# Homelessness and the American Novel

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For my daughters

Claire, Ruthie, and Aggy

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Kurtzman, Laura. “Homeless Deaths Doubled in San Francisco During the Pandemic’s First Year, Mostly from Drug Overdoses.” *UCSF News,* 3 Oct 2022, https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2022/03/422436/homeless-deaths-doubled-san-francisco-during-pandemics-first-year-mostly-drug.

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## 1. Introduction: Homelessness, the Novel, and the American Dialectic

Public libraries are safe havens for many homeless people who seek refuge from adverse weather, law enforcement agents, and boredom. The unhoused finding shelter among books provides an alluring metaphor for the unique poetic and prosaic relationship between homelessness and the novel that the following research project analyzes: For, not only does homelessness, as a trope, novelize literature in general, but, the novel as a genre, also informs our understanding of homelessness as an ontology.

This research project posits that the American interpretation of the novel fashions the way we understand one of the United States' most important social, demographic and ecological issues. Peter Brooks describes the essential role narrative plays in soothing our profound desire to understand our lives and the world. From Darwin's chronicles on evolution to Freud's case history in psychoanalysis, the narrative endeavor grounds us historically and helps us to construct a sense of self. Brooks calls this understanding in form of story "narrative epistemology" (*Seduced by Story* 27). Drawing on such an effort to understand in and through narrative, this research project looks specifically at the correspondences between the poetics of American narrative fiction and the unique narrative epistemology we implement in order to understand ontic houselessness. The novel not only

thrives on the homeless experience but also — in accordance with Mikhail Bakhtin and Georg Lukács — represents in itself (and in its open form) a homeless genre. If, according to Bakhtin, genre, and more specifically the novel, represents the dialogic consolidation of philosophical ideas concerning life at a certain historical moment (*The Dialogic Imagination*), and if genre develops, according to Lukács, within the context of a "historico-philosophical dialectic" (*The Theory of the Novel* 40), then the American novel can be seen as embodying precisely those paradoxes that make and sustain American convictions conditioned by the myth of upward mobility: a form of Humanism which strives to reconcile Puritan divine election with Enlightenment ideals of individual responsibility, as well as a neoliberal ideology which aspires to conflate laissez-faire capitalism with notions of personal liberty. In other words, the American "historico-philosophical dialectic," which celebrates the philosophy of self-reliance and freedom before the historical backdrop of homelessness, generates American narrative art.

The project presumes that homelessness, from the Puritan and pioneer migrations to contemporary urban tent encampments, posits a fundamental American trauma, and, therefore plays a relevant role in shaping American identity and shared cultural memory, a role that encompasses both the ethnic plurality that makes America as well as the historical juxtaposition of its rural and urban geographies. It posits that homelessness has influenced American art in an unprecedented polyphonic manner — from folk music and Blues to the films by Charlie Chaplin and the groundbreaking photography of the Great Depression. Further, and more specifically, the hypothesis of the project is based on the premises that the fictional literature of the United States can give us unique insight into homelessness as an American ontology. The plethora of fictional texts which are propelled forward narratively by

the experience of literal and metaphorical homelessness demonstrate formal and ideological manifestations of the trope which vary in their representations of the severity of the destitution caused by homelessness as a modus vivendi: from wandering philosopher poets like Thoreau and Whitman to degenerate junkies like Charles Bukowski and William Burroughs; from the young apprentice who takes to the road in the Bildungsroman, to the orphaned picaro with his daily existential struggle to survive poverty on the street. As narrative architecture, homelessness provides an existential narrative with various potentials for rise and fall.

As Wayne Booth so aptly states: “Fiction is the best instrument of understanding that has ever been devised” (157). While historical moments unique to the United States have necessarily brought about uniquely American genres like the captivity narrative and slave narrative, the short story and imagist poetry, the influence of the European canon on American cultural memory is simultaneously bound to our colonial and migrant history. These established literary traditions include those genres that implement homelessness and houselessness as a trope: genres like the Bildungsroman and the novel of the picaro. These genres posit poverty and homelessness as both the sociological *and* the poetic framework for a story. That is, the homeless ontology provides the setting for the narrative, but is also implemented stylistically and formally, both through the representation of diverse sociologically defined discourses in what Bakhtin terms “dialogism,” as well as through a specific time and space management that Bakhtin describes as the “chronotope of the road.” In addition, European modes having to do with homelessness are, in their American edition, further novelized: the fantastic and dark humor of Menippean satire as well as the image of the wise fool of Socratic dialogue. These are modes found in fiction defined by poverty and

homelessness that are implemented in American narrative fiction from Mark Twains *Huckleberry Finn* to postmodern classics ranging from Pynchon to Coover.

In this study, genre is examined inductively and retrospectively (and not prescriptively). Genre is seen as a continual process (Bakhtin), a process that is susceptible to its historical and philosophical contexts (Lukács), and which — after having been canonized — reflects the values of a nation. The American novel and ensuing novelized genres not only represent an "anti-genre" and an intentional break from European generic prescriptions, but, as a genre in itself, the novel, in general, thematically and formally explores processes of coming to terms with change and understanding life. In narrative manifestations devoted to conventional forms of mimesis, like Realism, testimony and autofiction (which often borrow the structure of the Bildungsroman), this "narrative epistemology" prescribes how we perceive and how we live homelessness, that is, as the opening chapter of the American narrative dream that takes course generically from rags to riches. However, in its subversive forms — that is, its satirical forms (and according to Bakhtin, in its carnival forms), as well as in its Gothic and grotesque forms, it undermines the "historico-philosophical dialectic" at the heart of American identity.

In other words, as a trope, homelessness novelized literature. And as the ontological consequence of Enlightenment philosophies of subjective autonomy, homelessness continued to novelize the novel when, in the 18th century, the letter writers of epistolary novels were shoved away from their desks and into the big wide world so that inner psychological processes were enhanced by the polyphonic diversity of life on the road. The novel, therefore, *needs* the conflation of psychological and physical homelessness in order to embody in form and style the philosophical developments of modernity. Homelessness is, therefore, relevant

to literature in general as a constituent of the architecture of the novel. On the other hand, homelessness plays a defining role in the development of American cultural idiosyncrasies and the American effort to reconcile the conflicting theological and philosophical discourses upon which the United States was founded.

While it is tempting to interpret the signifiers “homelessness” and “houselessness” as semantically related yet exclusive terms, it seems too simple to posit a binary between the psychological estrangement implied metaphorically by “homelessness” on the one hand, and the ontic state of being “unhoused” and without shelter at night, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, on the other hand. The “unhoused” has become the preferred (and politically correct) term for “rough sleepers” precisely because it attempts to sever the idea of being unsheltered from the more numinous forms of homelessness that Georg Lukács describes as “transcendental homelessness” in his *Theory of the Novel:* a psychological state defined by the existential plight of the modern protagonist, who, having lost faith in divine guidance, is driven by the perpetual search for a psychological, philosophical and aesthetic home. And yet, novelization occurs precisely through the confluence of inner psychological processes with outward physical movement. Lukács, who was influenced by Hegel, wrestled with this predicament, for while the Modern protagonist that he describes never arrives home, his endless search is not exclusively and necessarily antithetical to intellectual coming-of-age — the maturation is never completed, except in death. Similarly, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spiri*t has been compared to a Bildungsroman, with the Spirit as protagonist. on its way home to pure knowledge — which, by implementation of a Socratic plot twist, is, by definition, not attainable as a human end.

In this project then, the term “homelessness” encompasses both the ontic and the “transcendental” notions of homelessness and is used intentionally in order to shed light on the ethical questions that arise when ontologies of the unhoused and the homeless are conflated in aesthetic representations. In the recent prize-winning film *Nomadland* (2020), for instance, the ideological priorities of both American mainstream fiction and politics are summed up in the fictional representation of actual unhoused nomads in the American West where geographical freedom, natural beauty and psychological growth are offered as compensations for economic insecurity and lack of permanent shelter. In short, the term “homelessness” remains applicable within this thesis because, not only does this conflation of inner and outer world make the novel, the term homelessness also persistently reminds us to explore the ethical issues that arise when survival on the street is depicted as adventure on the road in order to craft novelized forms of narrative — and in order to entertain us.

In his reflections on literature, Aristotle defines (with hierarchical value) the aesthetic laws of genre within a sociological framework that categorizes psychological-emotional affect in terms of class: The tragedy of the kings and the comedy of the lower classes. While Bakhtin works chronologically in his reflections on the history of the novel, beginning with those traces of novelized prose that he finds in Greek antiquity, he plays with Aristotle’s generic class consciousness when he elevates the novel, as the form most apt to representing human life in its lowest, vulgar (and carnival) forms, to the highest aesthetic level of art. Both Aristotle and Bakhtin, therefore, posit genre as defined by its intention to give access to certain emotions and experiences that, in turn, are attributed to specified sociological categories. Indeed, for novelization to occur in the first place, epic distance needed to be dismantled (both through the adjacency of historical time between narrator and protagonist,

and through an approximation in social class): “To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one’s contemporaries (and an event that is therefore based on personal experience and thought) is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of epic into the world of the novel,” writes Bakhtin (“Epic and Novel” 14).

While Bakhtin is inclined to find the sociological and psychological roots of the art of the novel in the sentiments and lifestyles of the droll and the debased, Franco Moretti and Ian Watt posit the “rise of the novel” within the definitively scientific and rational 18th century: sociologically with the rise of the middle class during the industrial revolution, and psychologically as the effect of the “serious century,” in which the novel manages (only) to affect feelings of “calm passion” (Moretti, *The Way of the World* vi). As a sociological and psychological framework, the middle class, while affirming the paradigm of a secularized bourgeois work ethic, finds its equal in the United States’ historically grounded ideological conflation of Puritanism and Enlightenment Humanism. However, the forms of socialization promoted by the European novel, especially the Bildungsroman (recreations like travel, dance, music, and the small talk and etiquette of the salon) that continue to aspire to imitate an aristocratic life style (Moretti ix) are rewritten with American aspirations: The American Bildungsroman is founded on an ontology of poverty and homelessness and, instead of the protagonist’s aspiring to gain a meaningful education accompanied by the autonomy of adulthood and the responsibility of marriage, he (and sometimes she) strives to ascend to a higher rung on the social ladder through material prosperity (Graham 120).

In this context, Benjamin Franklin’s fictional *Autobiography*, published in 1793, not only anticipates our contemporary turn toward autofiction by centuries but also engages in intertextual dialogism with Goethe’s precedent Bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister,* thereby

initiating the American redirection toward and away from European literary standards. As abused apprentice, Ben arrives shipwrecked and homeless in Philadelphia, center of American Enlightenment; as an autodidact (through cleverness and "street smarts"), he becomes financially independent, "discovers" electricity, writes pedagogical novels promoting the rewards of hard work, and becomes a founding father of the United States with a career as a diplomat in Europe, where he fascinates the European court with his rural demeanor and anti-intellectualism. Heike Paul conveys the importance of Franklin's role in creating the myth of the "self-made man": Apparently his book was consulted by American icons like Davey Crockett and Jay Gatsby (371). Before the Bildungsroman was even defined as such, the American interpretation of the coming-of-age narrative experimented with and tilted the scales between intellectual growth and economic self-sufficiency, promoting the affect of "calm passion" towards those who cannot or do not help themselves.

Because the Enlightenment brought about a heightened interest in and evaluation of individual experience, Ian Watt explains, it consequently brought about a repositioning of the fictional protagonist, resulting in a new — a novelized — way of perceiving life which called for a more subjective form of mimesis. As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht explains, "If the literary roads had been a sequential pattern along which normative concepts of identity (above all, the identity of the courtly knight) could be displayed, they were becoming, by 1650, a representation of those world-contingencies in confrontation with which protagonists would be able to shape their subjectivity" (630). Subjective realism, as Ian Watt explains in *The Rise of the Novel*, takes the place of a universal notion of truth and the typified heroes that inhabit the literature of the Middle Ages. This paradigmatic shift from 'universal' to 'personal,' from 'type' to 'individual,' reflects the ideological palimpsest upon which the United States was

founded. The Founding Fathers extended ideas of subjective liberty and autonomy onto the political discourses pertaining to national independence. In other words, the cause of the novel as a genre, which is to pay tribute to the personality and agency of its protagonists whose significant decision-making processes pave the way toward growth (success, self-sufficiency and domesticity), was transferred to the nation. "Self-governing and self-education, which the eighteenth century so intensely associated with traveling, have now [with Wilhelm Meister] turned into principles of resistance against any world interpretation based on concepts of fate and randomness" (Gumbrecht 634)**.** In other words, the protagonist is no longer a pawn, but takes his narrative in his own hands — as does the republic.

As a consequence of Enlightenment subjectivity, the narrative possibilities that "adventure time" offers in the Romance genre, as well as the random and purely reactive activity that defines the picaro's movement through time and space, are replaced by active commitments made by the aspiring protagonist: "By the 19th century," Peter Brooks writes, "the picaro's scheming to stay alive has … taken a more elaborated and socially defined form: it has become ambition. It may in fact be the defining characteristic of the Modern novel (as of bourgeois society) that it takes aspiration, getting ahead, seriously, rather than simply as an object of satire" (*Reading for the Plot* 39). The picaro, who merely reacts to the situations he is confronted with, and whose views of (upper class) society occur from a distance and from below (and with both naive and snide humor) is replaced by an active agent, a bourgeois goal-oriented protagonist who acts with "calm passion" — seeking autonomy in adulthood, both intellectually and economically, while keeping priorities in focus and empathy in check. As Bakhtin recognizes, it is precisely in the Bildungsroman that

"the ideological sense [of the narrative journey] is substantially changed, since the concepts of 'chance' and 'fate' have been radically reinterpreted" ("Epic and Novel" 20).

This development toward values emphasizing active agency, self-reliance and aspiration during the 19th century (anchored in discourses from Kant and Weber to Emerson and Thoreau) has important implications for the way homeless protagonists are perceived: as victims of fate or as the architects of their own lives. In representations of the unhoused, then, and in the consequential fictional processing of the American myth of upward mobility, agency and contingency become narrative accomplices; together they underpin the dialectic at the core of the American dream when the responsible decision-making processes of the protagonists are interpreted morally *in hindsight*, and when the "freedom" to actively better your situation in life, especially to move upward in class, is interpreted as divine election retrospectively.

The theological discourses defining Puritan notions of American divine election, therefore, remain resilient before the secular political and sociological discourses conflating personal responsibility and freedom at the core of the American Enlightenment when choices leading to financial success are read retrospectively as the moral legitimization of the economic elite. The question of the agency of a protagonist (and what her agency means) is, however, part of a century old philological debate, ranging from Aristotle's conviction that "praxis" is a reflection of "ethos," to Novalis's famous and ambivalent statement that "character is fate." The debate about philosophical issues of intellectual maturity and self-reliance is undermined by theological moral ideals that are certified by financial independence and self-sufficiency, and the debate comes to a peak (in form and theme) in the American novel.

As Leslie Fiedler describes in his famous study *Love and Death in the American Novel*, male protagonists in American fiction tend to flee from the confinements of those "female spaces" having to do with marriage, family, and home, as well as from all the duties that belong to these institutions, like sex, fatherhood and providing. "If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again, — if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk." This is Thoreau on merely perambulating outside of Concord ("Walking" 46). In the virgin wilderness, as Fiedler describes it, the white male protagonist, free of domestic burdens (see Natty Bumpo, Huck Finn, Jack Kerouac), can pursue adolescent homoerotic adventures and preserve the desired physical and psychological distance from the inhibitions of economically productive heterosexual relationships. The Puritan experience of homelessness on the shores of New England is reinterpreted in the West with a carnival (Bakhtin) and/or Gothic (Fiedler) take on Enlightenment ideals of independence and individuality that crystallize, predictably, in the model 'type' of the tramp who is ambivalent about adult notions of responsibility. As Barbara Johnson notes, "Even plot itself — up until Madame Bovary at least — has been conceived as the doings of those who do *not* stay at home, in other words, men" (165). In romanticized and picaresque representations of homelessness, the vagabond considers family, home and neighborliness an infringement on his geographical and intellectual freedom. His orphaned, street smart, and self-sufficient existence becomes both a political predication and a hagiographic exculpation.

In his analysis of *Don Quixote,* in which he contests the conventional interpretation of Cervantes's novel as picaresque, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht postulates that, "if the roads of the *picaro*, like the roads of *Don Quijote*, become roads of contingency, the background against

which this happens is not the background of the chivaleresque prose romance." Instead, "the discursive point of reference for the picaresque novel's double play … are the roads from the allegorical narrative of ideal Christian life" (626). In this sense, Paul Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* provides a foundation for the scaffold of the American stage. Fittingly, the determined protagonist Christian not only abandons his wife and children but, as Tamsin Spargo explains, the female characters in the book are "disrupting" to the "discursive framework in which they are contained" (xxxii). In addition, and in line with the American (theoretical) dismantling of nobility, the gentry represent the ungodly, while the pilgrims are depicted as the poor and ostracized. W.R. Owens's analysis of *The Pilgrim's Progress* shows that American readers could recognize their own predicament of combining a Protestant moral template with Enlightenment subjective reason: "Christian and his pilgrim companions may in theory have been predestined by God to be saved. In practice, they doubt their salvation all the way and never achieve certainty, and at every point they seem to be freely choosing how to act" (xxx). And indeed, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is found on many an American protagonist's bedside table or in their travel trunks: in the home of the Phelps family in *Huckleberry Finn*, as well as amongst the Joad family's prized heirlooms in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Both of theses canonized novels are propelled forward narratively by an unhoused existence and informed psychologically by homelessness. And both cite the theological undertones of Christian morality that define the politically referenced settings of their stories, whether satirically (as in Twain's Mennipean descent into the hell of the South) or hagiographically (as in Steinbeck's biblical exodus West).

Architected by the homelessness trope, the novel, therefore, embodies and negotiates the philological dialectic of agency and contingency. And meanwhile the homelessness trope

supersedes definitive literary boundaries based on the subcategories of our national literature that are based on sex, gender and ethnicity: the burned-down house (Ann Bradstreet *and* Richard Wright), the haunted house (Edgar Allen Poe *and* Toni Morrison), the constellations in the night sky used as a map (Silko and Kerouac and Coover and Tubman), bridges as shelters (Silko and Robinson), moveie theaters as shelters (Kerouac and Robinson). The Department of Urban Development's census of homeless people reflects this diversity and intersectionality: homelessness transcends sociologically based categories. Kenneth Kusmer's history of homelessness in the United States, which is a detailed chronology of the efforts made to help and especially hide the homeless in American urban spaces, makes clear, however, that there has always been a strict hierarchy in the perception of the "worthy" and "unworthy" poor, perceptions conditional to the ideals of the protestant work ethic and the Puritan criminalization of idleness (Kusmer 31, 41). While in Catholic cultures the pauper is conceived within narratives of virtue pertaining to the suffering of martyrs and saints, the Puritan doctrine of divine election equates financial success with a high moral character, while poverty and homelessness are interpreted as proof of laziness and moral degeneration.

In his research on Puritan literary texts, Sacvan Bercovitch describes how the Puritans translated the American success story into hagiographic discourses: The Puritans "raised the success story to the status of visible sainthood," and "merged the economic venture with a larger spiritual narrative" (23). In this way, the Puritans laid the moral pavement for American social darwinism when they embedded economic endeavors in theological discourses, but they also novelized their literature. In "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin recognizes the influence of hagiography (whose structure is based on moral growth, from sinning and suffering to conversion and redemption) on the modern

Bildungsroman (115). This "narrative epistemology" through the process of redemption is symbolized metaphorically by the initiation into domesticity through the construction of a house for the family as well as the construction of the church and the new Canaan as God's home; it establishes a template for the moral interpretation of financial gain and success in the new colonies, an interpretation that equates upward mobility with God's grace.

In his book *National Melancholy* Mitch Breitweiser explains that, "the crucial energy for both Puritan and Hegelian thought is generated by the challenge of a Protestantism seeking to enter politics without sacrificing its intrinsic quality" (57). Even Thoreau embraces this dialectic when he uses his house on Walden Pond, and further, his exceedingly simplistic and neat (albeit male) domesticity, as a metaphor for his ordered mind and philosophical acuteness. In essence, the philosophers of the Enlightenment and their literary counterparts provided the vocabulary for a persistent and contingent argumentation dependent on a moral and intellectual steadfastness that is proven, in hindsight, by self-reliance. This moralized self-sufficiency pervades bestselling homelessness autofiction to this day, from biographies of tramps and Hobos at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, to the repeatedly anthologized essay "On Dumpster Diving" taken from Lars Eigner's *Travels with Lizbeth* (1993), a survival guide to living on the street. In its citation of Steinbeck's great American journey *Travels with Charlie, Travels with Lizbeth* is also a plea for the domestic bliss of man and dog. In his essay "Walking" Thoreau ponders on the etymology of the word "sauntering" as derived from the French sans terre, which means "without land or home" and which, "therefore, in the good sense, will mean having no particular home, but being equally at home everywhere" (45). Similarly, Lukács writes, quoting Novalis, "Philosophy is really homesickness … It is the urge to be at home everywhere" (29). There is a tendency in

American male outdoor fiction, from Thoreau (and Whitman) to Edward Abby, to equate homeless mobility with a reduction of material distractions that otherwise hinder philosophical insight, a trope that goes back at least to Rousseau who walked in order to think, albeit in the parks of industrialized Paris.

