

emotionality. Additionally, the volume comprises several essays which aim at answering fundamental questions of what emotion is and how it can be represented. Among these particular attention is due to Gerhard Hoffman's monumental "Emotion and Desire in the Postmodern American Novel" which embraces both theoretical considerations of the nature of emotions and their practical representations in the canonical works of high literary postmodernism. Finally, there are essays here which examine such exotic topics as musical noise, Grand Canyon, or witchcraft in literature. All of them prove the point that emotions and feelings are indeed an essential part of the postmodern period, even though their forms and incarnations may vary more considerably than ever before.

For many readers such a broad range of topics covered may appear to be both disorienting and discouraging. In fact, this is not the case at all. The texts are highly-informative and perform their persuasive function perfectly. The argumentation is clear and well-grounded, although some essays may require certain prior knowledge of the subject. With few exceptions all contributions to *Emotion in Postmodernism* provide practical demonstrations of their authors' theses in the form of a range of postmodern cultural artifacts. It is also worth mentioning that coming from various cultural backgrounds the critics discuss not only American culture, but make numerous references to British, German, and French sources and works of art, which provides additional insight into the nature of the issue. I strongly believe that both experts and laymen interested in postmodern culture will experience problems with controlling their own emotions at seeing such a promising volume.

(Pawel Frelik)

Leopards in the Temple: Studies in American Popular Culture
by Steven Carter . International Scholars Publications

San Francisco, 1997

Popular culture has become in twentieth century America a phenomenon worthy of academic treatises and publications. An average American can learn from these scientific studies what his favorite TV programs are or what cultural meaning his shopping habits have, and although such assessments may seem trivial at face value, if nothing else, they do make one important statement. Namely, they show (to those who managed to retain a bit of common sense and the last sparkle of ego in stupefying and paralyzing contemporary reality) the monstrosity twentieth century man is creating to his doom.

It is highly surprising and paradoxical that the ideas lying at the foundations of American society - ideas which propelled the development of America's land of milk and honey, and whose aim was to provide more wealth and happiness and freedom to each and every American citizen - should to some extent be responsible for the present state of affairs. The belief that every American is entitled to whatever is available - be it a T-shirt, a Ford, or a plot of land, and that he can get it in bigger quantities and for smaller price - has set in motion a machine which has produced a stupefied and puppet-like consumer society.

One recent book which ventures into the mechanisms of desintegration of contemporary America is Steven Carter's *Leopards in the Temple: Studies in American Popular Culture*. Carter takes us on a ride through the world of technology, nuclear power, dazzling TV advertisements and labyrinthine shopping malls. However, the further we go on that ride the less we are sure of our destination. And indeed, in Carter's book there seems to be no destination for American society because the only movement we are certain of is that from normality to abnormality.

There are a number of chapters in *Leopards in the Temple* devoted to the development of technology which, as Carter suggests, is both a horror and a wonder to contemporary man. On the one hand, technology is blamed for highly efficient and self-sustaining Nazi concentration camps of WW II, mutations, suicides, and high child cancer rates related directly to the meltdown at Chernobyl reactor as well as the nuclear policy of the Cold War resulting in "enough firepower to explode one [Hiroshima-sized bomb] an hour for twenty-three years." (p.29) On the other hand, though, with a constant human need for some metaphysical and mysterious other reality, and the necessity to internalize the Other, technology first serves as an extension of humanness and then begins to acquire the power of enchantment that goes beyond apprehension evoking instead respect and adoration. What is certain is that in both cases technology declares war on nature, and as Carter rightly observes, it is "a total war to the death, a war being waged in the collective unconscious of post-nuclear man." (p. 32)

The way technology begins to rule over our world is, according to Carter, frightening indeed but it is difficult not to give it justice. Very early in their lives children are instructed by TV cartoons about the superiority of high-tech gadgetry. Superheroes are presented as gods, computers talk, and machines are a thousand times better and more amiable than corrupted and murderous men. The fact that replicants are more human than humans, that villains become heroes and that children's favorite Ninja Turtles are by-products of radioactive contamination renders the border between right and wrong obsolete. No wonder, then, that people assisted from the early age by such images are not able to distinguish fantasy from fact.

Media - described in the book at some length and through funny and suggestive examples - are another phenomenon responsible for the confusion of values. TV advertisements which approve of traditionally unacceptable social behaviors or promote the villain-hero images of American sportsmen have, as Carter claims, "internalized the function of popular parody." (p.43) TV viewers exposed to more and more

bizarre events lose their ability to recognize the borders of normality because the only value that holds true in the world of media is commodity attraction. Thus, violence, tragedy, and fear, presented as entertainment, become all just part of the process of consumption.

Fiction prevails over reality, image over object, machine over man. The identity of the "post-nuclear man" is created by the TV programs he chooses to watch and the brand of the washing powder he chooses to buy. Such is the process of internalizing the Other that Carter presents in his most disquieting, but nevertheless entertaining book.

(Dorota Janowska)