these have tended to disregard gendered, ethnic, and other differences. In the texts considered here, American highways and backcountry roads, envisioned as distinctly gendered spaces, do not appear as pre-existing playgrounds for exploration detached from social circumstances; in these literary representations of the road, the complex realities of gendered space and mobility are instead reflected, challenged, and negotiated in the context of a number of emancipatory discourses.

Gillian Rose enlightens the connection of spatial discourse and fantasy in "Performing Space" (1999), harking back to Doreen Massey's notion of place as an articulation of social relations and Judith Butler's concept of performativity. For Rose, space is "the articulation of collisions between discourse, fantasy and corporeality" (247), and she argues that this articulation can be radically altered by different performances. If fantasy is understood as fundamental to literature, Rose's conclusions clarify how women's road literature can impact the discourse of space and mobility:

> The body […] is entangled with fantasy and discourse; fantasy mobilizes bodies and is expressed through discourse; and discourse […] is disrupted by fantasy and interrupted by the bodily. And all of these relations are articulated spatially; their performance produces space. (1999: 258)

Rose understands complex performances that counteract phallocentric spatialities as a way of thinking, dreaming, and practicing other spaces, spaces marked by alternative differential relations. Women's road writings imagine such other spaces, spaces which are not bound by public/private, center/margin, and similarly exclusive dichotomies. They literally take cultural constructions of femininity to the streets, displacing them and opening them up for contestation and negotiation.

Accordingly, my focus of inquiry was the analysis of how hegemonic conceptions of space, hierarchically structured not according to a single category of identity but to a multiplicity of differences, implicate female (im)mobility in road narratives. On the one hand, they articulate the experience of immobility and the internalization of hegemonic structures. On the other hand, this experience is transcended in women's road stories in that the narratives send their protagonists

on the road and thus have them transgress discursively dichotomous spatial boundaries. In the course of the narrated journey, the clash of contradictory cultural and gendered identifications emerges as a central transdifferential moment of tension. In contradistinction to postmodernist texts, which tend to devise post-identitarian models of women's subjectivity in response to these tensions, narratives written in the realist mode seem to be unable to seize these in a creative manner and thus frequently consolidate rather than challenge social difference. With regard to the aesthetic dimension, it has been shown that formally more innovative texts critique the nexus of space, (trans)difference, and spatial representation more radically, e.g. with the help of intermediality or metatextual commentary. To highly divergent degrees, then, the texts engender a literary spatiality that diegetically, narratologically, and formally challenges existing spatial semantics.

One of the central theses of my study has been that the genre of American road literature has been perceived and constructed in literary criticism as a masculine territory until recently – despite of the plethora of road narratives written by women. This critical discourse often implicitly affirms an essentialist and binary understanding of space as a social category that structures (or even determines) literary production. Thus, one of the aims of my study has been to show how American women's road literature from various cultural backgrounds effectively revises this genre history, in which a universal norm against which to judge women's road writing is implicitly asserted. As it articulates the formulaic road narrative with a critical difference, one could argue that there is a parodic dimension to all of these works (albeit not necessarily a humorous one).

In my readings, I have identified three paradigms of mobility which have structurally informed American women's road narratives since the 1970s, while the two interstitial chapters have emphasized that these paradigms can easily blend into each other within a text. In chapter three, I discussed the quest as a traditional form of mobility, centered around the notion of a 'better (home)place'. The attainability of such a place, however, remains questionable; the closer the questing protagonist seems to get to her imagined, Edenic destination, the more points of rupture disturb the narrative, emphasizing the unanswerability of the question of how the road trip can end successfully. What became clear in my explorations of women's quest narratives is

that an imaginary location beyond social norms and power structures, at least within realist narrative conventions, can only fulfill the function of a motif, a rationale for escape. Furthermore, I have argued that one central problem with which women's quest narratives are concerned, explicitly or implicitly, is the colonial and gendered legacy of the journey West and the concept of the frontier; the quest of these narratives thus also consists of finding new ways to come to terms with this legacy. While transdifferential tensions are sometimes seized as opportunities to revise self/other relations, they can just as well lead to the disavowal of transdifference and the consolidation of difference.

In my second chapter, I devised the term para-nomadism in order to counter the (post)colonial problematic pertaining to most uses of the Deleuzian paradigm of nomadic movement. Para-nomadism emphasizes, by way of a self-reflexivity introduced with the prefix, the construct character of the nomadic figuration. The specification of para-nomadic mobility resulted in the recognition that nomadic movement has little to do with homelessness or Western notions of travel (in the sense of the idea that the journey begins with a departure and ends in arrival), but that it does not abandon the idea of home; rather, the nomad constructs her home on the road. In addition, I argued the spatial resistance ascribed to the nomad is not her inherent characteristic, as nomads travel out of economic necessity and along fixed routes. Not surprisingly, para-nomadism frequently structures road narratives concerned with a legacy of collective displacement, stories that attempt to use this legacy creatively, appropriating and rewriting it in empowering ways – although bleaker versions of para-nomadic mobility are also possible.