With the construction of the urban metropolis in the 19th and 20th centuries a shadow is cast upon the literary convention of the lighthearted vagabond. As Malcom Bradbury states, "America was born in the country and moved to the city" (317). With the closing of the American frontier in 1890 (see Turner) and with the onset of urban-industrial life, the texts of Naturalism, Modernism and postmodernism introduce and continue to develop a protagonist afflicted by loneliness and alienation. Walter Benjamin, who was influenced by Georg Lukács, famously condemned the novel as a necessary result of the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the printing press, but more importantly, as a commodity of capitalism that, in contrast to oral storytelling, promotes isolation and loneliness in individual acts of writing and reading where solitary imaginations unfold in enclosed chambers ("The Storyteller"). In American literature of the city, the free (and self-sufficient) protagonist who roamed the tableau of the prairie is replaced by Lukács's "transcendental homeless," one with more limited prospects of self-invention within the urban context of modernity and capitalism. Tentatively, with the onset of Renaissance humanism, but then again, with much more urgency in the post-Enlightenment and post-industrial era, Modernistic forms of art and literature posit an unhoused protagonist informed by "transcendental homelessness" and burdened with philosophical and aesthetic questions.

This is reflected in contemporary Native American literature as well, in which urban settings are represented as necessary coming-of-age contexts, as unhoused protagonists,

banned from their rural homes, search for a new home in the cities (see Sherman Alexie and Tommy Orange). And only recently, within the resurgence of more realistic forms of prose narrative after postmodernism, does the transcendentally homeless *woman* emerge in the non-domesticated American wilderness and in other rural contexts (as in the film *Nomadland*). While the Enlightenment brought about a strong modern force, the paradigm shift that occurred due to migration into the cities at the end of the nineteenth century, brought about a more negative Naturalist and then Modernist interpretation of homelessness that sheds much of the romantic image induced by the knapsack carrying tramp and the rail-riding Hobo. At the same time, interpretations of homelessness as the moral affliction of the non-elect were complimented by psychological crises having to do with a loss of faith in divine election and Christian immortality.

"Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell" Benjamin writes ("The Storyteller" 7). The issue at hand is more than the limited authority of the narrator to relate the experience of death itself. Instead, with the onset of secular modernity, the end of life on earth no longer represents the beginning of something new, the afterlife. At the time of Rabelais, in the early 1500s, Bakhtin explains, "the hierarchical world of the Middle Ages was crumbling." And he continues: "The narrow, vertical, extratemporal model of the world, with its absolute top and bottom, its system of ascents and descents, was in the process of reconstruction" (*Rabelais and His World* 403)**.** Instead of preserving the order of vertical mobility toward heaven, a new order was being constructed, "in which the leading role was transferred to the horizontal lines, to the movement forward in real space and in historic time" (403). By the nineteenth century, however, the vertical model is reinstated, this time with the focus on economic and social mobility. By the twentieth century, then, those texts

abiding by the rags-to-riches template are being interpreted as advocating capitalist ideals, while those ending in destitution and death are attributed to Marxist discourses. And, further, with the onset of literary Realism and then Modernism, this predicament is enhanced by the obsoleteness of the broad spatial and temporal distances and possibilities posited by the "chronotope of the road" when the homeless adventure is transferred from the high road to the cramped streets in a destitute urban setting.

For Lukács and Benjamin, the novel is the embodiment of this modern turn away from human immortality, theologically and in art. In the modern novel, "[t]he meaning of life is revealed only in death" (Benjamin 10). Accordingly, Peter Brooks explains that post-Enlightenment western culture moved "from a culture dominated by a sacred explanation of the human condition into a new secular world where humans are on their own and must explain themselves to themselves" (*Seduced by Story* 17). As Klaus Benesch and François Specq explain in their study on walking and modernity, "[W]riters, artists, and thinkers frequently embraced the slow motion of walking as a powerful tool to undo the limitations and self-alienation imposed by modern capitalist society" (v). And in his essay "The Roads of the Novel," Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht posits Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Reveries d'une promeneur solitaire* as the endpoint in the "contraction of the literary roads" where familiarization takes place through heteroglossia and dialogism: "The traditional conversation between two travelers has collapsed into the dialogue of the lonesome individual with himself" (634).

In Modernism and postmodernism, the Romantic poet inspired by perambulation in the green hills merges into the solitary transcendentally homeless wanderer of the dark city. In Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, for instance, the narrator sends his detective protagonist on a

hunt for meaning in the grid of New York City's streets. Quinn searches for "totality" until he loses all connection to home, both to his physical apartment which is in the same city, as well as to any sense of trust in his understanding of the world. His search leads to a poststructural crisis and loss of faith in signs as meaning, represented metaphorically by the enigma of a homeless man, his Doppelgänger, whose daily walks through one neighborhood of Manhattan evade all sense of pattern. Quinn becomes so absorbed in the puzzle that he loses his apartment and his mind; he sleeps behind a dumpster, watching and waiting, until he dies homeless (starving and freezing) in the cold and empty room of an abandoned apartment. In essence, the novella is a postmodern interpretation of age-old ambivalences about American identity. Mitch Breitweiser concludes, "Most twentieth century American literature is about the gap between the promise [of Utopia] and the actuality," and about the breach "between the imagined ideal Golden West or City Upon a Hill, the model for all the world postulated by the Puritans, and the actual squalid materialism" (19). Homelessness is the trope that is implemented to negotiate these contradictions between myth and reality, between "narrative epistemology" and "epistemological vertigo" (Weinstock 19).

While rural and urban homelessness, as Kusmer shows, already existed side-by-side in colonial New England, the shift in the predominance of their respective representations in fiction, from rural to urban, coincides with the historical increase of public poverty in cities in the nineteenth century. The shift from rural to urban homelessness in fictional representations of the unhoused, especially in Naturalism, Modernism and postmodernism, represents a poetic shift from what Bakhtin calls the "chronotope of the road" to what I posit as a "chronotope of the street." While the chronotope of the road explains the geographical movement of a protagonist on a physical or metaphorical path within a certain time frame,

the chronotope of the street represents the limited movement in time and space of the urban unsheltered protagonist. By definition, the chronotope of the road provides narrative flexibility by making meetings between characters of various classes, genders and ethnicities possible who would, by the rules of social etiquette and sociological demographics, never have crossed paths. It also tolerates the contextualization of the journey as a maturation process in which a broadening of horizons can take place. In contrast, the chronotope of the street represents both the plurality of the homeless population and the time and space momentum of vagrancy — that is, of roaming the streets without aim. Therefore, the chronotope of the street posits itself in stark contrast to the ambition of characters and the linearity of texts that promote the myth of American upward mobility, narratives in which the protagonist moves both horizontally through time and space, and vertically on the social ladder. The chronotope of the street is antithetical to the Bildungsroman and to the rags-to-riches dictum; it is neither definitively linear nor does it endorse vertical (upward) mobility. Instead, it is informed by a negative time and space management connoted by intellectual regression and corporal decay, a backward coming-of-age, so to speak.

Without the capacities for explanation and understanding that narrative epistemology provides, the chronotope of the street does not allow us to grasp the story behind a person's homelessness. While modernity invented and then propagated human agency, Modernism (in the early twentieth century), represents the onset, or rather resurgence, of a more pessimistic outlook on the actual powers of human agency (Gumbrecht 645). Without a map of her journey or the development of his character — in other words, without positive evidence of the passing of time and space through a protagonist' maturing, the homeless person on the street is not conceivable as a human being. Without a story, we cannot recognize him or her

as one of us. As with Quinn's Doppelgänger: Instead of a comforting sense of understanding setting in through narrative, "epistemological vertigo" brings with it feelings of horror and estrangement (Weinstock 19)**.** In his essay on "Fantastic Biologies and the Structures of Horrific Imagery," Noël Carroll explains that monsters inspire revulsion through their "categorical contradictoriness," that is, through the "impurity" that they evoke when they embody a "conflict between two or more standing cultural categories" (137). In other words, as a hybrid, or "fusion figure," they unite traits that are considered to be categorically distinct. In his essay "The Uncanny" Freud also addresses the feeling that can arise when there are "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive, or conversely, whether a lifeless object might or might not be in fact animate" (Freud 65). Freud's "Unheimlich" refers to the emotion evoked by a feeling of estrangement, an emotion opposite to feeling at home (Heim), which is not so much homesickness but a feeling of horrific alienation when narrative epistemology is interrupted and epistemological vertigo sets in. In this context, Homi Bhabha's postcolonial notion of the "unhomely" should also be mentioned — the violent and overpowering infiltration of the imperial habitus into the oppressed's home, body and intellect that brings about the affect of the un-heimlich. ("The World and the Home"). Especially horror and Gothic genres have represented the homeless (and transcendental homeless) repeatedly as zombies, risen from the dead, as neither alive nor dead, as parasitical monsters ridden with contagious potential. Such texts are informed by the chronotope of the street in that the time and space management is halted and turned around through a regression toward and into the grave: As a genre, Gothic literature "is the disruption of realism and of all generic purity," Jack Haberstam writes when he posits that the Gothic novel itself is the the genre that questions all genres (157). Therefore, the Gothic mode represents in literature the

horrific unease of "epistemological vertigo." Feelings of shock and revulsion replace those of "calm passion" when, as Franco Moretti posits in *Dialectic of Fear*, "[T]he fear aroused by the monster … is the fear of one who is afraid of having 'produced his own gravediggers'" (86).

Every day, three homeless people die in public on the streets of Los Angeles (HUD exchange). With regard to no other topic does our "willfull ignorance" and our desire for the "novelistic illusion" persist so resiliently, as with regard to the unhoused and the homeless (*Seduced by Story* 33, 50). The current homelessness crisis is cause enough for a reassessment of our fictional representations of the unhoused and the homeless, especially since this topic has, to a great extent, been overlooked in literary studies. The political and cultural value and force of literature in influencing our understanding of homelessness can be highlighted through a metaphor from city planning: hostile architecture. When arm rests are attached to benches in parks and at bus stops, they are made to look like an enhancement in comfort, when in truth, they are there to hinder the unhoused from lying down to rest or sleep. In a similar way, the form of a fictional literary text can, in its architecture, act with hostility or commit violence against its own vulnerable protagonists. "[F]ormal patterns are what literature uses in order to master historical reality, and to reshape its materials in the chosen ideological key" writes Franco Moretti (*The Way of the World* xiii). Northrup Frye recognizes that, "The problem of convention is the problem of how art can be communicable" (99)**.** And Henry James is aware that the novelist can only break with tradition at the cost of losing the readers faith in the presented reality (Watt 22). The sentimentality of the rags to riches dictum comforts us during a historical moment when our philosophical and ideological premisses are being questioned - quite literally - on every street

corner. In this context, the following study looks at the (hostile) architecture of homelessness fiction and assess the implications of generic variations in the chronotope of the road and the chronotope of the street, as well as idiosyncrasies pertaining to its various modes, genres and epochal manifestations that engage in dialogism within the polyphony of the homeless experience.

The paper is divided into two parts which contain two chapters each. “On the Road,” addresses the myth of homelessness as an ontology defined by freedom and self-reliance and explores subversive forms of discourse that dismantle such hostile architectures. Part 2.1., “The Comic and the Carnival,” explores the unique carnival hybrid in American literature of the tramp, the picaro and the Native American trickster figure Coyote. Part 2.2., “Menippea and Melancholy,” relates the processes by which Menippean satire generates the carnival in American homelessness fiction and analyses three novel interpretations of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* that address narrative epistemologies of the frontier, of race, and of queerness. Part 3, “On the Street,” investigates the ambitions of Realism and Naturalism in representing homelessness and displays how these epochal genres (as well as realist mimetic aspirations outside of these epochs) are stabilized and/or infiltrated by discourses of hagiography and the Gothic mode. 3.1.,“Of Filth and Faith,” focuses on Realism/Naturalism and hagiography, with an emphasis on texts about homeless women and their surveillance, while 3.2., “The Gothic and the Grotesque” is concerned with ideas of monstrosity and “epistemological vertigo” central to texts thematizing mental illness and addiction. The Gothic infiltrates texts having to do with issues ranging from the estranged artist to the (racially defined) fugitive when the potential for carnival and dialogism are usurped by monological narrative epistemologies having to do with fear and Otherness.

While Georg Lukács has a more pessimistic Modernist view of the novel as, at its worst, representing a mockery of the search for home, and, at its best, embodying its problematic complexity, Bakhtin sees the novel in a more positive light — in its potential to provide the comfort of shelter when heteroglossia is realized in dialogism. American homelessness fiction can be considered a mode of fiction that incorporates the dialectic of these two agendas — the realistic and the carnival, the Gothic and the Menippean. In concordance with Jonathan Culler's writings on poetics, this project, therefore, "seeks to understand how the system of literary discourse works and has worked" (Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* 49). It attempts, not to define, but to circumnavigate a poetics and prosaics of homelessness fiction that is not only representative of the plurality and intersectionality of the homeless population, but provides us with a "novel" narrative epistemology of homelessness.

**Chicago, 2021**

Chiarito, Bob. “Block Club Chicago: Alderman Praises his “Gardiner’s Angels” for Tossing Blankets, Food Belonging to Man Who is Homeless.” *Chicago Coalition for the Homeless*, 22 Jan 2021, https://chicagohomeless.org/block-club-chicago-alderman-praises-his-gardiners-angels-volunteers-for-tossing-blankets-food-belonging-to-man-who-is-homeless.

## 2. On the Road

### 2.1 Comic and Carnival

As a trope, homelessness novelized literature: Protagonist horizontal and vertical mobility together with the dismantling of epic distance (historical and class distance) brought about a revolutionary literary form. Bakhtin, who explains his theory of the novel by example of certain model writers, (Dosoyevsky for “dialogism," Goethe for “chronotopicity,” and Rabelais for “carnival”), does not discuss Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (he mentions Chaucer once, and only in parentheses, in the essay “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” (140)). And yet *The Canterbury Tales* embodies all of these definitive formal tropes of the novel, and, surely, as a discourse propelled forward by homelessness, contributed to the novelization of literature through its homelessness frame: the pilgrimage as chronotope of the road, the polyphonic storytelling of characters from diverse social classes and backgrounds as a form of dialogism, and the subversive humor (and corporality) of the carnival in a group sharing the hardship and intimacy of travel. While the pilgrimage of the American Puritans does not evoke ideas of carnival, it is novel in that it positions homelessness at the beginning of its “errand into the wilderness” — as the revamping of a communal identity that would lead to the founding of the first modern democracy.

Leslie Fiedler writes about the rise of the novel as a genre, which is historically concurrent with the evolution of the United States as a political entity: “A new literary form and a new society, their beginnings coincide with the beginnings of the modern era and,

indeed, help to define it" (23). Linda Hunt, arguing from the standpoint of the novel's influence on society, convincingly contends that the novel's genesis coincides with the origin of human rights during the subjective and democratic impetus of the Enlightenment because the novel enables readers "to empathize across class, sex, and national lines" (38). In order to have human rights, she posits, one had to learn to empathize with someone outside of one's own socio-economic and demographic category; the novel made it possible for the rich to feel with the poor, for men to identify with women — on the basis of shared inner feelings and emotions evoked by narrative (27). At the same time, Bakhtin, arguing the other way around, from the standpoint of society's influence on the novel, insists that the Enlightenment brought about aspirations (and delusions) pertaining to ideas of semantic unity (pertaining to the "self-sufficiency of a single consciousness"), which inhibit dialogism and promote monologism: "The consolidation of monologism and its permeation into the spheres and ideological life was promoted in modern times by European rationalism, with its cult of unified and exclusive reason, and especially by the Enlightenment, during which time the basic forms of European artistic prose took shape" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 82). Both arguments reflect the complexity of the way the Enlightenment imagines the individual subject's acquisition of knowledge and truth through democratic processes.

In other words, stories give access to reality *and* are open to interpretation. As Peter Brooks has argued, the reader may be "seduced" by narrative, as far as he or she yearns for "the novelistic illusion." Brooks explains: "We open a novel in the initial expectation that it will conform to the conventions of our lives within time, space and gravity" (*Seduced by Story* 32). That is, we have certain ideas about reality that we want to have verified in and through narrative. Prior to Brooks, Jonathan Culler introduced the term "narrative

competence" to describe the ability of the reader to assist in the realization of story through her narrative fitness, for instance the knowledge attained through the experience of reading that makes her expect, when opening a novel, that the plot requires a transformation of character: that the protagonist begins his or her novelistic journey in a certain situation, undergoes some sort of change (brought about by important events) and that the story ends with a resolution that marks that change in character. "In applying these assumptions about the world to the texts of narrative we posit a level of structure which, by functioning as a normal given, enables us to treat everything in the discourse as a way of interpreting, valuing, and presenting this nontextual substratum" (**"**Story and Discourse in the Analysis of Narrative" 172). Therefore, we read a novel, not only to understand the world, but to find affirmation of our knowledge of the world as we believe it to be, or want it to be.

In his introduction to *Don Quixote*, Harold Bloom writes, "A fiction, believed in even though you know it is a fiction, can be validated only by sheer will" (xxvii). In the United States, that "narrative illusion" manifests itself in our abiding faith in opportunity (which is to be recognized and taken), as well as the logic that hard work and endurance are always rewarded. But what happens, in Brooks words, "when stories become myths: when their status as fictions … is forgotten and they are taken as real explanations of the world" (*Seduced by Story* 22)? In his essay "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin posits that "the absolute fusion of word with ideological meaning is, without a doubt, one of the most fundamental constitutive features of myth" (369). Texts confirming and celebrating the American myth of upward mobility persist in mainstream American culture. From Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Horatio Algier's *Ragged Dick* to contemporary films like *The Blind Side* and *The Pursuit of Happiness,* the American Dream is reiterated in comforting

(because familiar) narrative patterns that, more often than not, amount to kitsch. As Thomas Kulka explains, kitsch depicts themes that are "highly charged with stock emotions" and are immediately identifiable, but that do not enrich the reader or viewer with "expressive potentialities" (37). In Bakhtinian terms, such rags-to-riches narratives do not engage in dialogism because they posit the "absolutism of a single and unitary language," that of the hegemony ("Discourse in the Novel" 367-368).

In contrast, the novel (or the *nove*l novel), according to Bakhtin's definition, "begins by presuming a verbal and semantic *recentering* of the ideological world, a certain *linguistic homelessness* of literary consciousness" ("Discourse in the Novel" 367, emphasis added). Texts discoursing within the ideology of "officialdom," as Bakhtin calls hegemony, would therefore be monologic, because, while heteroglossia is present as a potential, it is not realized in that "artistically profound play with social languages" that constitutes dialogism: "A sealed-off interest group, caste or class … cannot serve as socially productive soil for the development of the novel" (367-8). Indeed, dialogism doesn't only happen between, but within, where a "single given consciousness … participates equally in several languages" (368). The potential of novelistic prose, therefore, is that it "undermines the authority of custom" and "erodes that system of national myth that is organically fused with language" (367-368). While Bakhtin's writing, which is historically embedded in the Stalin era, is influenced by thoughts on political and sociological power struggles, his argument is applied to fiction and the novel, and his resolution of the issue is simple and humanly universal: familiarization through laughter and folk humor, a form of democratization that caters to American anti-intellectualism.

From Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, novel-ness and novelization are forces in literature contingent on homelessness, forces that make the negotiation of subjective identity possible through dialogism across boundaries preliminary to heteroglossia and underscored by laughter. In all of these groundbreaking novels, homelessness and the comic play important roles, for growth in character depends on making mistakes and learning from those mistakes. While Lukács, writing from a Modernist (and urban, industrial, Marxist) standpoint, understands homelessness and novel-ness as representing the existential plight of modern humanity, Bakhtin interprets these forces in a more liberating way. In his discourses on the development of the novel within literary history, Bakhtin posits the social and literary dynamism of the novel as having the capacity to reveal, embody and realize "the carnival" as a potentially liberating social space, realized in the laughter of folk humor, in plurality, irreverence for conventions, corporality and the right to be Other.

In Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, Queen Isis changes Lucius from his cursed existence as a donkey back to human form during a carnival feast; but before she does so, she appeases him about his fear of exposure and embarrassment: "I promise you that in the joy and laughter of the festival nobody will either view your ugly shape with abhorrence or dare to put a sinister interpretation on your sudden return to human shape" (266). In carnival, all inequality and distance between people is suspended; carnival opens up the uncensored interaction of people regardless of geographic and sociological demographics. In order for heroes of the epic to grow into the protagonists of the novel, therefore, they had to take to the road and move through time and space (on the chronotope of the road), and *thereby* come into contact with various languages expressing diversity in class, gender, ethnicity,

occupation, and age (heteroglossia) — just as the reader does during her reading of the novel itself. The epic hero had to descend the social ladder into contexts yet unknown to him. This act of *familiarization* is more than what Linda Hunt means with the term "empathy." As Bakhtin analyses it in his Rabelais book, familiarization is the formal and emotional response to the dismantling of epic temporal and class distance and the consequential use of ordinary and base syntactic and semantic strata that makes possible "free and familiar contact among people" (*Rabelais and His World* 23). Carnival pageants, "comic verbal compositions," foul language and cursing, expression of bodily functions and sexual urges: "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live it," writes Bakhtin (7). "It is a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (6). In other words, while carnival is a social space and time, the novel is its literary equivalent.

The novel is expressive of carnival but not every novel is pure carnival like Bakhtin's prime example of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. And not all carnival is explicitly funny. An example from American fiction is the scene in Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, the story of the young restless poet Neal Cassidy who travels as a Hobo in the American West. Neal meets the homeless Dean Moriarty, the son of a wino, who embodies both the lost soul of the "transcendental homeless" and the life force of carnival. When Neal and Dean (still searching for Dean's father, Old Dean Moriarty), end up in Detroit without a place to sleep, they spend the night in an all-night movie theater on Skid Row:

> The people who were in that all-night movie were the end. Beat Negroes who'd come up from Alabama to work in car factories on a rumor; old white bums; young longhaired hipsters who'd reached the end of the road and were drinking wine; whores, ordinary couples, and

> housewives with nothing to do, nowhere to go, nobody to believe in. If you sifted all Detroit in a wire basket the beater solid core of dregs couldn't be better gathered. (243-244)

Over the course of the night, Dean and Neal watch two movies alternately, each six times, and by the end of their sleepover, they are "permeated completely with the Gray Myth of the West and the weird dark Myth of the East" (244). The scene represents the contrast between the myths of "officialdom" which, in the form of film, are being almost violently blasted toward the half-conscious audience, and the people that make that audience. The theater is carnival as represented in the intimacy of shared sleep and bodily functions over the course of the night, the plurality of identities inhabiting the theater, the familiarization and intimacy that occurs within the darkened space, and the contrast between the subversive setting of the theater and the mythical setting in the movies, between Otherness and "officialdom." And while this scene does not evoke howling laughter per se, the eccentricity of this shelter for the homeless suggests carnival, as does the narrator's conclusion to the scene (in which the reader has access to Dean's perspective — watching and grinning), and in which Neal describes himself being swept out if the cinema by the cleaning staff: "I was sleeping with my head on the wooden arm of the seat as six attendants of the theater converged with their night's total of swept-up rubbish and created a huge dusty pile that reached to my nose as I snored head down — till they almost swept me away too" (244). While carnival has the potential to "recenter" the ideologies of "officialdom," America's tragedies also "recenter" Bakhtin's "carnival" toward what he calls the "seriocomic" because they are necessarily mixed with melancholy, and because they manifest themselves as the comedy of life's tragedies.

In summary, carnival literature, as Bakhtin describes it in *Rabelais and His World* is defined by poetic devices that evoke tropes inherent to carnival pageants, such as 1) familiarization and anti-elitism through the interaction of people who otherwise would not interact due to their social categories and definitive mores, 2) eccentricity, when unacceptable behavior becomes acceptable, 3) carnival mésalliances through, for instance, the juxtaposition of heaven and hell, the sacred and the profane, the high and the low, and the clever and the stupid, as well as, 4) profanity, blasphemy and obscenity (especially regarding the anatomy of the lower body). And yet while, obviously, this seems to conflict blatantly with theories of the novel that define it as a specifically bourgeois form (see Ian Watt**)**, Bakhtin's theories exist in dialogic discourse with these philological alternatives as well, especially in American fiction, where the protestant work ethic and resilient Puritan values merge with the carnival of the frontier and of the metropolis. Together, these discourses perform dialogism between manifestations of the novel based on class, the housed and unhoused, the rural and the urban — between the bourgeois gaze of "calm passion" (Moretti) and the shocking, threatening laughter of the destitute (Bakhtin). As Goethe writes of Wilhelm Meister: "Wilhelm ist freilich ein armer Hund, aber nur an solchem lässt sich das Wechselspiel des Lebens und die tausend verschiedenen Lebensaufgaben recht deutlich zeigen, nicht an schon abgeschlossenen Charakteren." The novel is the genre of the underdog, and, at the same time, the genre that Bakhtin elevates to the highest aesthetic form.

The challenges of American fiction, therefore, are related to the challenges of representing inherently American tragedies as carnival (in all its plurality and freedom). As Leslie Fiedler so aptly puts it, "the technical difficulties of the American novelist" have to do

with “the adaptation of non-tragic forms to tragic-ends” (28). In other words, the American novel needs the conflation of humor and violence, laughter and horror, the carnival and the Gothic; it needs what Bakhtin calls “the serio-comic.” And the serio-comic is manifested in forms dedicated to the serious and the comic in varying degrees which have to do with their rural and urban chronotopes.

The myth of the American frontier made homelessness an ars vivend and the Wild West an American carnival in its fusion of comedy and tragedy, laughter and violence. Even before the frontier was “closed” in 1890 (see Turner), a nostalgia for the chronotope of the West persisted that effected the deferment of the maturity of the individual as a citizen and the nation as a political project. The American novel, therefore, relies on a hybrid form that promotes homelessness and eludes closure: a conflation of picaresque, Romance, Gothic, and Menippean designs, that promote juvenile virtues like anti-intellectualism, “street smarts,” roguish survival strategies, the grotesque, boyish adventure, as well as comedy at the cost of others. These modes of fiction can be recognized in Tom Sawyer’s Romance adventurism and Huck Finn’s Socratic wise ignorance in *Huckleberry Finn*, in the clever and almost admirable deception skills of Melville’s homeless scam artist in *The Confidence Man*, and in Jack London’s droll skirmishes with the police in his Romantic/Naturalist experiment as a Hobo in *The Road*.

There is, as Leslie Fiedler has famously shown, a tendency in the American novel to insist on, celebrate and perpetuate the white male’s freedom to experience adventure at the cost of any domestic responsibilities relating to family, marriage and sex. Ever since Rip van Winkle (the first American wino), “the typical male protagonist of our fiction has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat — anywhere

to avoid 'civilization.'"(26). This, claims Fiedler, is what makes our national literature, tinged with homoeroticism, so charmingly "boyish." In *Huck out West*, his 2017 sequel to Mark Twain's novel, Robert Coover lets Huck, the first person narrator, report: "There warn't many girls and women in my life. Mostly, I ducked and run" (201). And Tom Sawyer, explaining his separation from wife Becky, claims, "I got things to do in this world so long as I'm in it, Huck. Ain't got time for family. Don't believe in it … Adventuring's more natural to a fellow than homebodying" (201-202). While not all protagonists characterized by this self-centered, free and easy adolescence qualify as kitsch (Natty Bumpo perhaps does, while Huck Finn does not), they substantially infiltrate our mythical conceptions of rural homelessness as an ontology of enviable freedom and lightheartedness: The novel of the American white male creates "fantasies of flight from civilized comfort to primitive simplicity," Fiedler writes (165). However, in *Huck out West*, Robert Coover also lays bare the brutality, fear, and existential distress that life on the frontier actually represented (especially the violence toward Native Americans and women). Thereby, Coover exposes a deeper layer of the palimpsest of the American dialectic: the implementation of crude and overt violence towards the Other in order to secure personal liberty.

Nowhere is the nostalgia for the homoerotic boyish adventure of the frontier as evident as in the imagined lives of Hobos, tramps and vagabonds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from the economic crash of 1873 to the Great Depression. After the closing of the frontier, and during the historical transition from rural to urban human existence, "Hobohemia" inhabited the geographical and psychological demographics of America's landscapes and bourgeois minds; and it did so in an ambivalent manner that paid tribute to American ideologies of freedom and mobility while sustaining "the moral

geographies of roots and rootedness" (Cresswell 14). As Tim Cresswell summarizes in his study of the American tramp, "Clearly, the tramp is a figure that embodies mobility in an array of apathologized *and* romanticized ways" (160, emphasis mine). And John Allen, in his study of tramp autofiction *Homelessness in American Literature* explains that the complex discursive treatment of the tramp in literature, sociology, journalism and photography "complicated the notion of what it meant to be poor and without a home" (6). Tramps and Hobos were already an object of study in their time. The anarchist, physician and founder of the "Hobo College" in Chicago, Ben Reitman, defined the "genus vagrant" according to the motivation behind his mobility: "The Hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders, the bum drinks and wanders" (Anderson 61). His colleague St. John Tucker posits a definition that fuses ideas of mobility and work: "A Hobo is a migratory worker. A tramp is a migratory nonworker. A bum is a stationary nonworker" (Anderson 61). While the landscapes occupied by the wandering homeless of that epoch (the railroad, "jungle" camps, Hobo colleges) might fare as carnival spaces, their literature (mostly autofiction) does not prove novel because the subjective force behind autobiography and autofiction does not engage in dialogism. The setting is Carnival but the form of the text is not carnival.

A comparison between two texts imagining Hobos and tramps can help illustrate the difference between Bakhtin's carnival and the cultural idea of Carnival. *Sister of the Road* (1937) recounts the life of a young woman who was raised by a wandering single mother, and who, as an adult, continues to live the life of the vagabond: "I am thirty years old as I write this, and have been a hobo for fifteen years, a sister of the road, one of that strange and motley sorority which has increased its membership since the Depression" (7). And yet, while the narrator tells her tale in the first person, Bertha is not the one composing it at all. Instead,

the same "hobo doctor" Ben Reitman (of the tramp-definition above) transcribed Bertha's testimony to construct a book that, by the complete title is called *Sister of the Road, The Autobiography of Boxcar Bertha, as told by Dr. Ben Reitman*. Marketed as an autobiography, written by someone else, and further, as the autobiography of a woman, as told, in the first person, by a man (who also happens to have the authority of an MD), this *novel*, with its focus on important life-changing events and its oxymoronic title, claims (in its blurb) to be "the frank and uncensored story of a wandering woman of the underworld" — one in which the reader will be informed of the "intimate facts of a woman hobo's methods and habits: a life story that has no parallel." In other words, the novel promises lots of sex (as well as insight into the gross phenomena that go along with it: female desire, prostitution, and abortion). And the setting of all this disorder is the mysterious underworld.

*Boxcar Bertha* gives substance to the philosopher Agnes Heller's metaphor of "geographical promiscuity" ("Where Are We at Home?" 1). Not only does Bertha, in the vein of Leslie Fiedler's adventurous boy-men, refuse to settle down with one man in one place; her sexual escapades also constitute the opportunity for the reader's voyeurism — approved of by the doctor. Reitman gives readers access to the "fascinating problems of modern society," but he also gives his authoritative consent to readers to empathize patronizingly with these women, whose "first playhouse was a boxcar" (7). Bertha relates:

> But even that first summer I could see what I know now after many years, that the women who take to the road are mainly those who come from broken homes, homes where the father and mother are divorced, where there are step-mothers or step-fathers, where both parents are dead, where they have had to live with aunts and uncles and

> grandparents … Many others, I have found, are graduates of orphan asylums. Shut up and held away from all activity, such girls have dreamed all their childhoods about traveling and seeing the world. As soon as they are released they take the quickest way to realizing their dreams, and become hoboes. Not a few are out of jails and institutions, choosing the road for freedom, the same way, regardless of hardship. Among these are actually many paroled from institutions for the feeble-minded and insane. (70)

Like Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*, the women of the road that Bertha describes are the homeless children of homeless parents. Besides the disconcerting antiquated vocabulary, the text ambivalently infers that women's vagrancy stems simultaneously and paradoxically from inherent traits *and* free-will. Her homelessness is a physiological and psychological weakness that evokes physical and mental restlessness *as well as* the effect of a personal choice to fulfill a dream: a choice to which she is animated through her intellectual curiosity *and* feeble-mindedness, through her quest for freedom *and* (especially) her inherent promiscuity. Through its authorship and political, sociological and "scientific" motivation, the text, while feigning chronotopicity and heteroglossia, rejects dialogism; it refuses any familiarization (in favor of voyeurism), eludes plurality (in favor of binaries), and claims eccentricity (while meaning "Otherness"). While Bertha might actually have lived the Carnival, her "autobiography" is not carnival because it promotes the ideology of "officialdom" and undermines "the right to be 'other'" (Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" 159).

A second example of a text that provokes the question of its carnival intent is the personification of the tramp in films by Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin's 1915 film *The Tramp* is a Menippean rendering of tramphood in which the unsophisticated naiveness of Chaplin's protagonist is implemented in order to elucidate and satirize philosophical tendencies having to do with economic liberalism. The coincidental meeting between the tramp, a woman and some Hoboes on what Bakhtin would call the "chronotope of the road," makes this critique of Capitalist values in the modern age possible. The woman who, like Bertha, embodies an ambivalent girl-woman entity (she wears long blond braids with ribbons, lives with her father, and seems to scream a lot out of fear) is alone on the road, carrying a bundle of cash dollars openly in her hand. While, as a woman, she is completely vulnerable in this isolated context, the Hoboes who attack her are totally oblivious to her beauty and only have eyes for the money she is holding. The tramp, in his signature oversized shoes, tattered coat and bowler hat (which he takes the time to raise in course with his good manners) is there to save the damsel in distress. The comedy is created by the blindness of the robbers to her attraction because of their material obsession with the money, while, at the same time, the tramp, in his slapstick awkwardness before the girl, is a mockery of her Knight in shining armor — low class trying to act upper class. With Socratic and Menippean comedy and, finally, in picaresque style, the tramp takes leave of the home he has been welcomed into by the grateful father, and in the vagabond tradition that Fiedler has described, takes to the road again. Besides the blatantly sexist instrumentalization of the female protagonist, the sketch has strong carnival tendencies because of its citation of satirical modes of literature which engage in dialogism, and because of its subversive tendencies and its "low" comedy. The laughter this sketch evokes is meant to be laughter of all the people and laughter "directed at those

who laugh" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 11-12). Nevertheless, it cannot count as carnival because the ideological "recentering" with regards to economic liberalism remains strictly centered with regards to the role of the woman who acts merely as a prop on the male stage.

And yet, historically speaking, the tramp is a maverick. Cresswell writes of Chaplin's Tramp, "The tramp is an outsider, a figure on the margins, whose marginal position allows a novel perspective on the workings of normality" (160). This "novel perspective" is not a platform for the performance of subversion (nor a literary mode that merely disobeys generic templates). Simply implementing carnival spaces as a setting in fiction does not guarantee novelized literature. Indeed, most of our Hobo and contemporary autofiction about being unhoused, while attempting to represent the Carnival, is not carnival, but written in the Realist and Naturalist tradition. Despite the pedagogical motivation of Hobo fiction and the mimetic engagement of Realist and Naturalist fiction, the representation of economic and social fall is fraught with moral judgement. Therefore, Hobo autofiction is often marked as investigative rather than existential: Jack London's *The Road* (1907) is an experiment in literary slumming, Woodie Guthrie's *Bound for Glory* (1943) depicts his riding the rails as an inspiration for his music, Boxcar Bertha's testimony in *Sister of the Road* (1937) is licensed erotic fiction (especially in Marin Scorsese's 1972 romantic drama of the same name), and Lars Eighner's *Travels with Lizbeth* (1993), including the widely anthologized "On Dumpster Diving," reads like a "how to" manual for living on the street. Indeed, much of our homelessness autofiction thematizes and continues the Naturalist tradition of voyeuristic curiosity toward the homeless and moral judgement of the poor. In novelized literature, however, the morally tinged hierarchy between people is dismantled: "[C]arnival does not

know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 7).

Having investigated the nuances of carnival, it becomes clear that the closest American literature comes to carnival are the Coyote tales of Native American folklore. Old Man Coyote is "the trickster par excellence for the largest number of American Indian cultures" (Bright 341). He elevates human life when he brings fire to to the people, but he lowers it perpetually through his carnal cravings; his cleverness is unparalleled, but so is his foolishness; he lusts for life *and* brings death. In other words, Coyote is a demigod *and* a bum. Since the 1950's Old Man Coyote, who traditionally was the subject of oral storytelling, has appeared in the written poetry and prose of Native Americans like Leslie Marmon Silko and Peter Blue Cloud, as well as in those texts of Anglo writers like Gary Snyder, who, as William Bright argues, launched Coyote's "neopoetic" career (341). As a protagonist, Coyote is the homeless and vagrant underdog with "motley fur" that, as Simon Ortiz describes it, looks like "scraps of an old coat" (Bright 368). Leslie Marmon Silko tells how Coyote lost his fine coat in a poker game and, therefore had to resort to a "ratty old coat / bits of old fur / the sparrows stuck on him / with dabs of pitch" (*Storyteller* 237). And Gary Snyder writes about Coyote: "In folklorist terms he's a trickster … He's always traveling, he's really stupid, he's kind of bad, in fact he's really awful, he's outrageous … But most of the time he's just into mischief" (69).

In his essay "The Natural History of Old Man Coyote," William Bright summarizes the character traits of Coyote. He is a wanderer, and, while the reason why he is "condemned" to wandering varies, the fact that he *must* wander perpetually and that he is at home nowhere (or everywhere) is a universal and undisputed truth at the basis of all Coyote

tales (350). Coyote is also a "bricoleur," that is "a sort of mythic handy-man who 'cobbles' reality in the form of *bricolage* out of the available material" (351). In other words, he knows how to build a house, and a story, out of recycled material. He is a glutton and a lecher who has inspired stories in the mode of "Coyoterotica." (359). In addition, Coyote can have many identities in one tale, and takes on various animal and human traits. He is a thief, a cheat, an outlaw, a loser whose tricks frequently backfire and who "has rejected all supernatural aid and has elected freedom" for himself (367). He is a clown (we laugh with him and at him), but also a spoiler and a pragmatist who warns of the "dangers of intellectualism" (373). Finally, like Menippus himself, he has traveled to the land of the dead and back: Coyote never dies, he gets killed plenty of times, but always comes back to life again. In "Berry Feast" Snyder describes his resilience:

> … and when Magpie
> Revived him, limp rag of fur in the river
> Drowned and drifting, fish-food in the shallows,
> "Up yours!" sang Coyote
> and ran. (376)

Known for his cunning and adaptability, he is the ultimate survivor: "The trickster's only remedy for death is tears, followed by laughter" (377).

As a trickster Coyote is homologous to European comic homeless characters: the Socratic wise fool, the "doggish" Diogenes, the picaresque survivalist Lazarillo de Torres, the street smart rogue Simplicissimus, the lecherous Don Juan, and Lucian's facetious Menippus. In Karok myth, in a tale of Coyote's greed, he displays human folly with Menippean humor:

And he ripped them apart,

his clothes.

And he tore them to bits,

little bits.

And he threw them downslope.

And he stood there naked.

And so then he said,

"Now I'll shoot one!" —

and he missed.

And the raccoon jumped away downslope.

And again he shot at one,

again it jumped down.

And he missed every one of them.

And he felt BAD.

And he crept away downslope.

And he collected them,

all of his torn-up clothes.

So he mended his clothes —

and he hurried upstream. (368)

Such texts, which on the page look like narrative poems, reflect in their form, the repetition and song of their oral precursors. While traditional oral texts rendered in print are presented without quotation marks, the texts of Peter Blue Cloud, for example, are not only resistant to the conformities of poetry through the enjambement of the song-like lyric (with no

punctuation at all), they are also set in quotation marks in their entirety to make clear that the form, as seen on the page, is a tribute to oral storytelling. Many other renderings of Coyote tales are in prose, as in the collection edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz. And indeed, it is in the Menippean tradition, to merge prose and verse in tales blending human folly and Socratic wisdom with the sheer survival skills of the dogged. In a final example, Blue Cloud gives Coyote philosophical insight that parallels Lucian:

> Coyote, coyote, please tell me
> What is power?
>
> It is said that power
> is the ability to start
> your chainsaw
> with one pull…
>
> Coyote, coyote, please tell me
> Why is Creation?
>
> Creation is because I
> went to sleep last night
> with a full stomach,
> and when I woke up
> this morning
> everything was here. (372)

Bakhtin repeatedly refers to Socratic dialogue as a subversive method for revealing truth, and Lucian's Menippean legacy is his development of the philosophical dialogue into a technique of satire. Coyote's image of the the wise fool, his anti-intellectualism, the simplicity of the motivation behind his actions (thirst, hunger, sexual desire, greed, digestion), the emphasis on corporality and laughter, his multiple identities and ambivalence, as well as his homelessness: all these traits are essentially carnival. And yet, at the same time, Coyote is a "transcendental homeless," not only through his perpetual vagrancy, but because he is "the inventor of death": For, while "Earthmaker" wanted to give people eternal life, Coyote confronts them with death in order "to make people take life more seriously" (Bright 352). When, however, Coyote's own child dies, and he wants to rescind his contrivance, it is, by then too late: "Coyote becomes the first to feel the bereavement which is to be the lot of humanity" (352).

Therefore, in the essence of his character, Coyote constitutes the human dialectic of the comedy of life's tragedies (and the literary conflation of Menippea and melancholy). Meanwhile, the narratives relating his adventures (in "adventure time") reflect the American dialectic as well, when they combine resilient ideas of divine intervention with Coyote's insistence on using his own free will, especially in order to fulfill his own desires and needs. In form, they are, in Bakhtin's definition, novel because of their implementation of dialogism, chronotopicity, and the carnival. They embody narrative defined by a lowering and familiarization of language and architected with dialogism and chronotopicity. "In reality, [carnival] is life itself, but shaped according to certain patterns of play" (Bakhtin *Rabelais and His World* 7). As a mode of literature, Coyote tales balance on the border between art and play.

Coyote tales both support and stand in stark contrast to Walter Benjamin's (Modernist and Marxist) take on the invention of the novel in his famous essay "Storyteller," in which he mourns the art of oral storytelling and posits an increasing isolation of modern humanity due to the commodification of literature and the private act of reading the novel. In her own text entitled "Storyteller," Leslie Marmon Silko writes: "White ethnologists have reported that the oral tradition among Native American groups has died out because whites have always looked for museum pieces and artifacts when dealing with Native American communities" (274). Instead, Coyote maintains his carnival identity, even in written form because he avoids being archived. And at the same time, Native American literature, as Marmon Silko has shown in her own fiction, actively draws on colonial influences like the Bildungsroman, while acknowledging that aspects of the Native American literary tradition have influenced the European-American novel as well. In her novel *Ceremony*, the medicine man Betonie embraces this dialogism in form of intertextually; he tells Tayo (before they proceed with his ceremony), "I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong" (126). The changes that Betonie implements and remains open to, make his ceremony novel.