The third paradigm of mobility I have identified in contemporary women's road narratives is the picaresque, which creates the protagonist as an adventurer across gendered spaces who is confronted with the phenomenon of transdifference by her originary out-of-placeness in terms of her cultural – ethnic, gendered, sexual, social, etc. – Otherness. Ridiculing conventional discourses of masculine adventure, picaresque road narratives often use humor and parody as important elements in such tales of aimless wandering. Bodily and sexual pleasures, shape-shifting, roguery, and trickstering are important elements of transgression and survival in these stories. Like the nomad, the picara refuses a fixed place in a system of identity and difference, of self and Other, but in contrast to the former, she goes even

further in rejecting the idea of home altogether. Her only constant characteristic consists in her continual out-of-place-ness and restlessness; arguably, the picara is thus the most radical 'border crosser'.

The narrative design of more fluid, permeable, and transient conceptions of space operates to a large extent via interstitial spaces (such as the car as a simultaneous fusion of private and public spatialities) and is highly influenced by the protagonists' pluri-affiliations and multiple differences. Through the construction of such spaces, women's road literature is witness to, and highlights, the importance of spatial experiences for the construction of identity as a transitory process (rather than something to be embodied or attained) and of the subject as a temporal, relational individuation of a rhizomatic network of discourses (rather than as an autonomous entity).

As a heuristic analytical concept, the notion of transdifference has led me to rethink the spatial negotiation of conflicting lines of cultural differences. On these grounds, one possible future development of the concept of gendered space could be to review it through a transdifferential lens: as my study has shown, other categories of difference also need to be brought into account when we study social as well as fictional spatialities. The fictional production of space in the narratives I have analyzed is often of a transdifferential nature, as it is affected and effected by the tensions generated by the clash of multiple affiliations and identifications. Such a development may be of great consequence for future scholarship following the *spatial turn* in the humanities, which brought literarily mediated and generated spaces in view but which did not necessarily pay attention to the nexus of space and cultural difference.

Connected by the discourse of the road genre, the texts I have discussed in this study articulate the concatenations of gender, space, and mobility in their specific cultural contexts; these articulations, however, are never independent of each other but have to be seen as interconnected specifications of collective claims and desires – in this case, the claim to expatiation and the mobilization of concepts of femininity. From a feminist perspective that aims at a democratization of space and spaces of agency, such alternative designs to hegemonic-patriarchal discursive constructions of space are highly important. In this way, the attempt of women's road narratives to imagine 'other spaces' can be regarded as the counter-discursive "cultural work"

(Jane Tompkins) these texts are doing. Questioning residual ideas about the freedom of the road, women's road writing can be regarded as discursive interventions in the cultural imaginary rather than as simple reflections of socio-spatial configurations.

Gendered space and mobility have been negotiated in multiple discursive forms, from semiotic articulations to material culture (like the *Thelma & Louise* t-shirt) and performative bodily practices. Women's road writings constitute only one such semiotic form; road movies, music, cartoons and comics, photography and visual art, even road architecture could be objects for further analysis in this context. Without a doubt, these would require different parameters of study and changed methodologies, yet it would be worthwhile to examine how the specific (inter-)mediality of these cultural products affect and shape the negotiation of gendered space and mobility. Another area for further research would be the analysis of women's transatlantic or transnational road narratives in terms of space, mobility, and cultural difference. In Simone de Beauvoir's *L'Amérique du jour au jour* (1948; tr. as *America Day by Day*, 1952), for instance, gendered spatialities and mobility are prominent themes, but earlier transatlantic travel narratives, such as those by the German writer Clara von Gerstner (1842) or the Swedish Fredrika Bremer (1854), also come to mind as possible objects of study. More historically oriented analyses like these could examine how the literary genre of travel writing has influenced, informed, or altered by road narratives in the 20th century. As one of the oldest American travel books by a female author, Sarah Kemble Knight's *Journal* about *A Woman's Treacherous Journey by Horseback from Boston to New York in the Year 1704*, so its subtitle, would be a possible starting point for such a project. Early automotive travel narratives of the 20th century like Emily Post's *By Motor to the Golden Gate* (1916) have also been understudied, as has the subfield of genteel road travel, in which Post's book belongs. Similarly, road scholars could ask whether there is a paradigm shift in the articulation of gendered space between second-wave and third-wave feminist road narratives, a question I have only briefly touched upon in this study. In a study of this subfield, one could further explore how the development of 'chick-lit on the road', exemplified by Cameron Tuttle's *The Bad Girl's Guide to the Open Road* (1999) or Erika Lopez' works, constitute a reworking of those more serious road narratives written in the context of second-wave feminism.

In the context of the recently emerged field of cultural mobility studies (cf. Cresswell 2006), all of these projects would contribute to further establish both gender and narrative as fundamental for the production of space and mobility. Female protagonists on the road – across media, national, and generational boundaries – have always confronted the limits of what is conceived as acceptable 'feminine behavior' in certain spaces; both physical realities and ascriptions with which female bodies are confronted on the road have been imprinted on cultural representations of this spatial experience. Yet it is exactly in the act of facing these gendered spaces that women's road narratives remap the road: by questioning, subverting, and appropriating paradigms of mobility, they create transient, deterritorialized subjects and envision not 'a road', but many 'roads of their own'.

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