As Franco Moretti explains in "Conjectures on World Literature," "[W]hen a culture starts moving toward the modern novel, it's always as a compromise between foreign form and local materials" (3). For non-European cultures, the novel comes into being as a compromise between defined Western philosophical and philological prescriptions (notably British and French) and local subject matter. While precisely these British and French templates are the influences *with* which and *against* which the United States was organized, the American project displays acute "conjectures" in genre. In his essay "Native American

Novels: Homing In," William Bevis explains that within their literary traditions, Anglo-Americans are known to *leave home* while Native Americans *come home*: "[L]eaving plots," he explains about Anglo-American literature, incorporate "the basic premise of success in our mobile society." Further, the "American Adam … advances, sometimes at all cost, with little regard for family, society, past, or place" (582). Central to plot and narration is the personal freedom of the individual: "The individual is the ultimate reality … [H]ence individual consciousness is the medium; 'freedom,' our primary value, is a matter of distance between oneself and the smoke from another's chimney" (582). In contrast, the Native American hero is drawn, physically and intellectually, to the group and to the past — in short, homeward. Native American novels are not expanding ("centrifugal") but contracting ("centripetal"), Bevis continues (in Bakhtinian vocabulary): "In Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call 'regressing' to a place, a past where one has been before, is not only the primary story, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good" (582). The Native American Bildungsroman progresses backward in space and time; the protagonist matures and attains (Kantian) intellectual autonomy by regressing chronotopically into their people's traditional designs of home.

In Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, for instance, Tayo's healing journey from homelessness (and from his homeless childhood with a homeless mother) is traced after his return from the battlefield of the second World War, first to the area of the Laguna Reservation, and then to his people's and family's traditional architectures of dwelling and storytelling. The novel satirizes its own architecture when Tayo undertakes a quixotic mule ride from one side of the reservation to the other with the primary goal of reaching a bar inhabited by his drunk peers. But his long journey within the boundaries of the reservation,

during which he sheds the cultural mores and the habitus he acquired as an individual in American high school and the United States army, is an act of "regressing" into Native American adulthood.

"Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family" (Silko, *Ceremony* 68). Tayo's "pilgrimage" is a journey of coming to terms with the self *in* the group that also deconstructs the idea of the pilgrim's "chronotope of the road," in that the limited geographies of the reservation demand a deeper and more persistent mobility within time: both "adventure time" and historical time. During Tayo's cermemony, Betonie chants, "I'm walking home / I'm walking back to belonging / I'm walking back home to happiness / I'm walking back to long life" (144). This form of Bildungsroman-in-reverse is an example of what Franco Moretti means when he posits that foreign form is adapted to local material. For Bakhtin, the carnival is always novel — that is, it is always new and non-conform. While the oral storytellings of Native American Coyote tales don't look like novels in print, they do, as argued above, amount to novelized fiction in Bakhtinian terms because they are informed by chronotopicity, dialogism, and the carnival. How they look on the page (the plurality of their lyrical and prosaic representation) can be interpreted as another aspect of their orality and carnival non-conformity — that which makes it informal, and therefore, novel.

"What You Pawn I will Redeem" (2003) is a twenty-one page short story by Native American author Sherman Alexie that takes place in Seattle in the course of twenty-four hours. The chronotope is limited geographically and temporally. Each of the story's narrative

episodes are introduced by a time reference which underlines its chronotopicity (from noon to 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and onward until noon the following day). The homeless Native American protagonist Jackson Jackson is on what he himself calls a "quest" for a long lost family heirloom: his grandmother's regalia which he discovers by chance on display in a pawnshop: "'I want to win it back like a knight,' he explains (6, 16). The shift from rural to urban context is important because the setting in which Jackson's quest unfolds alters the chronotope of the road dramatically — to a chronotope of the street. Not only are the geographical and temporal realms limited (albeit within the posited "adventure time" of the quest), but the "mood," which Lukács, in a tangent on the short story in his *Theory of the Novel,* credits as the foremost 'aim' of the short story, becomes, inadvertently, more transcendentally Modernist (51). Jackson' homelessness is defined by hunger and cold in urban streets lined with hostile architecture (and juxtaposed with the fenced-in natural beauty of the Laguna reservation in Tayo's "homing-in"). Through his urban displacement Jackson, as a protaonist, becomes a conflation of Coyote and the picaro: homeless, poor, unemployed, funny and not in the least ambitious. When the shop owner promises him the regalia if Jackson can raise enough money (and even gives him a head start), Jackson spends every cent he wins or earns, on his friends, on alcohol and on McDonalds. "I've been homeless for six years. If there's such thing as an effective homeless man, then I suppose I'm effective. Being homeless is probably the only thing I've ever been good at" (1-2).

The narrative traces Jackson's mobility chronologically and within the Seattle neighborhood where he lives. Each episode depicts the dialogues Jackson has with shop owners, bar tenders, other "homeless Indians," lottery ticket sellers, cops and homeless newspaper vendors. Most episodes consist of many pages of pure dialogue while those in

between often consist of a mere few lines of dense prose which describe the protagonist's geographical progress. The discourse consists of the rendering of historical details within the conversations between characters that are reminiscent of oral storytelling, but also of comic question and answer dialogues that evoke Socratic philosophical erudition. When Jackson asks one fellow homeless man from which "specific tribe" he comes, he answers vaguely, "Do any of us know exactly who we are?" Jackson thinks, "Yeah, great, a philosophizing Indian," and says to him, "Hey … you got to have a home to be that homely" (2). Like Coyote, "He just laughed and flipped me the eagle and walked away" (2). The chronotopic progression through designated time and space, the intertextual dialogism between Native American and Anglo-American literary traditions and various canonized genres, the dialogism that exists through the interaction of a plurality of homeless people and through the multitude of cultural discourses that Jackson embodies within himself, the priorities of sex, alcohol and food, as well as the complete lack of aspiration (and his forfeiture to fate) that Jackson embodies on his "quest": all these poetic features make the short story carnival.

Alexie's endeavor to squeeze an entire searching quest into a short story means he must "recenter" the infamous generic definition of the short story that Edgar Allen Poe posited in his second review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. Poe's definition emphasizes the motivation, or "aim," of the author of the short story to procure a specific affect in the reader, in one reading or sitting: "[H]aving conceived, with deliberate care, a certain or single effect to be wrought out, [the composer of the story] then invents such incidents … as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived affect" (Norton 1531). About the novel Poe famously states: "The ordinary novel is objectionable from its length … . As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself … of the immense force derivable from *totality*" (1531). As

discussed in the Introduction of this study, Lukács also uses the term "totality" when he describes the quest of the transcendental homeless in his search for a philosophical and poetic home. For both Poe and Lukács, the "aim" of literature is to empower the subjective individual through the acquisition of knowledge. In contrast, Alexie's emphasis is on the polyphonic realization of dialogism which is relative to experience: it is new every time it happens. Dialogism is evoked through polyphony, chronotopicity and carnival; it novelizes the short story.

While genres besides the novel can be novel, the novel, in turn, can represent "officialdom" when it is pressed into subgenera that are canonized, for the canon always represents the values of a nation at a certain moment in its history. The character and situation of the protagonist, the setting, plot and mode can act as hostile architecture when they are forced upon the homeless as "narrative epistemologies" of their experience. While this is a project about homelessness and the novel, it is important to recognize that dialogism happens both within novelistic discourse, amongst characters and within them, but also between the boundaries of modes, genres and works of literature. Carnival is a force in discourse that is favored by the homelessness trope, a force which seeks to evade generic systems and "officialdom." A subversive carnival and dialogic discourse that infiltrates the novel as homelessness fiction is Menippean satire. In the following chapter, Menippean satire, which thrives on the seriocomic, on plurality, intersectionality, and intertextuality, on the generic conflation of verse and prose, on heaven and hell, will be considered as an elemental constituent of homelessness fiction and the American novel.

**2.2 Menippea and Melancholy**

Menippean satire is envisioned through the perspective of the homeless, the low and the destitute. As a genre it acts like a mode of fiction in that it transcends epochal boundaries. (von Koppenfels 18). Menippean satire persists throughout literary evolution, more or less covertly, depending on the demands made by the "historico-philosophical dialectic" of a particular historical moment. "It was formed in an epoch when national legend was already in decay," writes Bakhtin of its ancient Greek roots ("Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" 119). It seems logical then that Menippea is important to the literature of a young nation that has been on the verge of crumbling at various points in its short history, a nation that doesn't, as Fiedler has pointed out, have its own national "first-rate verse epic" to give it a foundation in distant history (23) — a nation whose literary history began with the novel.

If the United States doesn't have its own *Odysseus* in epic form, it does have a text, a novel in the Menippean mode, that acts the part: Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn.* Twain's novel is a Menippean fusion of literary modes and devices: low language dialect, dramatic irony, interior monolog and soliloquy, Socratic dialogue, Shakespearean cross-dressing, satirical interpretations of serious genres, the Gothic rendering of nostalgic genres, anthropological discourse, and the descent into hell. While Homer traces the noble Odysseus's journey from the battlefield toward home, Twain follows the orphan Huck and the slave Jim's journey away from 'home' to the hell of the Southern slave states. However,

while Huck and Jim travel together, the novel's title presumes that Huck is the one having the adventures.

Huck embodies one of a multitude of homeless children that inhabit American myth and reality. As the homeless, motherless (and soon to be orphan) son of a violent and abusive drunk, he is yet again the unhoused child of an unhoused parent. Similar to Boxcar Bertha his escape from his father's violence and his ensuing homeless journey are represented ambivalently, as both a necessity *and* a choice (Huck flees from abuse *and* can't stand being "sivilized"). In Menippean character, Huck is superstitious, watches adults from the perspective of a child, observes the upper classes from below. He exudes the lightheartedness of someone who has no ambition that needs to be stilled with heroic actions, no possessions to guard from theft (let alone carry), and no aspiration to rise on the social ladder. He is always up for playing tricks and at the same time he is a rough sleeper who philosophizes about the origin of the universe; he is often kind, increasingly concerned with doing the right thing, traumatized by domestic abuse, homeless.

After Huck stages his own murder and escapes from pap, he falls into a sudden deep and disorienting sleep in his getaway canoe. This scene is an example of the ambivalences of the text that suggest a multitude of interpretations and make it the definitive novel. Huck's deep slumber can be interpreted as that childlike ability of being able to sleep anywhere and at any time (quickly letting bygones be bygones and moving on), it can also be interpreted as his losing consciousness due to traumatic events. Much of what happens in the scenes surrounding the launching of Huck and Jim's journey is ambivalently funny: the superstitiousness that seems outrageous to the reader, the cross-dressing, the sketches in which Huck outsmarts adults by gaslighting them, his hunger and sleep based motivations,

and his simplistic wisdom. Huck, the beggar-philosopher who never begs, is the American Menippus.

In the following section of this project, I will discuss three novel interpretations of this American Urtext that, again in Menippean manner, oscillate between pastiche and parody, and "recenter" discourses of Otherness that are central to Mark Twain's original work. Robert Coover's novel *Huck Out West* (2017) is a sequel to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as imagined in the realization of Huck's final sentences in the original novel in which he shares his plan to "light out for the Territory" (334). Coover's version is Huck's testimony of the brutality of the frontier, especially the violence carried out against Native Americans and women. Percival Everett's novel *James* (2024) exchanges the main character and narrator from Huck to James (formerly Jim). In this discourse, the semantics of race are debated, positing "race" as a homeless category — positing it as a signifier without a signified, much in the sense of Bakhtin's idea of "linguistic homelessness" ("Discourse in the Novel" 367). Finally, Gus Van Sant's film *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) explores ambivalent notions of sexual freedom with regards to queerness that are implied by narratives depicting the autonomy and anonymity of homelessness.

While *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is often defined as a picaresque novel, it isn't invested enough in its critique of slavery (which is ambivalent in many ways) to really count as a novel that shows, as Northrop Frye puts it, "interest in the actual structure of society" (310). Mennipean Satire exudes the carelessness of a Huck Finn. Menippean satire is by definition a hybrid form (consisting of prose and verse in its classical form) that satirizes mental attitudes instead of specific people or institutions (Frye 309). In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* it is not the institution of slavery per se that is being unveiled, but the

human folly and hypocrisy that lurks within the entire (Christian and democratic) American enterprise. In Bakhtin's theoretical investigations, the so called "serious genres" are monological, that is, they posit a "stable universe of discourse" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 106). The "seriocomic genres," on the other hand, are dialogical: they repudiate, even repulse, in their dialogic nature, the possibility of mimetic realism. "The dialogic means of seeking truth" is "counterimposed to official monologism" and entails experiments in form and language in the novel (110). Mennipean satire is the genre of "serious-smiling" (106) and a genre influenced in part by further seriocomical forms that are embedded in homeless ontologies, like Socratic dialogue and bucolic poetry.

Menippus was a Cynic who lived in the first half of the third century BCE and was a follower of Diogenes (like Diogenes, Huck lives in a "hogshead" barrel). While Menippus's works do not survive, he appears as a protagonist, playing himself, in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* (which were written in Menippean style much later, in the second century CE). In Dialogue 1, Diogones calls Menippus "the Dog" (a nickname for a Cynic philosopher, but also a symbol used in various cultural and mythical traditions for the homeless and for death). Pollux invites Menippus to Hades in order to laugh with Diogenes about the folly of humankind that comes to light when the recently deceased wait for their ferry passage to Hades on the shores of the River Styx. Diogenes describes Menippus to Pollux: In character "he's always laughing and generally mocking those hypocrite philosophers." In appearance "[h]e's old and bald, with a decrepit cloak full of windows and open to every wind, a motley of flapping rags" (MacLeod 3-5). He is droll and sad, naive and wise, poor and homeless.

Upon his arrival in the underworld, Menippus argues with Charon the ferryman about his fare (because he is "penniless"). "Did that make it wrong of me to die?' he asks and prides

himself on being "the only passenger that wasn't weeping" (13). Charon asks Hermes, "Where did you find this Dog, Hermes? How he chattered on the crossing too, mocking and jeering at all the passengers and singing on his own while they were lamenting" (15). Menippus acts the homeless madman whose mental instability excuses his eccentric behavior: his clothes, his disconcerting dialogues with himself, his attacks on authorities, his dirty jokes and coarse humor. At his lowest point, upon arrival in the Underworld, Menippus pokes fun at kings and other rich noblemen who lament having lost their wealth upon dying: Hades is the (Gothic) carnival of plurality and equality. Even the central figures in Homer "have been cast to the ground and lie unrecognizable and ugly, all so much dust and rubbish" (27). Kerouac's metaphor of the homeless person as filth and rubbish that gets swept away by society's cleaning crew, resonates here.

Dialogue 6, which is Menipuus's dialogue with Socrates, displays the importance of Socratic dialogue for Menippean satire:

| | |
|---|---|
| Socrates | Looking for me, Menippus? |
| Menippus | Yes, I am Socrates. |
| Socrates | What's the news in Athens? |
| Menippus | Many of the young men call themselves philosophers, and, to judge at least from their garb and gait, are tiptop philosophers. […] |
| Socrates | And what do they think of me? |
| Menippus | In these respects at least, you're a lucky fellow, Socrates. At any rate they all think you were a |

wonderful man, and knew everything, though — I think I am right in saying so — you knew nothing.

Socrates That's what I myself keep telling them, but they thought it was all pretense on my part.

Menippus But who are those around you?

Socrates Charmides, my good fellow, and Phaedrus and Clinias' son.

Menippus Bravo, Socrates! Still following your own special line here! Still with an eye for beauty! (33-35)

Bakhtin claims that Menippean satire is "usually considered a product of the disintegration of the Socratic dialogue" ("Epic and Novel" 26). And again, Lucian's literary feat is the expansion of the philosophical dialogue of the wise fool for satirical purposes. This dialogue sounds incredibly contemporary, even postmodern: It acts as a metonymy for the Menippean mode. Further, through the text's preoccupation with death, *Dialgues of the Dead* transcends the boundaries of comedy and enters the realm of the grotesque. While Diogenes claims that Menippus hanged himself, Cerberus says to Menippus. "You alone were a credit to your breed — you and Diogenes before you, because you came in without having to be forced or pushed, but of your own accord, laughing and cursing at everyone" (21). Even Menippus's suicide is variably seriocomic.

In 1640, Valásquez painted Menippus as a beggar-philosopher: He has a scruffy beard and wears tattered clothes. Werner von Koppenfels interprets the parchment and books at his feet as symbols of his unpretentious and unacademic wisdom: wisdom "from below" (16) — much in the American anti-intellectual vein. Menippus looks straight at the viewer with alert

and kind eyes, his nose has the reddish bulbous form of the "cheerful beggar," and he smiles a tentative melancholy smile like that of a "sad clown." His gaze is a provocative reversal of the gaze upon the Other. As affect, it exudes what Bakhtin calls "serious smiling." Finally, a water pitcher stands on the pile of books as an emblem of humble simplicity and lack of want — again similar to the American vagrant in, what Fiedler calls, his "primitive simplicity." In 1788 Goya made an etching based on Valásquez's painting. One and a half centuries later, during the violent historical transition to modern democracy, Menippus's face is thinner, the nose straight, the smile a little more bitter. Goya seems to have adjusted the image of Menippus to embody the development of the Menippean genre itself, toward a more serious, sad, and spiteful satire that finds its way into the modern novel.

The first *novelized* expression of Menippean satire, however, is Apuleius's *The Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass),* written in the second century BCE. It is the story of Lucius, a young man of relatively high birth who has ambitions to learn magic and thereby gets turned into an ass by an annoyed goddess. As a domesticated animal he changes owners repeatedly and is forced to labor for mean thieves and other low scoundrels, much in the manner of his younger literary brother, the picaro in *Lazarillo de Tormes* (published in 1554). After many adventures on the road and amongst the destitute, Lucius manages to get turned back into a human being, and, much wiser than before his metamorphosis, is able to slyly elevate his rank to priest. In structure, Lucius's story is a precursor of the horizontal and vertical mobility of the Bildungsroman: After his foolish fall into homelessness and his experiences amongst the lowly, he accumulates knowledge about humanity and the social competences that allow him to design his final rise in class. The text is structured chronotopically and constitutes a hybrid of novel elements like coming-of-age processes,

Romance adventure time, picaresque insight into various levels of society (without being seen), Socratic wisdom, the perspective from below, and biting Menippean comedy. As Northrup Frye explains, Menippean satire is known for its “loose jointed narrative” and therefore, again, is often confused with the picaresque novel or the Romance (310). The picaro, however, has an interest in the actual structure of society, and the Romance depicts a different (higher) class of protagonist. Menippea, in contrast, is low class and symbolic, and it welcomes various other literary modes as part of its dialogic form.

The philosophical and philological motivation behind the implementation of Menippean satire is, as Bakhtin explains, “the creation of extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 114). And Northrup Frye contends that, “Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes … It represents a conflict of ideas rather than of character” (Frye 309). The comic element is increased, in comparison to Socratic dialogue, because it is released from the confining aspects of history and memoir that limit the Socratic genre. There is an “extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention" that makes room for “fantastic lands” and “extraordinary life situations” (Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 114) — like a raft floating down the Mississippi River, on which, for instance, an orphaned white boy and a “runaway” slave can travel as father and son, fleeing the potential freedom of the North for the underworld of the South.

In Percival Everetts novel *James,* a 2024 pastiche of Mark Twain’s novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the first person narrator and protagonist is no longer Huck, but James (formerly Jim) who is not only presumably a runaway slave, but also Huck’s biological father. By renaming the novel, Everett doesn’t just reposition the perspective of the

protagonist, he changes the genre of the novel: to slave narrative. And in Menippean manner, the body lowest on the social scale has the narrative in his power. While James is literate and capable of reflecting philosophically on the discrepancies in the American idea of liberty, he, in a strong Socratic gesture, simulates slave dialect and humble stupidity in order to seem as illiterate and simple as slave owners and white people would expect him to be. As will become more clear later in this project, in Part III.ii. on the Gothic, the image of a Black man and slave speaking in a cultivated English style spurs "epistemological vertigo" in those who are looking and listening (even in Huck) because the discrepancy between appearance and language creates a crisis in the normative signifier-signified relationship of the viewer (Weinstock 9). But what is at stake here is not the "right" of smart and amiable James to be free: "'Ain't no such thing as rights," James says (72). Instead, the discourse (including the many Socratic dialogues between James and Huck), questions the idea that the identity of a human being has to do with something called race, and that this can be read off a person's face, like the facade of a building or the cover of a novel.

On their journey, James carries with him a heavy sack of books, which makes him look even more foolish, since, presumably, as a slave, he cannot read. When Huck falls asleep, James is tempted to take out one of the books and read it, so he weighs the potential consequences. James comes to the conclusion that nobody who sees him with a book will necessarily suspect that he is actually reading it. "At that moment the power of reading made itself clear and real to me. If I could see the words, then no one could control them or what I got from them. They couldn't even know if I was merely seeing them or reading them, sounding them out or comprehending them. It was a completely private affair and completely free and, therefore, completely subversive" (73). The moment when Huck is sleeping and

James is reading is symbolic for the powerfully subversive act of secretly acquiring knowledge for those who are supposed to remain uneducated in order to uphold the hegemonic "narrative illusion."

James pulls a book out of the bag and begins to read: "*In the country of Westphalia*…" (73). The choice of Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* reflects the situation on a meta level and with Menippean sophistication: The Schelmenroman is an early example of the picaresque novel and a narrative propelled forward by the homelessness and wise simplicity of the protagonist (at a further point in the text, James also meets Cunégonde). In Everett's novel, Menippean satire happens through the conflation of wisdom and foolishness in the poor and lowly protagonist: the protagonist's agency is primarily relevant as a philosophical question in itself, and not as an instigator of plot. Later in the novel, for instance, when Huck has found out that he is indeed James's biological son, he begins to speak in "slave dialect" (James is the narrator):

> "We's best be gettin' out of here," Huck said.
>
> I looked at him in the moonlight.
>
> "Where fo we be headin'?" Huck went on.
>
> "Why are you talking like that?"
>
> "I be yo son, so by law I be a slave."
>
> "Like I said, I don't know what the law says about you. But stop talking like that. You sound ridiculous. Besides, you don't know the language."
>
> "Then you gotta teach it to me." (255-256)

Again, in Menippean satire "[t]he issue is precisely the testing of an idea, of a truth, and not the testing of a particular human character" (Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 114). By definition dialogic it cannot and does not stray into monological postulations. Modes of Menippea are any "violations of the generally accepted and customary course of events, norms of behavior and etiquette, including manners of speech" (118). In the above quote from the novel, the idea that anyone can determine who a human being is by a category called race, or by her skin color or his dialect, is mocked and undermined (as Toni Morrison has also endeavored to show in her novel *Home*). The text of Everett's novel tests the reader's preconceptions of truth and their "novelistic illusion." Fun is made; laughter echoes, but what is presented is not explicitly funny. Everett takes the idea of the wise fool to its ultimatum: The educated Black man must play the simpleton, even toward his son, or he will literally lose his life, as indeed happens when a friend of James's is burned at the stake for stealing a pencil stub.

Menippean satire inhabits the novel through its persiflage of Socratic access to knowledge: As a "narrative epistemology" it becomes a metaphor for the institutional denial of education toward the oppressed. Historically, writes Bakhtin, the novel develops through "immediate stages of familiarization and laughter" made possible by life on the road ("Epic and Novel" 15). Through the novel's persistent and definitive experimentation with new and Other forms of telling and being, Other ontologies are felt and become known. Bakhtin puts it this way: "When the novel becomes the dominant genre, epistemology becomes the dominant discipline" ("Epic and Novel" 15). In this sense, the novel, in its ambivalence and formlessness, pays tribute to the Socratic devise that we know that we know nothing. In fact, Bakhtin comes close to naming Socrates the inventor of the novel: "Socratic laughter

(reduced to irony) and Socratic degradations (an entire system of metaphors and comparisons borrowed from the lower spheres of life…) bring the world closer and familiarize it in order to investigate it fearlessly and freely" ("Epic and Novel" 25). In Everett's novel, Socratic dialogue is implemented to mock the Socratic virtue of wise ignorance as a hegemonic convenience for suppressing Others. For Bakhtin, however, Socratic dialogue, a staple of Menippean satire, represents a subversive strategy of representing truth as relative and dialogical.

In his novel *Huck out West* Robert Coover sheds the ongoing and debatable definition of Huck as picaro and constitutes him in Coyote style: As a homeless underdog in the Wild West, Huck merges traits of the picaro and Coyote tales. In the novel, Huck and Tom are adults making their way within the paradigm of opportunity that the frontier represents. The central philosophical dialogues consist of Huck's conversations with his Native American friend Eeteh and those he has with his old childhood friend Tom, as well as the private reflective dialogues he has with himself in which he weighs the validity of his two friends' discourses. Huck lives a hybrid life between settler and Native cultures, sleeping soundly in a tepee, speaking both languages, but simultaneously torn between his loyalty to Tom Sawyer's stories which are lived and told in Chivalric Romance "adventure time" (with its unlimited violence, racism and misogyny), and his fascination with the stories of Coyote, which his friend Eeteh tells him. Here is an excerpt from one of Eetah's Coyote stories:

> The peyote that Snake et [sic] give him visions of the beginnings and endings of things, and those visions led him to concluding that nothing mattered in the world no more and everything, even boils and pustules, was funny. Coyote laughed along with him, and then when he was well

> again, he killed both Snake and his woman and cooked them up with prairie onions, wild mushrooms, and buffalo berries, and et them, saying he hoped Snake got the joke and didn't take revenge whilst he was passing through. (149)

Coyote fascinates Huck not only because of his versatility with regard to his own values and his steadfastness with regard to his personal priorities, but also because of his resilience to death. Indeed, he is a character closely related to the picaro. In his introduction to *Lazarillo de Torres,* Michael Alpert summarizes, "The world of the *picaro* is a harsh and cruel one, of cold, hunger and blows; a world of the *burla*, the cruel practical joke, and of thieves, tricksters and murderers" (xiv). Since an important constituent of "dialogism" is also literary intertextuality, within the context of carnival, modes of episodic adventure time and the picaro (with his droll religion of superstition and keen survival skills) are often rendered in discursive dialogue with modes of the serious pedagogical experience and personal growth of the Bildungsroman. This literary dialogism is also evident in Huck's inconclusive maturation in the original *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In Coover's novel, the discourses of Coyote and Native American myth join the dialogism that is already at play in Twain's original work.

The parallel metonymies for homeless lifestyles that Huck lives (as represented in Tom's Romance and Eeteh's Coyote narratives), represent life-designs *for* or *against* which Huck must make responsible choices — in the manner of the Bildungsroman. Trying to persuade him to join him in the adventure of battle, Tom, who has by now raped, married, impregnated and ditched Becky, tells Huck, "Trouble is, Huck, you never growed up. You're still living in some dream of a world that don't exist" (193). But in a Menippean plot twist, Huck, guided by Coyote, rides a wild black stallion to the land of the dead. Enriched by the

experience of death, he realizes that a homeless life is the only life for him. “I turned my back on him,” Huck says of Tom; and of Eeteh he says: “Eeteh, who don’t believe in nothing, not even Coyote, says it was Coyote who hitched him up again to his spirit side” (118). Eeteh tells Huck: “‘Laughing all we have. Hahza. No Great Spirits. Only laughing” (118). In Menippean manner, Huck laughs and raises the whisky-jug.

Finally, then, Coyote is presented as more than just a protagonist of Native American lore. As Gary Snyder summarizes, he represents, psychologically, “something within ourselves which is creative, unpredictable, contradictory: trickster human nature” (75). Coyote tales have “Dadaistic energy” (Snyder 81). They are non-contingent *and* resilient to modern humanist forms of interpretation. They combine the tragic with the comic, and they follow the chronotope of “adventure time.” In American fiction, Coyote is in dialogue with his European counterpart the picaro; together, these homeless brothers constitute a hybrid form of Menippean satire unique to American literature.

In Menippean satire, the free, fantastic and often “symbolic” treatment of philosophical ideas is in “organic combination” with homelessness and “crude slum naturalism” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 115). While in Lucian, Menippus is able to change his perspective and gaze upon humankind from both heaven (the moon) and hell (Hades), according to Bakhtin, “the adventures of truth on earth take place on the high road, in brothels, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, marketplaces, prisons, in the erotic orgies of secret cults” (115). In Gus Van Sant’s film *My Own Private Idaho*, the relationship at the center of the story, between Scott and Mike, consists of a homoerotic version of the friendship between Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn (and between Neal Cassidy and Dean Moriarty) and transfers the story to the milieu of urban male prostitution in Portland in the

early 1990s. In the film, homelessness might, at first sight, pose as a liberating ontology that facilitates "boyish" sexual freedom among a group of homeless male youth. It is, however, also the source of their entanglement in a cycle of prostitution that survival on the streets demands of them. In other words, the unconventional lives they lead are ambivalent in their "primitve simplicity" and "homoerotic boyish adventure" because they must sell their bodies to live this life, and to survive it. In this interpretation of homelessness, comedy goes grotesque and carnival goes Gothic.

In the picaresque mode, Mike Waters (River Phoenix) is the offspring of an incestuous relationship between his brother and mother — a fatherless homeless youth whose mother has disappeared. He survives on the street as a hustler and gigolo and suffers from narcolepsy in situations of stress. He is part of a gang led by Bob Pigeon, a fat old homeless man who is famously based on Falstaff from Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Mike's best friend is Scott Favor (Keanu Reeves), a rich boy gone slumming who is loosely based on *Henry V*'s Hal, but also reflects Tom Sawyer's reckless addiction to adventure. Scott is the estranged son of the former Mayor of Portland. He lives on the street, joins the gang and also works as a male prostitute, both for the experience of it all and in order to antagonize his father who is to him a stark symbol of "officialdom." While Mike is gay, Scott is "gay-for-trade."

The narrative is split into four parts according to their settings: Seattle/Portland, Idaho, Italy, and Portland again. In the film, Mike's homeless journey (while taking him to Idaho and Italy) is centered in the urban context of Portland, Oregon. Not only does this shift from Twain's rural to Van Sant's urban setting change the "mood" of the story, it has formal implications for the chronotopic structure of the narrative, as well as for the realization of carnival. As Raymond Williams explains in his study *The Country and the City*, "powerful

feelings have gathered and have been generalized" around the idea of human settlements — both positive and negative. While the country is defined by ideas of "peace, innocence, and simple virtue," its image is also influenced by "hostile associations" that make it a place of "backwardness, ignorance, and limitation." The city, meanwhile, resonates with positive notions of "learning, communication, and light" but is also associated with traits like "noise, worldiness, and ambition" (1). These preconceptions influence representations of homelessness: While *My Own Private Idaho* is propelled forward by Mike's quest to survive and to return home by finding his lost mother, and by Scott's "crusade" to escape home, have grand adventures and provoke his father, it is also generated by the dynamics created in the fluctuation between urban and rural ideas of carnival that are tinged with the Gothic and the grotesque.

The film is Menippean through its bricolage of formal modes and carnival devices: the motorcycle and recurring highway as elements of the road novel, the hustler strip as "high road" and "marketplace" (Bakhtin) that makes meetings and dialogism possible in a queer community, and the editing of graphic sex scenes in a collage of black and white film stills. The scenes that take place in a decrepit city mansion that an elderly woman has opened to the homeless are defined by what Bakhtin calls, "scenes of battles, thrashings, uncrownings, as well as games and fortune-telling" (*Rabelais and His World* 244). Like Tom, Scott devises tricks and like Huck, Mike plays along, in order to unmask the folly and hypocrisy of Bob, their self-appointed leader. These scenes are adorned in dialogic citations from *Henry V*, creating, in Menippean style, the conflation of high and low languages, as represented in Shakespeare's play itself. And while in Shakespeare and *Huck Finn* the device of cross-dressing is contrived as a ploy of carnival, in *My Own Private Idaho* the masquerade is

extended into what might be called cross-classing — that is, the mobility across class lines as a subversive act, in which Agnes Heller's more dismissive notion of "geographical promiscuity" is rewritten as a positive form of sexual freedom.

In her essay "Where Are We at Home?" Agnes Heller posits "geographical promiscuity" in a binary with "geographical monogamy" in order to demonstrate the difference between the inherently human devise of "privileging one, or certain, places against all the others" and the deconstructed notion of home that 'takes place' in mobility (1). She does so in order to make general philosophical assumptions about humanity and home. But in LGBTQ "narrative epistemologies," homelessness can be implemented in order to create chronotopes of carnival that can liberate LGBTQ ontologies from the surveillance of the hegemony, and from the "unhomely." As an example of Heller's metaphor realized in fiction, the short stories of Garth Greenwell imply that geographical mobility can represent a form of liberation from the surveillance suffered in geographical sedentariness. The short stories which appear separately in magazines like *The New Yorker*, are published as a short story cycle in book form, thereby offering a form of "adventure time" that underscores the brevity of the relationships that the single protagonist experiences. Greenwell's stories of the emotional and physical homelessness of queer men (like Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room*) depict the love-lives of expatriates in Europe who can live their sexuality within "harbors" of mobility and anonymity, symbolized by subversive semi-public sexual acts in conventional hotel rooms, bus stop shelters and public restrooms. The public spaces of foreign places, Greenwell implies, are more private than the private spaces of familiar places. In his essay "The World and the Home," the postcolonial literary critic Homi Bhabha depicts the uncanny "intricate invasions" of domestic space (of both the physical and the intellectual homes of

body and mind) by “the unhomely” when “the public and the private become part of each other” (4). When this happens, the public invades the private through physical and intellectual surveillance, and the private necessarily finds refuge in the public. Without using Bhabha’s terminology, Greenwell seems to be implying that at home, the “unhomely” usurps the privacy and intimacy of physical and intellectual shelters, while abroad, “geographical promiscuity” becomes, at least potentially, a positive reality.

In *My Own Private Idaho*, the liberation from the “unhomely” is pursued within the carnival: the masquerade lived in the city setting and the road trip in the country. And yet “geographical promiscuity” is relativized in its potential as a subversive act when it is combined with the real ontic homelessness of very young adults. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development there is an overrepresentation of LGBTQ youth among the young people who are homeless because of the homophobic sentiments inherently existent inside their family homes: For these young people from the LGBTQ community, “homelessness or the threat of homelessness frequently forces [them] into survival behaviors that jeopardize their wellbeing and safety” (HUD exchange). In the café that Mike, Scott and their homeless friends frequent, the camera catches the stories of various homeless youth, who, as actors in the film, are actually kids off the Portland streets. In a kind of casual soliloquy (engaging their viewing audience through the lens), these teenage boys share intimate details of dates gone wrong: of being raped, abused and cheated by clients. In this way, the carnival of the street, and the freedom and anonymity that homelessness presumably offers, is put into perspective.

In another scene, which takes place in an erotic shop, Scott, Mike and their friends are depicted on the covers of gay erotic magazines that are on display in a magazine stand. In a

satirical turn, they begin to talk, addressing the viewer, highlighting the differences between queer and straight hustlers. While the satire of this scene is called forth through the adolescent authority that they express about their trade, they continue to exist on display and as victimized commodity. And indeed, the pose that Mike strikes on his magazine cover is sarcastically reminiscent of Christ: Next to the blurb "Pillars of the Roman Empire," and wearing a only a white loin cloth, Mike is stretched out on a wooden beam, salaciously caressing his own chest and stomach: a quandary interpretation of victim and perpetrator, saint and sexualized rogue. Mike's ambivalent identity is a comment on the discrepancies surrounding the implied sexual freedom that homelessness presumes to offer: 1) in the context of Leslie Fielder's thesis concerning the centrality of male homoeroticism in American narrative, 2) in the prevalence of "geographical promiscuity" in queer narrative texts, and 3) with regard to children and very young adults that are, like Boxcar Bertha and Mike Waters *forced* to embrace a promiscuous lifestyle that is defined by free-will.

The balance between carnival and Gothic tilts towards the latter when Mike and Scott go to Idaho. However, the contrast between carnival and Gothic is initially underlined by the campfire scene that introduces this part of their journey. The campfire, as fundamental metaphor for mobile home and carnival, creates an environment of light and shadows which evades the surveillance of the hegemonic spotlight, but brings selectively to light what has been hidden in the shadows. In this scene of rough-sleeping-domesticity, Mike spontaneously professes his love for Scott. This is the most purely dialogic scene of the film. In a film in which sex metaphorically represents the potential of heteroglossia within the power struggles of capitalist society, it is the only sex scene based on love, friendship and respect. Through its placement at the center of the film's narrative progress, it sheds light on the grotesque

corporality of commercialized sex and introduces the Gothic turn that the rural context brings about.

While they are not historic examples of Gothic architecture, the buildings and shelters in the rural scenes that follow, can be interpreted as Gothic because of their remote locations and impermanent designs: The mobile home and the motel are definitive shelters for the transient. The trailer that Mike's older brother Richard lives in stands next to the actual house Mike was raised in by his single mother and his brother. It is not explicitly explained why Richard lives in the trailer and not in the house, but his extreme poverty is connoted in many details, like, for instance, when Scott discovers Alpo dog food as a staple in Richard's pantry. Consequentially, the house, which is too expensive to live in, stands mockingly empty and acts merely as a prop when it is referenced only from the outside in 16mm home video film clips depicting Mike as a baby with his mother and brother. These anonymously filmed clips of his dysfunctional family in front of their house (accompanied by eerie music) make up the memory flash-backs that overcome Mike and lead to his narcoleptic fits.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard constructs an entire philosophy on the refuge and creativity that safe buildings can offer us within our imagination, the terror and psychological conflicts that negatively connoted architectures evoke, and the poetic potential that originates in memories conjured by buildings. When Mike visits his brother with Scott, Richard retells the story he has invented to explain their mother's fugitivity. According to Richard, their mother murdered Mike's father at a drive-in theater by shooting him in the head, an act that led to her being committed to an "institution." Through the terror that Richard spreads about the mad mother, combined with Mike's muddled awareness that his brother is really his father, the potential carnival that the genre of the road trip offers is

transferred into that of Gothic horror, which, in turn, is provoked by flashbacks of the house and the incestuous family situated geographically outside of the safe space that it potentially has to offer. In Mike's case, then, his memories of the house represent an intrusion of the past into the present through the haunting of incest: The Gothic paradigm of the haunted home supersedes the carnival chronotope of the road.

In the film a pattern ensues in which the extent of destitution and the form of homelessness that Mike and Scott experience generates changes in the generic paradigms constructing the narrative. When Mike and Scott's quest in search of Mrs. Waters leads them to Italy, the literary mode changes from Gothic to pastoral, another "low" genre, defined as such through its depiction of the low rural social class of the shepherd and through its low ranking on the hierarchy of subgenres. Following sections of the film associated with novel genres like the novel of the picaro (Portland) and the Gothic novel (Idaho), there is a shift in the generic paradigm toward the pastoral which effects a regression into a genre historically prior to the novel and therefore monological (that is, resistant to dialogism, chronotopicity and the carnival). Leslie Fiedler writes, "[T]he novel is the long-delayed answer of the lower classes to the courtly pastourelle, the love debate of shepherdesses and noblemen, which ends typically with a tumbling in the hay" (Fiedler 72). With the introduction of the poor but fair sheperdess from a poverty-stricken Italien farm, a young woman with whom Scott (in turn the nobleman) falls in love, as well as within the simple domesticity of their daily routine of meals and sex, a shift in genre comes about. This change in genre, from carnival and Gothic to pastoral causes Mike and Scott's close dialogic relationship to decompose. When Scott finally inherits his money, the couple abandons Mike and returns to the United States, where again the genre shifts. At the end of the film Scott returns to his Bildungsroman, and, like

Lucius, all the more wise for his experiences in cross-classing, reenters his own coming-of-age narrative at its close. In a three piece suit, as a wealthy and mature adult and husband, he launches a political career in his father's footsteps. Mike, on the other hand, returns to his picaresque roots: After a deep and disorienting sleep on the airplane (similar to Huck's slumber in his canoe), he returns to his rogue existence on the streets of Portland. While in carnival they could travel together, the journey through the Gothic into the pastoral makes Mike and Scott's roads part by way of the literary implications that their specific genres bring about.

The idea that mobility, that "geographical promiscuity," could offer *permanent* shelter has been dismantled. The first scene of the film remains uninterpretable until the end: The scene, which depicts a date between Mike and a much older man, consists of parallel editing which intercuts the sex scene with footage of a dilapidated prairie farmhouse (or stable) that comes crashing down from the sky during the moment of Mike's climax. On the one hand, the scene represents discrepancies with regard to desire and abuse inherent to commercialized sex. On the other hand, the dilapidated house, which falls to its destruction as though expelled by a tornado from Oz, is a metaphor for the demolition of notions of home that posit it as a refuge for non-normative intimacies. The film is novel through its carnival ontologies: through its dialogism it encompasses the complexity of life. And as a representation of this comeplexity, all three rewrites respond via dialogism to the generically homeless and ambivalent novel *Huckleberry Finn*.


**Los Angeles, 2019**

Coffey, Sean. "Study confirms serious health problems, high trauma rates among unsheltered people in U.S." *UCLA Newsroom*, 7 Oct 2019, https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/serious-health-conditions-trauma-unsheltered-homeless.

# 3. On the Street

## 3.1 Of Filth and Faith

The works of narrative prose discussed in part 2 access the comedy of life's tragedies through the seriocomic juxtaposition of profound tribulation and carnival laughter within the representation of a homeless ontology. Their allegiance to carnival, chronotopicity, dialogism and therefore polyphony, represents a significant attempt to secure subversive release from "hostile architecture" and invests them within the generic "homelessness" of the novel (Bakhtin "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" 59). As a blueprint for the novel, the experience of homelessness provides a paradigm that not only dismantles epic distance but also provides the foundation for American themes like plurality, free will, self-reliance, individual exceptionalism and the right to self-invention. As a trope, homelessness becomes a metaphor for the novel itself.

As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht explains, the definitive generic trait of the novel is its capacity to perpetually reinvent itself: "Over and again, the novel transformed and complexified its structure by staging itself as an anti-novel in relation to a previously established standard" (628). The novel not only produces novel forms, it is, in its essence, novel. In his essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin claims that "laughter paved the way for the impiety of the novelistic discourse" (59). With his use of the word "impiety," Bakhtin applies the idea of self-invention as not faithful to generic guidelines and repositions it within a paradigm of theological hierarchies defined by the high

and the low, gentility and vulgarity, obedience and disobedience — only to reverse the hierarchy of these binaries so that the latter is what is to be strived for in literature. Dissidence, Bakhtin posits, is what makes the novel *definitively new.* The potential of novelistic prose as subversive mimetic art relies on its formal reiteration of change — which is also its theme.

As mentioned in Part 1, most critics agree with Bakhtin that Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, now usually called *The Golden Ass*, is an early (if not the earliest) example of a narrative in the novel (and Menippean) mode. Because of its interest in the development in character of the protagonist that comes about through his (partly picaresque) experiences on the road and amongst the destitute, the text can also, arguably, be considered the first Bildungsroman. The processes of character evolution are not biographical (from birth to childhood to adulthood and old age); instead the structure distinguishes important events, and focuses on crisis and growth. Bakhtin recognizes this emphasis on change as novel when he writes, "Metamorphosis serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its more important moments of *crisis*; for showing *how an individual becomes other than what he was*" ("Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" 115, Bakhtin's emphasis). Lucius, after being transformed from man to donkey and back to man again, becomes a priest, which has both religious and social implications. Change, which occurs chronotopically (horizontally and vertically) is the generator of narrative, and homelessness is the necessary antecedent.

When Bakhtin describes the novel's fidelity to change and its consistent dissent from philological credence as an act of impiety, he simultaneously recognizes the generic influence of hagiography as a formal precursor of the novel. Hagiography focuses on crisis and rebirth,

on the image of the sinner (before) and the redeemed or saint (after), with the part of his or her life devoted to askesis, or the purification through suffering, in between ("Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" 115-116). Hagiography, however, implements stories with the motivation of creating a unity of type and a totality of human purpose that is in conflict with the subjectivity of life-experience in the novel. The novel is a modern genre that disclaims the belief that a reconciliation with God in death is the aim of life's journey. In *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács, therefore, places the rise of the novel within the historical transition of humanity into a secularized society. By doing so, Lukács, who was influenced by Hegel, also posits the structure of the Bildungsroman as homologous to the evolution of knowledge when he posits that the journey of the "transcendental homeless" in search of "totality" can, by definition, never come to an end: By arriving home in philosophical and philological truth, the "transcendental homeless," who is devoid of faith, would die a final death. The novel (as a transcendentally homeless protagonist itself), surrenders, by definition, any aesthetic ambition of representing the "totality" of life. For, by attaining its final form, the novel would deconstruct its own plural identity, and therefore would no longer be novel.

The evolution of the novel, as discussed in the introduction of this project, records a "historico-philosophical" transition in ideas of human agency. Much of the action that produces crisis and change in pre-novelistic literature comes about through "hard luck" or "good fortune" (the intervention of the gods or the grace of God). With the increase in agency of the individual within Humanistic discourses, the responsibility for change in narrative prose is transferred to the protagonist whose aspirations and life choices determine his or her "fate." Simultaneously, modes of novelness, which, according to Bakhtin, have lurked within fictional texts since antiquity, join with Enlightenment philosophies of subjective mimesis in

order to incite the evolutionary processes of *the* novel as a genre. The novel, therefore, embodies a dialectic in itself. Its mimetic claim relies on its disloyalty to its own modes of representation and its consequential loyalty to the representation of change as an expression of reality. Realism for the novel is change in theme and form, and the challenges to realism are what simultaneously destroy and sustain it.

Realism is a mimetic postulation and narrative mode, as well as an epoch. As a literary epoch Realism produced prose that negotiated life within realms of probability and paved the way for the transition from Romanticism to Modernism during the late nineteenth century. As narrative mode realism has acted as a catalyst for the literary evolution of the novel: by reducing the status of its heroes (from gods and kings to equals and inferiors), by exchanging epic myth for novelistic contingency, and by dropping high modes of storytelling for the low and ironic ones (Bradbury 321). As mimetic force, it is best considered in terms of its effect on the reader, by remaining within their terms of probability and as fulfilling their expectations of what reality is — the "narrative illusion," in Brooks's terms. As Frederic Jameson explains in *The Antinomes of Realism*, the realist mode works its realism by forcing its way towards "a scenic present" (11). That is, the strength of its mimetic assertion has "its genealogy in storytelling and the tale," but "its future dissolution in the literary representation of affect" (10). While Realism is narrative with high claims to descriptive purity, its reality comes about through "affective investment" in the readerly act. This seems to resound Poe's ideas of the effect of the gothic tale or short story on the reader that can only be procured in the uninterrupted intensity of one sitting. (I will return to this later in part 3.2).

If Realism escorts literary history through the transition from Romanticism to Modernism, then Naturalism realizes the shorter transition from Realism to Modernism.

Naturalism attempts to render reality even more realistically than Realism — with even lower characters, vernacular language, scientific accuracy and medical candor that constructs an image of life that, in its pessimism and alienation, can merge into the Modernist urban grotesque. It is a mode that evades its own potential for carnival when it takes on an anti-humanistic position that, in its refutal of free will and agency, is concerned with humanity as a species helplessly exposed to external social, political and economic forces. In Naturalism the "narrative illusion" of Realism is deconstructed when the attempt at familiarization no longer leads to empathy, but turns back on itself as defamiliarization and estrangement. In this way, as Northrup Frye explains, the distance between writer and subject, between reader and protagonist becomes, ironically, more remote (Bradbury 323). This emotional distancing is due to an aesthetic displacement that occurs when the "narrative illusion" is exposed to an epistemological crisis. It also forces the narrator to turn to other modes of telling that are far more eccentrically fictional, like hagiography and the Gothic, in order to reestablish a sense of authority within that crisis: Both in Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and Marilynne Robinson's *Lila* this process of refamiliarization comes about through the (generic) citation of narratives of Christian saints, but also through horrific undertones that evoke the Gothic.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the representation of the unsheltered in Realism and Naturalism with an emphasis on texts depicting homeless women. Not only do homeless women fare very differently from Leslie Fiedler's happy-go-lucky white homeless boy-men, but narratives of their necessary fate as prostitutes and their ordained deaths seem to represent significant ambivalences when their claims to realism are reiterated by hagiographic and Gothic intimations. In Stephen Crane's *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and in Marilynne Robinson's novel *Lila* (2014) the generic ambivalences between Naturalism

or Realism and hagiography evoke a Gothic undercurrent through the narrative resurgence of pre-Enlightenment discourses concerning damnation and grace: that is, through the revival of Puritan contingencies of divine election within discourses of Victorian moral piety (in Crane) and a re-grounding of the subject within Christian discourses after the volatility of postmodernism and poststructuralism (in Robinson).

Both novels depict children and their transition into adulthood on the street. Both are named after their heroins and explore processes of poverty, abuse and homelessness in their lives as young women. Crane's novel takes place in the urban-industrialized context of New York City at the end of the nineteenth century, while Robinson's is set in rural Iowa in the 1930s, during and after the Great Depression. In Stephen Crane's *Maggie,* a canonized Naturalist novel, the protagonist *falls* from the violence and destitution of her home-life in the tenements of New York City into the even deeper annihilating constraints of prostitution and death that life on the streets prescribes for her. Crane uses established stylistic devices of Muckraking journalism like vernacular language, detailed description, decrepit settings, and gross physicality in order to underline his authority as a social critic of the Gilded Age. But in order to keep the text on its realist course, he also implements religious symbolism and irony as an antidote to the demfamiliarization that occurs through the crassness of the Naturalist discourse.

In Marilynne Robinson's contemporary realist novel *Lila* (2014), the protagonist *ascends* from a childhood and young adulthood defined by homelessness and prostitution toward a fulfilled life as reverend's wife and blessed mother. In a literary context posterior to Modernism and postmodernism, the narrator in *Lila* uses devices categorical to Menippean satire in order to promote a form of realism that musters its authority through its intertextual

relationship with biblical and hagiographic texts: Socratic dialogue on cryptic religious themes, the restrained simplicity and seductive tangibility of (biblical) lyrical prose, the perspective from below and the (metaphorical) rise from the dead are devices attributed to the Menippean mode that can be and, in this case, must be reinterpreted within Christian poetics. For they are ambivalent about their implementation as devices of dissidence from "officialdom" in that they underscore narratives of the homeless experience with a hagiographic blueprint in which a metaphorical rise from the dead (and from poverty) is made narratively possible through faith.

If America is the land of reinvention, and the novel is the genre of reinvention, then the Gothic is the literary mode that permits that which has been dismissed during reinvention, to haunt the new. In Crane's *Maggie* the supposedly bygone fatalistic discourses of Puritan divine election engage in an ironic form of dialogue with more modern ideas of Social Darwinism. In *Lila*, Robinson offers Puritan and Calvinist doctrines of predestination as a consolation, both for renegotiating responsibility and for bringing about a grounding of the subject after the ontological crisis of postmodernism and poststructuralism. In both cases the narrative epistemology of hagiography contributes to realism as mimetic aspiration because it stabilizes the text by guaranteeing empathetic familiarization between reader and protagonist. While comparing Crane and Robinson's novels, some references will be made to further narrative efforts to depict female homelessness "realistically," like Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl* (a novel staged as testimony) and the docudrama *Nomadland.*

In his book *The American Puritan Imagination*, Sacvan Bercovitch shows how the Puritans' narrative epistemology permeates the American imaginary. "Having raised America

(past, present, and to come) into redemptive history, they imposed upon it the allegory of the saint's life" (12). And, as we have seen in Bakhtin's discussion on hagiography, the template of sinning-suffering-rising is structurally present in the foundations of the architecture of the novel. Yet how much agency can be granted these protagonists when the life of a saint (or martyr) must be lived forward but can only be understood backwards, that is, when a life is only given meaning and value in hindsight, after death? While in Catholic poetics life's meaning *is* suffering and redemption comes about in death itself with its gift of everlasting life, in American fiction's absorption of Puritan hagiography, God's grace isn't proven through suffering per se, but through the alleviation of suffering — at best through the mitigation of poverty and the advancement material prosperity.

In the United States, and in the Puritan tradition of the conversion narrative, redemption belongs to the public spheres of life (Caldwell). At the same time, the homeless infiltrate the stage of our public lives as invisible witnesses to our comings and goings, doings and not doings. In the BBC series *Sherlock Holmes*, for example, Sherlock considers the unhoused his accomplices in solving crime; the homeless are his "network," the invisible eyes and ears of the city. While redemption in Puritan Congregationalism was proven through contingent interpretations of success and affluence, in post-Enlightenment fiction redemption's *source*, the antecedent to prosperity, shifts from faith to knowledge (which is not to say education): the redeemed modern American man is one who contributes to Humanist aspirations of spiritual Enlightenment by acquiring knowledge in the form of "street smarts," and then using these to further his socio-economic climb.

Homeless male protagonists, such as the picaro and the youth of the Bildungsroman, go unnoticed when they enter the public scene. In fact, that is the appeal of the picaro as a

literary figure. That he remains invisible to the characters he reflects upon only increases his authority as naive ("objective") observer. In contrast, the apprentice, who is yet to be discovered as an individual, takes to the road in the Bildungsroman in order to seek recognition — that is the whole point of his growing up. Their female counterpart, however, experiences public acknowledgment in a very different way; not only is she, if invisible insider, usually a domestic servant or prostitute, but when she does take to the road, she risks "geographical promiscuity" (Heller). From the picara Moll Flanders (who engages in horizontal and vertical promiscuous mobility) to the (anti)heroins of the captivity narrative, from Lilly Barth in Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* to Crane's Maggie Johnson, the fall, no matter from what height, is a public matter for which she must provide a public appeal — whether it be her personal testimony (in the name of her own chastity) as in the captivity narrative, or through the surrendering of authority to the omniscient narrator and the domineering forces of milieu in Naturalism. In other words, male homeless protagonists negotiate the acquisition of knowledge and wealth. The female homeless, in contrast, are implemented in order to negotiate moral paradigms having to do with home, domesticity, procreation and sex. While the male protagonist *escapes* the surveillance of domesticity, going public in order to maintain his privacy, the female protagonist who leaves the home *enters* the public and moral spotlight of the hegemonic super ego.

Taking to the road or entering the street entails a chaperone who can be a husband, a mother or guardian, or even a child. In *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*, Maggie is not introduced until Chapter 2 — after a brawl among boys, and directly after a long paragraph positioning the story historically and geographically in the "dark region" of New York City. It is a scene in which the tenement houses come to life like a Hieronymous Bosch tableau

where filthy babies spill onto the street and ugly lazy women prefer gossip to child care. Before this backdrop, "[a] small girl dragged a red, bawling infant along the crowded ways" (6). Maggie, who at this point is but a small child herself, is introduced as babysitter and mother figure for the toddler Tommie. "Ah, Tommie, come ahn. Dere's Jimmie and fader. Don't be a-pullin me back" (6). While their father is on the scene, their mother is conspicuously absent, surrendering her responsibilities to her young daughter. While in the rest of the text, Maggie has very little to say, she has a voice and a will in this initial scene in which she herself expresses the burden her role as mother to her siblings represents. Maggie has aspirations (she finds a job, she decorates the apartment, she falls in love), but she is doomed by the milieu into which she was born and by the role she plays in it. By chapter four, Tommie is dead.

William Dean Howells, who was responsible for getting Stephen Crane's career going (even with such a controversial text as *Maggie*), called Crane's relatively short novel "Greek" because it exhibits the same "fatal necessity which dominates Greek tragedy" (Brennan 174). Maggie certainly ends badly, and her fall seems both mythological and tragic in the Greek sense that everything that happens to her seems determined. Quite in the Naturalist mode, Maggie is interpreted as a victim of her milieu: the abject environment of Rum Alley and the New York city tenements, as well as her poverty-stricken and dysfunctional family. Maggie's fall is extremely short, from destitution to homelessness to death; the narrative, literally, does not take up much space. And yet, while Maggie is plagued by the hardship of slum life, her actual fall, as Donald Pizer has shown, is induced by the middle class piety and morality that is imposed on her, even by her impoverished and indigent peers (191). Maggie's physical fall from tenement apartment to street parallels her moral fall from virgin to prostitute. The text

oscillates in its efforts to familiarize and defamiliarize the ontology of homelessness for the reader through a collage of styles that undermine the scientific and journalistic aspirations of Naturalism with religious symbolism and irony.

William Bysshe Stein recognizes in *Maggie* "a recurrent pattern of symbolic moral situations which is inspired by the New Testament" (170-173). These textual homologies are, however, inverted and become ironic through the reader's understanding that they are but a mockery: Maggie as Saint Magdalene, her mother Mary Johnson as the Mother of God (who laments the death of her child), Maggie as the prodigal son who returns home a sinner, Peter and James as two disciples who accompanied Christ on his journey to Calvary. Irony also permeates Maggie in her simplicity and her weakness for kitsch: citations of Romance (Maggie in her blind love for Pete considers him her Knight) and melodrama (Maggie is impressed by the "sophistication" of the shows they see which are actually cheep "Dreigroschenopern"). The recognition of irony entails both religious literacy and literary taste which raises the reader onto an intellectual pedestal from which he or she looks down on the activities of Rum Alley and Maggie's unpreventable fall.

And yet, unlike Zola's Nana, whose moral corruption is reflected in her grotesque disfiguring disease, Maggie's physical appearance is — uncannily — resistant to her moral decay: "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl. None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins" (16). Later on, the woman of brilliance and audacity describes Maggie's eyes as having "something in them about pumpkin pie and virtue" (49). Maggie's physical appearance does not coincide with her mobility and with conventional representations of such a moral fall. This ambivalence can go two ways, depending on the

"narrative illusion" that the reader brings with him or her: Either Maggie is a martyr, or she is a fake (like the "gnarled woman with the music box" who can "don, at will, an expression of great virtue" (10)).

Because Crane implements a complex collage of literary devices and modes, the text opens itself up to interpretations that stray from the Muckraking descriptions of the evils of social darwinism. The narrator might report, "In the mingled light and gloom of an adjacent park, a handful of wet wanderers, in attitudes of chronic dejection, was scattered among the benches" (52). But the narrator may also appeal to the readers "affective investment" though symbolism and irony, as in the final scene of Maggie's life when she is depicted as a prostitute roaming the streets. The chronology of the nine men that she approaches (and who diligently reject her) symbolizes her own fall. They are described in hierarchical order, beginning with the highest rung in class and descending down the ladder to the lowest rung: "A tall young man, smoking a cigarette with a sublime air … A stout gentleman, with pompous and philanthropic whiskers … A belated man in business clothes … A young man in light overcoat and derby … A laboring man … a boy … A drunken man … a ragged being with shifting bloodshot eyes and grimy hands." This descent down the social ladder goes on until she meets her final fate:

> When almost to the river the girl saw a great figure. On going forward she perceived it to be a huge fat man in torn greasy garments. His grey hair straggled down over his forehead. His small, bleared eyes, sparkling from amidst great rolls of fat, swept eagerly over the girl's upturned face. He laughed, his brown disordered teeth gleaming under grey, grizzled mustache from which beer drops dripped. His whole

body gently quivered and shook like that of a dead jelly fish.

Chuckling and leering, he followed the girl of the crimson legions. (53)

The expressionistic imagery of the pubs and vaudeville shows, and the more Gothic imagery of the tenement as monster (to which I will return shortly), come together in this image of the only man that will now “have" Maggie. And in his image, Maggie loses her pale visage and becomes, like the other prostitutes that have been described as grotesquely painted, “the girl of the crimson legions” (53). The reader is forced to wonder which of Maggie’s faces is the facade.

The futility of any attempt to escape this milieu is reflected in the narrative structure of the novel: While it carries her name as its title, Maggie’s own voice and point-of-view are explicitly secondary to the male voices in the text. This, however, is not to say that she is inconspicuous. The futility of her situation is starkly underscored by the surveillance that she is submitted to and the spotlight that she is caught under. As a child Maggie blends in with her environment: “When a child, playing and fighting with gamins in the street, dirt disguised her. Attired in tatters and grime, she went unseen” (16). As a child she still has the privacy of camouflage. But with adolescence she enters the spotlight of male desire and thereby the surveillance of society in general. To return to Howell’s comparison to the Greek Tragedy then: Once Maggie has become a woman, there seems to be only a passively compliant internal struggle concerning the fate that has been prescribed for her as a girl and woman. A dramatic soliloquy, in which she questions the doings of some divine presence, or even of her family or lover, is staged as a mockery of rhetorical significance (and as one that an audience cannot share). After Maggie has been rejected by her family and her seducer Pete, she wanders the streets and cries out to herself just once, “Who?” (50). Her one word soliloquy

takes on the form of a question addressed to the night (or to God). It is ambivalent about its subject (Who is responsible? Who can help?) and is heard by a man who is passing by. He stutters an answer and continues on, laughing, but laughing knowingly.

Maggie's alienation is completed through the encounter with a clergyman (with someone nearer to God) in which any potential for dialogue or dialogism is negated by the physical disgust the clergyman shows for Maggie: “[H]e gave a convulsive movement and saved his respectability by a vigorous side-step” (51). This physical reaction mirrors Maggie’s previous rejection by the patriarch of the Johnson household, her brother Jimmie: “Radiant virtue sat upon his brow and his repelling hands expressed horror of contamination” (48). As abject, Maggie represents the social death of the woman represented by her “geographical promiscuity”: “Soon the girl discovered that if she walked with such apparent aimlessness, some men looked at her with calculating eyes” (51). The wandering female is depicted in stark contrast to the high-browed vagrant male (Rousseau in Paris or Teju Cole in New York City) who roams the city streets in order to attune his thoughts to a more unified philosophical grasp of knowledge. The abject, which evokes this uncanny disgust, not only in the clergyman but also to that whole list of men who are described in hierarchical descent on the social ladder, represents, according to Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, “a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome” (2). As a woman of the streets, Maggie, precisely because she does not look like a “girl of the painted cohorts,” inspires a feeling of uncanny disgust. She is the in-between: Through the discrepancies between her innocent looks and her purportedly criminal actions the signifier “girl” conflates with “slut,” the signifier “mother" with “prostitute.” The abject, writes Kristeva, overwhelms

us, "when death … interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death" (5). When the idea of death infiltrates the holy image of motherhood (the mother who is supposed to keep her children safe and off the streets), the uncanny disgust of the abject is affected both in the gazer within the text, as well as in the reader. As a homeless young girl-woman, Maggie embodies the death of the mother before the child is grown.

In other words, the distress of poverty seems only to provide the setting for Maggie's physical skidding into the gutter, the real story is about her moral careening. *And* about who or what is responsible for this moral careening: "She had a bad heart, dat girl did…" says Maggie's mother (40). Mary Johnson is depicted as a violent drunken monster who curses and screams at her family and at the police. The narrator introduces her in an irate fury after Jimmie has been in a fight: "The mother's massive shoulders heaved with anger. Grasping the urchin by the neck and shoulder she shook him until he rattled" (7). After two pages of cursing and destruction of home and hearth she discards him: "At last she tossed him in the corner where he limply lay cursing and weeping" (8). Mary (as well as the other women in the text like the painted prostitutes and the "gnarled woman who possessed the music box") are abject because of their physical monstrosity, a monstrosity that exudes ambivalence. The mother is built and acts like a drunken troll, the sinister old woman can "don, at will, an expression of great virtue," and "the woman of brilliance and audacity" is painted to look grotesquely beautiful. Iris Marion Young (drawing on Martin Heidegger and Luce Irigaray) posits home as a "complex ideal" that is architected as "a nostalgic longing at the expense of women and of those constructed as Others, strangers, not-home, in order to secure this [male] fantasy of unified identity" (164). In *Maggie*, the nostalgic imaginary of the security of childhood home is brutally destroyed by the mother's violence towards her offspring and the

physical signifiers of household and home. The furniture (as symbol of comfort), the kitchen utensils and food (as symbols of nourishment), the curtains (as symbol of familial privacy) are constantly being bashed and thrown around, torn and broken. Mary's violent and unbridled agitation, therefore, is set in strict contrast to the bourgeois reader's controlled response of "calm passion."

The home, that "shelters daydreaming," in Gaston Bachelard's terms, is not only neglected by the women responsible for its thriving, it is literally *torn down*. Bachelard writes, "When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of revery, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live" (29). Warmth, temperance, material paradise, protection: Mary not only denies her family these things, she destroys them. Not a single woman in Crane's novel is capable of providing for a family. The irony comes to a peak in the last scene of the novel when Mary Johnson, after having cast her daughter out and thereby catapulted her to her death, admonishes Maggie's sins but finally forgives her ("Oh yes, I'll forgive her! I'll forgive her!" (58)). The irony is not lost on the reader who sees the mother as the greatest hypocrite of the novel, and as the original culprit behind Maggie's demise. The mother (not the (dead) father, not Pete or Jimmie) is responsible for keeping her child morally in line. The mother, who doesn't manage to keep her children home and off the street is responsible for the homelessness of so many children, and the adults that they become.

Metaphorically, the tenement house represents this monster of a mother:

> Eventually [Mr. Johnson and his children] entered into a dark region where from a careening building, a dozen gruesome doorways gave up

> loads of babies to the street and the gutter. A wind of early autumn raised yellow dust from cobbles and swirled it against a hundred windows. Long streamers of garments fluttered from fire-escapes. In all unhandy places there were buckets, brooms, rags and bottles. In the street infants played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles. Formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons, in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners. A thousand odors of cooking food came forth to the street. The building quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels. (6)

The building is personified as a female monster literally spitting, puking, shitting and birthing some sort of abhorrent human kind that procreates in excess. When carnival turns to Gothic, dialogism turns to monologism. The text screams: What has happened to our mothers? In Marilynne Robinson's *Lila* too, the birth of homeless babies is described as an event out of any one's control: "[Lila] had seen women bearing their children in a shed, at the side of a field, babies that the light of day shouldn't have seen for a month or two but the women's bodies just gave them up out of weariness" (103). And in both *Maggie* and Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl*, a mysterious woman dressed in black oversees the fall of the novel's heroins and grieves for what women used to be: In *Maggie* she is called "the mourner," and in *The Girl* she is the social worker Bradley, also known as "the shadow" (57-58, 156-157). The Gothic crumbling of buildings that house us, keep us safe and allow us to be creative; the decomposing of the maternal body that houses us, keeps us safe, and issues us safely into the

world; this breaking down of families and family; this collapse of tradition: While in "Icaromenippus," Lucian still looks down onto earth from his position on the shining moon (45), Maggie's brother Jimmie concludes that, "Deh moon looks like hell, don't it?" (16). In her essay "The Origin of Others," Toni Morrison explains that in Christian discourses the process of Othering, which in Maggie happens as much in Rum Alley as from above it, involves the simultaneous approaching and distancing of ourselves from Others that (referring to Jean-Paul Sartre's phrase "L'enfer c'est les autres"), "raises the possibility that 'other people' are responsible for turning a personal world into a public hell" (35).

Surveillance is a central topic in homelessness fiction about women, whether it be in modes of Naturalism, docudrama, or fictional testimony. When, after Maggie has left home with Pete, her mother refuses to take her back, she is described as descending the tenement stairs to the street under the piercing gaze of the neighbors; the women recoil and pull their children away from her. The judgement persists with Maggie in the limelight. "Through the open doors curious eyes stared at Maggie. Children ventured into the room and ogled her, as if they formed the front row at a theatre" (48). Half a page later, when she in the stairwell: "As the girl passed down the hall, she went before open doors framing more eyes strangely microscopic, and sending broad beams of inquisitive light into the darkness of her path" (48). Not only are the nosey neighbors reduced metonymically to their eyes ("curious eyes stared" and "doors framing eyes strangely microscopic"), but within that short procession of descriptive text, Maggie, in the glaring spotlight, is reduced to "the girl," a character type. Maggie's fall is finalized by her public display, first through the judgement of the women and children inside the building, then through the conviction of men outside on the street. And ironically, it is Maggie's mother who cries and points, "Dere she stands! Lookut her!" (48).

Despite the corporality, sex, vulgarity and noise, the text, obviously, destroys any carnival energy that Rum Alley might procure as a setting, through the terror of hegemonic surveillance. "[C]arnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators," Bakhtin emphasizes in *Rabelais and His World* (7).

In her novel *The Girl*, which was written in the 1930's but couldn't be published until 1978, Meridel Le Sueur depicts the terror with which homeless women are kept under surveillance. This story of a homeless young woman in the "dark city" of St. Paul, is told in first person vernacular, with much sexual candor, and as a kind of metonymical testimony on the sexualization of the lives of homeless women in general (hence the title, which echos Stephen Crane's deprecation of his own heroin from "Maggie" to "the girl"). The Girl, as she is called in the text, reports, "You can get so you can go on thinking and living in the streets because you got no home. The streets used to be only something you walked through to get someplace else, but now they are home to me" (148). Not only do the police follow the Girl, but a relief worker is assigned to lurk about her "like a shadow": "She gave me the willys, following me around everywhere I turn … I see her and my blood freezes right in my body, and the sweat comes in my hands and feet because I am scared, and there she is looking right above my head" (156-157). The slum Naturalism of *The Girl* (which resounds as a much more pessimistic and urban edition of *Boxcar Bertha*) turns Gothic through the moral spotlight that ensconces the protagonist. When she becomes pregnant, she is taken off the street and put into a relief-supported maternity home, a house of horrors where "fallen" women are kept under strict observation. The windows are locked and have alarms on them; women are treated with shock therapy, separated from their babies immediately after birth,

and threatened with sterilization. The potential of carnival existence that life on the road implies (even in *Boxcar Bertha*) is rewritten under the microscope: Christian and Puritan moral discourses concerning grace and damnation reemerge and infiltrate the text, bringing about, in the case of *The Girl*, the conflation of Marxist interpretations of slum Naturalism with Gothic terror.

In Marilynne Robinson's *Lila*, the surveillance that the protagonist feels is symbolic of divine surveillance and reflects her internal struggles concerning her emerging Chrisitan faith. Lila's journey begins in her childhood, when she is a victim of abuse and neglect, and follows her through important events and crises in her life: her kidnapping by the homeless woman Doll who nurtures her like a mother, their life on the road as migrant workers, her one year of schooling, the death of her adoptive mother, her work as a prostitute (her first sheltered existence is in a brothel), and her final redemption when, one rainy day, she spontaneously walks into a church in Gilead, Iowa and encounters her future husband and father of her child, the Reverend John Ames. The complex chronotopicity of the text consists of layers of narrative that describe the past (her homeless existence as a child with Doll) and the present (her "transcendental homelessness" in the strangeness of John Ames's Chrisitan household), along with the events leading up to her baptism (in which she lives in Gilead as a homeless woman). Surveillance is a feeling that persists in her life as the "unhomely" (Bhabha). It infiltrates her every move and decision, and keeps her perpetually on the verge of flight, even when she is carrying Ames's baby. And indeed, while John Ames's kindness is soothing, his looking after her (for example, his going to her shanty in the night to alleviate his own fears of her abandoning him), is a form of benevolent shepherding that is also filled with male notions of possession and his religious calling as a minister.

Her past, as well as those parts of the Gilead-present in which she is physically alone, are narrated in free indirect discourse, a narrative perspective that is ambivalent about agency in that it enters the consciousness of the protagonist but remains in the power of the narrator's surveillance. It is a lyrical prose that is filled with rhetorical questions — questions that echo unanswered. Her "loneliness" and "shame" (signifiers used repeatedly to describe her emotions) are reiterated through these queries (that function much like Maggie's "Who?"). Lila's coming to consciousness in this, her own, Bildungsroman, is symbolized by the learning processes represented by her readings and interpretations of excerpts from the Bible, her sinning and suffering, her reconciliation and redemption: "All right. She was mainly interested in reading that the people were a desolation and a reproach. She knew what those words meant without asking. In the sight of all that pass by. She hated those people, the ones that look at you as if they want to say, Why don't you get your raggedy self out of my sight" (125). Like Dean and Neal in Kerouac's *On the Road*, Lila finds respite from surveillance, and shelter from her transcendental estrangement, in the darkness and carnival space of the movie theater: "She went to the movies … And when she was sitting there in the dark, sometimes, when it was crowded, with somebody's arm or knee brushing against hers, she was dreaming some stranger's dream, everybody in there dreaming one dream together" (208). The quote continues to describe the people in the theater as ghosts, ghosts attempting to feel something: the scheming, the murder, the kissing, the dancing depicted in the movie. The stranger's elbow or knee brushing against hers is the epitome of nonsexual intimacy that Lila has in her life as a homeless woman.

Indeed, those women who embrace homelessness as an ontology must take on existential identities as mothers or become asexual beings, in order, literally, to stay alive.

Doll kidnaps Lila; she needs the child as chaperone in order to survive as a homeless woman and migrant worker. When planning her escape from the brothel, Lila works out a plan to kidnap the child of one of her fellow prostitutes before she takes to the road. Even in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (a text that negotiates the possibilities of motherhood within the context of slavery) Sethe, who flees the plantation without her husband, gives birth to baby Denver while on the road. And in *Nomadland*, the widow Fran rejects Dave's proposals of intimacy and insists on living an asexual life in which she, however, also nurtures a homeless youth in a motherly way. To enter the public sphere alone, homeless women must take on the identity of the Virgin Mother. While Lila's homeless existence was defined by corporality and sex, her pregnancy within her marriage with John Ames takes on Christian significance. That in his very old age, Ames could still father a child infuses him with Joseph's mild doubt about his role as father, and tests his faith.

While the flashbacks are narrated in free indirect discourse, the chronotope of Lila and Ames's marriage, which revolves around their home, is dominated narratively by dialogues in which they discuss philosophical questions regarding excerpts from the Bible. The lyrical prose of the free indirect discourse is juxtaposed with Lila's questions about Christianity, that, in their naiveness and simplicity, are deeply philosophical in a Socratic way. A recurring theme is "existence" and Ames relates long monologues on the topic: "[W]e have no way to reconcile [existence's] elements, because they are what we are given out of no necessity at all except God's grace in sustaining us as creatures we can recognize as ourselves" (223). There is a philosophical play here with the "transcendental homeless" of secular modernity (from which Lila is just emerging) and the "totality" that God seems to constantly be offering and taking away. "Near as I can tell," says Lila, "you were wanting to

reconcile things by saying they can't be reconciled" (224). In an instance of Socratic wisdom, Lila describes the dialectic of the "transcendental homeless" when she posits reconciliation as a "totality" that (as Lukács sees it) exists semantically as an ever receding aspiration. In closing, Lila says to Ames, "If you thought dead was just dead, then you wouldn't have to worry about any of this" (224). With this rational, Menippea enters the Christian home. Not only does Ames laugh persistently about Lila's comments (a laugh that, although purportedly kind, is also patronizing and haunting in its ambivalence), but when her idea of death as a finality enters the scene, Ames, who, in his very old age, is on the verge of death, is shaken in his faith. Through affect that oscillates between laughter and fear, the Gothic creeps in: the terror of death's sheer loneliness — a form of homelessness.

Finally then, the death of the homeless protagonist, symbolic for death as the final and most lonely act of life, generally poses a conundrum in texts aspiring to some sort of mimetic realism because, obviously, death is an experience nobody can write about from experience: the omniscient narrator doesn't have the know-how, and the first person narrator doesn't live to tell. The homeless dead embody a metaphor for the existential discrepancies regarding the public and private nature of death. The issue of surveillance and invisibility that defines the homeless ontology crystalizes in the event of death, an event that is both intensely private and blatantly public, an event in which one is the protagonist, but to which one can never bear witness, an event in which one is invisible and at the same time hypervisible. Lila reports: "Boughton mentioned the Last Judgement. Souls just out of their graves having to answer for lives most of them never understood in the first place. Such hard lives. And there Doll would be, whatever guilt or shame she had hidden from all her life laid out for her, no bit of it forgotten. Or forgiven" (101). While Doll is a "lost woman," her judgment is public and

perpetual. To contrast: Auster's Quinn and Van Sant's Bob lie dead in the shelter of abandoned buildings, Huck's Pap's corpse is also hidden in a dilapidated house when it floats down the Mississippi River. In these instances, houses become coffins (a metaphor for the death of the man imprisoned by domesticated ideas of home). In the texts discussed in this chapter, homeless women die outside. Maggie is engulfed by the blackness of the Hudson River, in *Nomadland* Fran's friend Swankie returns to the river of the swallows, and in *Lila*, Doll disappears and Lila imagines her dead in a field, frozen stiff in the cold winter. The ambivalences surrounding the representation of homelessness are contained symbolically in the representation of death as both a reiteration of the public and private trials (in its dual sense as examination and burden) of homeless men and women as represented in fiction, and as a challenge to realism as a mode of representation.

The dialectic of realism (and Realism), then, is that it takes on a form of surveillance itself: surveillance in and of the novel. It's ambition of holding life in place for a moment, in a text immune to change, is paradox to novelness itself. While for Bakhtin the novel is, in its ability to encompass both subjectivity and plurality, a positive symptom of modernity, Lukács sees the novel's form as symptomatic of the modern affliction: In Lukács's *Theory of the Novel,* as Frederic Jameson so aptly summarizes in *The Antinomies of Realism,* the form of the novel "is essentially distinguished by its capacity of registering problematization and the irreconcilable contradictions of a purely secular modernity" (4). By juxtaposing Bakhtin and Lukács, the dialectic of Realism comes to light: The ambition to grasp the "totality" of life, in all its plurality, entails the recognition that any proposal of "totality" immediately annihilates itself. "Realism is a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal" (Jameson 5). And, Jameson continues, "[i]f it is

social truth or knowledge that we want from realism, we will soon find that what we get is ideology" (6). The death of the homeless protagonist is an uncanny metaphor for the capacities of Realism (and realism) that extends into Modernist and postmodern literature, where it becomes a metaphor for the inability of language to represent reality in the first place. In other words, the epistemological crises of the novel in Realism, Modernism and postmodernism are metaphorically represented by the death of the homeless protagonist.

Finally, in novels representing homeless women, a connection is made between the perpetual epistemological crisis (or openness) of the novel as the homeless genre and the crisis (or opening) of values pertaining to motherhood and home. Huck Finn and Dean Moriarty are the homeless children of homeless fathers and dead mothers. Scott Favor has no mother; Mike Waters is the offspring of his brother and his mother who is missing. Boxcar Bertha and Lila (and in many ways Maggie), are the homeless daughters of homeless mothers. How can our mothers and potential mothers betray us by rattling at the institutions of procreation — at the foundation of life? "The philosophers up-stairs, down-stairs and on the same floor, puzzled over it" Crane's narrator summarizes (48). Jerrold Hogle explains: "Through the Gothic, we remind ourselves, albeit in disguise, that something like a return to the confusion and loss of identity in being half-inside and half-outside the mother, and thus neither entirely dead nor clearly alive" (Hogle 5). In literature, this mystery, when contended with, turns into kitsch or Gothic melodrama: for instance, in Horatio Alger's popular fiction about impoverished but diligent boys who are usually living with a single mother who is dependent on them for support, or in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road,* where the mother and wife of the protagonists "the boy" and "the man" commits suicide instead of taking on the responsibility for her family in a post-apocalyptic hell. Or, in contrast, the mother as saint

in the last scene of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* when Rose of Sharan offers an old homeless man her breast:

> For a minute Rose of Sharan sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. "You got to," she said. She squirmed closer and pulled him close. "There!" she said. "There." Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously. (619)

After her own baby dies, Rose of Sharon rises to her role as mother when she nurses the old man who thereby becomes her child; and the formula, metaphorically, is breastmilk. The woman as mother (and even the girl as potential mother) represents home through her physical body; therefore, the logic goes, she is responsible for the homeless. For, so it is written since the beginning of the novel: In Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* only Queen Isis ("I am Nature, the universal Mother") can deliver Lucius from his homeless plight.

## 3.2 The Gothic and the Grotesque

Migration and immigration to American cities after the Civil War and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed the demographics of the United States — and of homelessness. By the 1920 census, "more Americans … lived in the cities than outside them" (Cassuto 159). This transition from rural to urban life is reflected in the development of the American novel, for when the novel moves to the city, it takes with it the Gothic as a mode that "at once evokes real-world terrors, and reassures us that they are unreal." (Ringel 16). While the American Renaissance still celebrated the awe-inspiring aesthetics of the frontier, postbellum literature (while still constructed on the foundation of the dialectic conflating Puritan divine election with Enlightenment self-reliance), was faced with the historical realities of industrialization, urbanization, and secularization. In the urban context, the middle class (and therefore the novel), "dissociates from itself, and then fears, the extremes of what surrounds it: the very high or the decadently aristocratic and the very low or the animalistic, working-class, under financed, sexually deviant, childish or carnivalesque" (Hogle 9). The transformation from Romantic rapture to the feigned impartiality of Realist and Naturalist fiction, and further to the estranged nihilism of the Modernist narrative, occurred within the geography of the city where mobility is limited on the horizontal plane, but enhanced on the vertical (both in the vertical architecture of the city's skyscrapers, as well as on the ladder of social mobility). In other words, the move of the unhoused protagonist from the country to

the city changed the narrative of homelessness from the chronotope of the road to the chronotope of the street.

While this chronotopic transition has implications for both epochal and structural definitions of genre, in its American design, the novel, as Leslie Fiedler has shown, is persistently permeated by Gothic poetics: "Horror is essential to our literature," Fiedler writes (27). And he adds that American fiction is "bewilderingly and embarassingly, a gothic fiction, nonrealistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic — a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation" (29). Like Menippean satire, the Gothic has a dual existence philologically: as a subgenre of the novel and as a literary style. As a mode it transcends epochal boundaries and purposely and perpetually infiltrates American literature (from the hagiographic narrative epistemology of the Puritans to postmodernism's epistemological crisis). While, as an architecture, it already invoked grotesque fear-inspiring forms in Middle Age buildings and churches, the Gothic doesn't manifest itself officially as a literary architecture until the 18th century in rural England. Ellen Weinauer, however, sees "the role of the Gothic in managing the 'spector of Otherness' in America" as much older. Long before Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliff in England, and long before Charles Brockden Brown in North America, "white colonists were drawing on proto-Gothic metaphors, tropes, and techniques to capture the anxieties provoked by life in a strange and forbidding land," she writes (86). In the United States, the cultural role of the Gothic is "paradoxical," Eric Savoy continues: As a nation that was founded on Enlightenment claims of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, a nation that, at its founding moment, repudiated all irrational claims to a meaningful history, the United States is not only persistently haunted by an "undead past"

and fascinated by “the strange beauty of sorrow,” it is also prone to an “insatiable appetite for spectacles of grotesque violence” (167).

Within the shift from rural to urban narrative contexts, which in Realism and Naturalism brought with it a sociological mimetic assignment, a Gothic shift in class also becomes recognizable: “While Romantic Gothic deals with the sins of the fathers in the shape of aristocratic privilege and their abuse of those disempowered or outcast on the periphery of society (Native Americans, African Americans, and the servant class), the Realist Gothic visits the commonplace in the shape of horrors inflicted on factory workers, recent immigrants, city dwellers, rustic isolatoes, social climbers, wounded Civil War soldiers, disabled and diseased veterans, fallen or mad women, and African Americans newly emancipated but still disenfranchised” (Elbert and Ryden, “American Gothic Realism and Naturalism” 44). The transition from high to low, and the “oxymoronic class-mixing style” of the Gothic (Hogle 5) is the consequence of a realist and urban turn which effects the transition from the (Romantic) supernatural to the (realistic) material human: “With the focus on human rather than supernatural monsters, the urban Gothic links traditional Gothic horror and the literature of realism” (Cassuto 166). That is, through the endeavor to keep stories within the realm of the probable, realism (and Realism) necessarily changed the *sources* of Gothic fear from the imaginary (supernatural) to the (material) Other. Through the focus on human beings (especially the poor and unhoused) as monstrous, Realism, in its effort to represent the material, and Naturalism, in its scientific endeavor, enhance discourses of Otherness while purportedly aspiring to dismantle them. Realism’s surveillance of reality in the novel turns on itself as a deathly threat to the genre of polyphony.

In Realism and Naturalism the carnival potential of life on the street is channelled into Gothic fear. “It is about its own blurring of different levels of discourse while it is also concerned with the interpretation of other opposed conditions — including life/death, natural/ supernatural, ancient/modern, realistic/artificial, and unconscious/conscious — along with the abjection of these crossings into haunting and supposedly deviant ‘others’ that therefore attract and terrify middle-class characters and readers” (Hogle 9). What makes literature Gothic, as Poe was well aware, is affect. The Gothic works on the English heath and on the American frontier, in the house of Usher, in the mobile home, and in the tunnels of the New York sewer system. “[W]hether a work of literature should be labeled Gothic or not depends upon the associations and especially the sensations that the work creates in the reader” (Casutto 157). And in his “Reviews of Hawthorne’s *Twice Told Tales,*” Edgar Allan Poe writes, “ Without a certain continuity of effort — without a certain duration or repetition of purpose — the soul is never deeply moved. There must be a dropping of the water upon the rock,” and, while “Beauty” is best treated in the poem, “Not so with terror, or passion, or horror,” the effect of which is most effectively procured in “the tale” (1531-32).

And yet there are some general parameters to Gothic fiction. Metaphorically, antiquated or destitute buildings act as trap doors through which the past (and its unresolved traumas) creeps into the present: the castle, crumbling mansion, prison, graveyard, primeval frontier or ocean literally house the past. Within theses spaces, as Jerrold Hogle explains, secrets from the past are hidden that haunt the protagonists: “The hauntings can take many forms, but they frequently assume the features of ghosts, specters, or monsters (mixing features from different realms of being, often life and death) that rise from within the antiquated space … to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be

successfully buried from view" (2). In Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, this haunting takes the shape of the woman who, as a baby, was murdered by her own mother in order to prevent her being taken as a slave. The woman, now pregnant herself, comes back to haunt the home her mother has tried to make for those who survived. In Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, this haunting infiltrates Tayo's mind when, returning from the war and stranded at the railroad station in Los Angeles, he experiences a dissociative episode in which he cannot tell the difference between the Japanese migrants (who were imprisoned in camps during the war and who represent, in this case, the enemy he fought in the Pacific) and his own Native American people. In *My Own Private Idaho* this haunting informs the film through old 16mm film clips that visualize Mike's incestuous parents on the porch of their house (not inside and not outside) — memories that infiltrate his consciousness and lead to his narcoleptic episodes.

Urban underworlds, however, like the movie theater, hospital, warehouse, factory, and the tunnels of the subway system, are Gothic spaces that are haunted, I posit, by the ghosts of carnival that the homeless represent. These structures are architectures of modernity; they do not evoke the historical past in the same way that the ruins of castles do, but they posit the parameters of carnival (corporality, polyphony, subversiveness) while simultaneously deconstructing them and revealing (within the destitution of the homeless ontology), publicity of corporality, polyphony of identity and subversiveness toward officialdom. In other words these architectures evoke an uncanny nostalgia for the polyphonic potential of carnival. In Richard Wright's *The Man Who lived Underground*, such a space is the semi-basement (half under, half above ground) in which a Black gospel choir is singing. In David Means's *Two Ruminations on a Homeless Brother*, the rehabilitation hospital in which his brother (and alter ego) is being treated for addiction and mental illness becomes a Gothic

structure that opens passages into the past (and future) through various states of consciousness. In *Lila* it is the movie theater where she finds refuge from the hardship of the street that turns Gothic; unlike the carnival setting of Kerouac's all-night movie theater in *On the Road*, the theater that Lila frequents is full of ghosts:

> [T]hey were ghosts all gathered in the dark, watching the world, seeing all the scheming and the murder and having no word to say about it, weeping with the orphans and having nothing to do for them. And then the dancing and the kissing, and all of the ghosts floating there just inches from a huge, beautiful face, to see the joy rise up in it. (208)

The scene, which is in the dark, represents the invisibility of the homeless who have no access to the contingencies of the American dream as shown on the screen before them. While carnival represents a positive falling away of contingency which brings about polyphonic impressions of equality, in the Gothic, this subsiding of contingency (and the return to inexplicable randomness) evokes a crisis in knowledge and the understanding of life (and my life) through a comprehensive narrative epistemology. In carnival, discourses of Otherness are dismantled; Bakhtin insists that in dialogism, there is "a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6). But the plurality of carnival turns Gothic through the grotesque *recentralization* of dialogic discourses concerning sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class and age within the monologic paradigm of fear.

The Gothic assumes a prevalent presence in homelessness fiction as a mode that redefines and undermines carnival. The Gothic persists, even after the dawn of the Age of Reason. While the Enlightenment brought about a decline in the belief of the prevalence of supernatural forces in everyday life, rationalism and realism maintained Gothic discourses of

fear by shifting affect from the terror of the supernatural to the horror of the physical Other. And while realism (and Realism and Naturalism) acts antithetically to the homeless genre of Menippean satire, and Menippean satire is a mode of carnival, the Gothic undermines this mode of dialogic literature as well. In homelessness fiction, journeys to the underworld mark the body and grotesque corporality becomes freakishly ambivalent about its status as alive or dead; Socratic dialogue becomes an aberrant form of conversation with the self that, on public display, signifies insanity; and laughter surrenders its therapeutic and cathartic nature to become a loud and crazy burlesque or an evil snicker.

In the following section of this paper, then, I will discuss the processes by which Mennippean satire and the Gothic negotiate homelessness fiction. Homelessness fiction can be seen as a protagonist in the family of novel genres that, regardless of its generic family name, is informed by modes of Menippea *and* the Gothic — both modes that are based on a homeless ontology and that transcend epochal boundaries. A narrative of homelessness finds shelter in intertextual dialogism with previous works *and* it is haunted by these Doppelgängers, both in historically precedent texts and in "Other" American genres like the Gothic short story. The intertextual dialogism between Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* (1864), Richard Wright's novel *The Man Who Lived Underground* (1941), and David Means's short story "Two Ruminations on a Homeless Brother" (2019) represents a (modern) Gothic haunting by Doppelgänger texts that transcends the beleaguering surveillance posited by poststructuralist negative notions of intertextuality and, instead, represents a form of generic carnival that makes the novel perpetually and scarily open and new; a carnival polyphony that is undermined by the Gothic — ambivalently novel and, therefore, novel — and indeed American.

"It is [Rousseau's] compelling vision of a society uncompromised by culture that has left the deepest impress on the American mind," writes Leslie Fiedler (37). Rousseau, the philosopher who perambulated the streets and public parks of Paris in order to find the needed solitude for his philosophical ruminations, wrote down on a playing-card while he was writing *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, "My whole life has been little else than a long reverie divided into chapters by my daily walks" (12). In *Walking and the Aesthetics of Modernity*, Klaus Benesch and François Specq explain, "[W]alking has often come to signify a counterspace, a mode of mobile existence that frees the mind from the limitations of history and tradition, thereby empowering the autonomous subject and providing moments of epiphanic insight" (vii). While Rousseau's ruminations are defined by his search for philosophical insight, stoical simplicity and solitary contentment, much like Thoreau's, they are also burdened by the conflicts of public society that infiltrate his private reveries (France18). Rousseau seems to have lived a life haunted by a public Doppelgänger — torn between his identity as the exiled orphan that he was (and preferred to feel he was), and the public person exposed to fame — and critique. As noted in the Introduction, Gumbrecht considers Rousseau's *Reveries d'une promeneur solitaire* as the dead-end of Bakhtin's high road: "The traditional conversation between two travelers has collapsed into the dialogue of the lonesome individual with himself" (634). A century, and then two centuries later, the predicament of the estranged intellectual and solitary walker is echoed in the vagrancy of the "transcendental homeless": in Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from the Underground*, in which the man hiding underground flaunts his alienation in a dramatic soliloquy (aimed at his critics and readers) (France 22); in Richard Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground*, in which

this subjective appeal is deconstructed and imbued with issues of race and racism; as well as in David Means's short story "Two Ruminations on a Homeless Brother," in which the narrator experiments with various conventions of homelessness fiction, and (in a ruminating monologue that enacts a dialogue with the reader), thematizes the ethical precariousness of implementing homelessness as an aesthetic device.

In his Forward to *Notes from Underground*, the translator of Dostoevsky's text, Richard Pevear, writes, "The one quality that [Dostoevsky's] negative characters share … is inner fixity, a sort of death-in-life, which can take many forms and tonalities, from the broadly comic to the tragic, from the mechanical to the corpselike" (xx). When mobility is intellectualized, therefore, physical and intellectual roaming is posited as a positive form of life (for men), while intellectual standstill is equated with sedentariness (if not domesticity), as well as intellectual and physiological death: "Inner movement … is always a condition of spiritual good, though it may also be a source of suffering, division, disharmony, in this life" (xx). Homologous to the original Don Quixote, whose inner intellectual gearwheels are bent by Romance literature and propel him into the complexities of juxtaposed imaginary and physical worlds, the modern Quixote, like Rousseau (whom the Underground Man mentions repeatedly), is plagued by the isolation and alienation that his private and vital intellectual mobility procures within a necessarily public realm. Bakhtin explains, "What the Underground Man thinks about most of all is what others think or might think about him" (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 52).

The Underground Man, who is trying to escape the underground through writing, initially reads himself into its depths. "At home," he remembers, "I mainly used to read" (4)**.** And towards the end, he summarizes, "Leave us to ourselves, without a book, and we'll

immediately get confused, lost — we won't know what to join, what to hold on to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise" (130). A modern theme of Dostoevsky's novella, therefore, is estrangement brought about by intellectualism, and "books" are the metonymies for this plight: Their narratives are structured via contiguity but are ambivalent about their contingency; their mockery of "totality" leads to a loss of control, to an epistemological crisis and, in the worst case, insanity. "I am strongly convinced that not only too much consciousness but even any consciousness at all is a sickness" (7). For the Underground Man the outrageous recognition of Lukács's dialectic of "totality" is reason enough for insane laughter. Over and over, he taunts his readers, emphasizing that he is joking and echoing their laughter within his discourse:"'Ha, ha, ha! Next you'll be finding pleasure in a toothache!' you will exclaim, laughing" (14), and "You're laughing, I'm very glad … How can a man of consciousness have the slightest respect for himself?" (16)

Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* was published in 1916 and, in contrast to Bakhtin's enthusiastic treatise on the liberating qualities of the modern novel, it focuses on the novel's ambivalence as a genre — the limitations of its open form. Lukács reports from and about a modern world (both modern and Modernist) in which the estranged protagonist and the disoriented artist (with their' "world of created forms," the genre itself) find themselves in a state of "transcendental homelessness," struggling to find direction in a world without divine guidance (41). In this context, the novel (with its lack of formal prescription) becomes the genre apt to representing this loss of rootedness and orientation. However, instead of reveling in its creative potential, Lukács (much like Benjamin) is concerned with the novel as a symptom of modernity: He sees the novel as a metaphor for the reality of the modern protagonist's inner turmoil and dotes on its definitive evasion of epistemological

closure. The novel is new and modern and mimetically true to the predicament of constant change. But through the conflicting haunting desire for and rejection of conventional genres and modes that make the novel, a Gothic mist emerges through the cracks in its carnival structure.

The two primary texts by Richard Wright and David Means which are discussed here are respectively a novella and a short story — not texts of the novel length. And yet as homelessness fiction, they represent, on the one hand, similar visions of homelessness when they abide by the nonlinear and potentially circular chronotope of the street. While the novella and the short story are distinguished according to their length, the short story (according to Poe) and the novella (according to Lukács) set themselves apart from the novel by the reduction of the chronotopic scope of any internal or external journey (and growth) that the protagonists might make. Even though the novella might indeed show more tendency to develop narratively toward change and closure, and the short story is known for its capturing a scenic moment that is metonymically representative of a greater truth, both Wright's novella and Means's short story are structured by a limited non-linear chronotopic architecture — the chronotope of the street.

On the other hand, thematically, they are blatantly different: Means's text embodies the emotional plight of the transcendentally homeless writer whose intellectual crisis is represented metaphorically by two alternative homeless "brothers." In contrast, Wright's text, which traces the homeless journey of a fugitive Black man in the sewage system of New York city, depicts homelessness as existential for the constitution of any narrative depicting issues having to do with ('racial') Otherness. In both texts the Gothic invades the Menippean perspective: In Means's story the narrator (who is encapsulated in the comfort of his car)

claims a perspective from *above* (Menippus gazes at the earth from the moon in Lucian's "Icaromenippus" — the Menippean Icarus), while in Wright's novella, the perspective is from *below,* from the New York underground (Menippus reflects on humanity from Hades in Luician's "Dialogues of the Dead").

In a short tangent in *The Theory of the Novel* Lukács calls the novella (in Anna Bostock's translation "the short story") "the most purely artistic form": "[I]t expresses the ultimate meaning of all artistic creation as *mood*, as the very sense and content of the creative process" (51, translator's italics). This "mood" is equated with the wariness and despair of the transcendental homeless. "It sees absurdity in all its undisguised and unadorned nakedness, and the exorcising power of this view, without fear or hope, gives it the consecration of form; meaninglessness as *meaninglessness* becomes form" (51). In the German original "absurdity" is rendered as "sinnlos." "Sinnlos" encompasses more than what Anna Bostock deems "absurdity" in her translation; "sinnlos" also generates a sense of pointlessness and meaninglessness. The notion of pointlessness is important because "absurdity" alone cannot specify what makes it absurd, which is that the novel ensues from the search for "totality," which is, in turn, the sustenance of the form precisely because it remains unattainable. In other words, the absurdity resides in the paradox of the simultaneous pointlessness of the search and the absolute necessity of the search. In his discourse on the novella, Lukács deems as "mood" ("Stimmung") the expression of this structural paradox, not simply on a content level in the fluctuating personal pursuits, frustrations and resignations of the protagonists, but in the universal mood of the historical, political and sociological context: the atmosphere of a time is reflected in the chronotopic structure.

Georg Lukács allows that every author is influenced by his or her confrontation with certain "historico-philosophical realities," and he writes more specifically about the rise of the novel: "This is not a matter of change in mentality giving rise to a new genre . . . . The genre-creating principle . . . rather . . . forces the same mentality to turn towards a new aim" (40). Edgar Allan Poe's equivalent of Lukács's "aim," which Poe posits in his theory on the short story in his second review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (May 1842), encompasses both "aim" and affect. He calls this duality the writer's "single *effect* to be wrought out": "[H]aving conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, [the literary artist] then invents such incidents … as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect" (1531, Poe's italics). Poe's "single *effect*," therefore, incorporates both Lukács's "aim" and what Lukács calls "mood," the transference to the reader of which is the short story's foremost literary function and contribution (51). Similarly, the "Gothic exaggerates its own extreme fictionality" so as to be able to evoke the strongest emotions possible (Hogle or Elbert 14) In Means's "Two Ruminations on a Homeless Brother," "totality," then, acquires a specific signification within the short story, the genre which Poe establishes—per definition—as being able to provide, with the force of its brevity, a wave of emotion (an "immense force"), and therefore, a *sense* of "totality" (Poe 1531). Poe actually uses the same term as Lukács.

The "mood" which defines Dostoevsky's and Means's stories is on all levels the protagonists' loneliness and boredom, which is posited as the existential mood of the homeless, but also the prerequisite for his intellectual mobility; it is, in essence, the "pleasure of the one who is suffering" (Dostoevsky 14). Dostoevsky's Underground Man explains, "Deep in one's soul it's hard to believe one is suffering, mockery is stirring there, but all the

same I suffer … And all that from boredom, gentlemen, all from boredom; crushed by inertia" (17). Simultaneously, tedium and loneliness are the *form-giving* elements of the story because the alienation felt on the street (in contrast to the communal heteroglossia that Bakhtin's high road offers as a setting), demands the solitary monologue as its vehicle of expression. Lukács posits that, "the language of the absolutely lonely man is lyrical, i.e. monological" (45). Such loneliness, he continues, "is also the torment of a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community" (45). In this case, this longing for community applies to the imaginary audience (of literary critics) that the Underground Man addresses in *Notes from Underground*, and it applies to the narrator's Doppelgänger in "Two Ruminations on a Homeless Brother." — the old homeless man that the narrator observes from his car, as well as his addict-artist brother.

David Means's short story addresses homelessness on three levels through three different protagonists: an elderly man who lives on the street "rooting" and "digging" in trash cans for his daily bread, an artist and addict who oscillates between a half-way house and a rehab hospital, and the narrator himself who, as a writer, digging and delving for the right words and themes, is a socially alienated but keen observer of the empirical differences and metaphorical similarities between their various homeless states. The title of the story implies that this process occurs in "two ruminations" but remains ambivalent ("on a homeless brother") about the number of brothers the narrator actually has, and it is not quite clear if they are two entirely different people (one his biological brother and the other his 'brother' in the Christian sense) or, perhaps, if they represent the theoretical but potential homeless states of the narrator's own being. In any case, each is allotted his own chapter (in a short story that is only eleven pages long), although the titles of the chapters ("Sviatoslav Richter" and "Oh,

Rockland!") do not solve the mystery of their interdependence, but, rather, through the citation of these cultural icons, suggest that the narrator's own homeless estrangement is the construct of his artistic sentiment.

The narrator-writer sits comfortably in his "house of fiction," to use Henry James's phrase from his *Preface* to *The Portrait of a Lady*: "The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million … every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will" (45). In Means's story the house of fiction is not a building but the narrator's car (a reference to the increase in the United States in the number of homeless people living in their vehicles). In the story, the narrator's ruminations take place while driving through the streets that make up the homeless old man's rounds, while parked in the parking lot of the rehab hospital in which his brother temporarily resides, and in the driveway of his own home. From these locations, feeling emotionally and physically displaced but also secure, he gazes out the windows of his car and reflects on both the literal and the transcendental homeless states of being. It is the paradox of narrative fiction, as Käte Hamburger, Dorrit Cohn, and Henry James have shown, that "narrative fiction attains its greatest 'air of reality' in the representation of a lone figure thinking thoughts she [Isabelle Archer] will never communicate to anyone" (Cohn 7). In Means's story, the narrator's homelessness resides in the transparency and exposure of his inner thoughts to the reader; through his monologue he becomes conspicuous (in the showcase window of his car) to the implied reader outside, like, in reverse, the homeless old man on the street leads his entire private life in public and is strikingly visible (and at the same time invisible) to the people who drive by him in their cars.

The narrator's monologue echoes the homeless man's talking to himself while rummaging through the trash. In the first chapter his ruminations are very much concerned with the way in which passersby, generally, are indifferent to, empathize with, or deplore the homeless old man in their neighborhood. The syntax is lyrical rather than prosaic, as each often page-long paragraph is made up of one, or at the most two complex sentences, organized in paratactical phrases that can be read as a series of enjambed verses. Certain often repeated words, like "rooting" and "digging," embed the semantics in the tradition of Heidegger's essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," relating agriculture and building with dwelling (Means 146)**.** The repetitive use of "or" or "say" to connect the phrases of a sentence allows the narrator to offer various scenarios within these semantics: "There's this old man who walks along the fence next to the hospital, or, say, down near town … digging around in the garbage can on the corner …" (179). Or, "[He is] smoking a cigarette, clutching it between his battered fingers, or simply walking with his shoulders braced …" (179). The narration becomes a conglomerate of ideas about homelessness that repeatedly reshuffles its narrative presentation and simultaneously posits a homeless 'type' *and* confirms the plurality of the homeless experience. Lastly, phrases like "those who pass," "those passing him shrug," "while passing him on a windy day," "the minds of those passing," allow the narrator to distance himself from his own role as gazer and remain detached (180-181).

In the story, "mental illness" has a dual function as virtue and vice: It defines the eccentricity of the artist and writer who, like Rousseau, must actively pursue loneliness and engage in dialogue with the self, in order to be creative. But it is also conceived by the narrator as the evident trait of the old unsheltered man's identity that allows the passing observers to distance themselves from him — allowing them to mark his behavior as

definitely not theirs and as Other: “The phrase ‘mental illness’ shrouds his body as he walks, and orients him, slips him like a peg into whatever dreamy ideas of madness fill the minds of those passing and pushes away the thought that he is, in a way, say, a reflection of some part of themselves . . .  ” (181). His apparent “mental illness” (signified here by his wearing clothes not suitable to the weather) also induces ambiguous feelings in the gazers, not only different individuals’ emotions but conflicting emotions within individuals: They are, “half caring and half not caring, subsumed in the responsibilities at hand, so to speak, or caring deeply with a flash of intense sadness . . .  or not caring an iota and getting riled up thinking about the ease with which a man can pass his life” (180). This ambivalence is, however, underlined by the more general acknowledgement of his “admirable persistence” in walking his daily rounds, “oblivious” to those who wiz by in their cars (180-181). The passersby are at home on the road in their cars, they are *rooted* in mobility. It is at this point in the narration, where those who pass by display how mobility defines the strategy that they have (inadvertently) invented to protect themselves from the threat of homelessness, that the narrator shifts gears, so to speak, into the second person “you” (the colloquial “one”). As Adrianna Cavarero explains in *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and selfhood* [sic], “Symptomatically, the you [tu] is a term that is not *at home* in modern and contemporary developments of ethics and politics. The ‘you’ is ignored by the individualistic doctrines, which are too preoccupied with praising the rights of the *I*, and the ‘you’ is masked by a Kantian form of ethics that is only capable of staging an I that addresses itself as a familiar ‘you.’” (90). In Means’s short story, the second person narration both emphasizes the monologue as dialogue with the self, *and* releases it from its personal reflective tone,

expanding it to encompass, generally, anyone and everyone who has passed a homeless person on a city sidewalk.

At the same time, the narrator also recognizes himself (as artist and "transcendental homeless") in the elderly homeless man when he imagines some of the exasperated passers condemning him as living a life tinted with Romantic notions:

> [G]etting riled up," they think about "the ease with which a man can pass his life in what must be a pleasurable vortex of non-time that comes from following a set path day after day, say, insane or on the edge of insanity, as a way of escaping responsibilities, dodging them for the poetic stance of being the odd homeless gent" (180).

The homeless man's "poetic stance" (which is the effect of the chronotope of the street) is similar to that of the artist genius before and while he performs, and, indeed, in the same paragraph, the narrator introduces the piano virtuoso Sviatoslav Richter, whose bearing on stage is defined by his superior oblivion to the audience. Although Means doesn't mention which piece he imagines Richter playing, Richter is famous for his interpretation of Franz Schubert's "The Wanderer's Fantasy" (1816) which was inspired by Georg Philipp Schmidt's poem "Der Wanderer," in which the 'poetic I' mourns the loss of home. Schubert adapted the lament "Ich bin ein Fremdling überall" ('I feel like a stranger everywhere I go') from the poem and used it as the recurring theme in his composition. While Schubert's (Romantic) hero oscillates between feelings of despair and hope in finding his way home, his modernist counterpart in Lukács's text (1916, exactly one century later), is aware that his search for 'home' is not only in vain but brings him farther away from it with every step. Still, he

continues to "seek" what Lukács calls the "totality" that potentially shapes a work of art, a "totality" that, however, can never be attained but exists only as an abstract potentiality (56).

The ambivalence of the narrator's role as sheltered artist (and the responsibilities that go with it — helping others, helping himself, or just seeking a good story) is highlighted, finally, in his attempt to write his brother (and himself) into literary history. Rockland is the psychiatric clinic in which Allen Ginsberg's friend, the poet Carl Solomon, was incarcerated and repeatedly underwent shock therapy in the 1950s. Seeing his own brother in "Rockland," reminds the narrator of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*. In anaphoric repetitions, the 'poetic I' cries out to Carl Solomon, "I'm with you in Rockland . . . " (24 ff). Like homelessness itself, mental illness — being "insane or on the edge of insanity" (Means 180) — becomes a trope, a conventional aesthetic through which the really brilliant artist or writer gains authority. Means's narrator is aware of the parallels between Ginsberg and Solomon, and himself and his artist brother. While he concedes that even his attempt at writing his brother into literary history will not save him from "the fact that you were in a real situation with your real brother" (184), this narrative trick of introducing the author as a protagonist of his own narration (by now a fictional convention in its own right), becomes yet another trope that Means's narrator tries out and then discards: The "mental illness" of the interdependent homeless brothers becomes a metaphor for the narrator-implied author duality.

David Means's "single *effect* to be wrought out" seems to be, then, to highlight both practically (in structure) and emotionally (in "mood") the wariness and misgivings that accompany the utilization of homelessness as a poetic device. Beginning with the "historico-philosophical dialectic" defining the homeless situation in the United States, the narrator questions the *representation* of the homeless experience in American fiction: the slippage

within the signification of "transcendental homelessness" and empirical homelessness, the (biographical) imitation of the homelessness ontology (alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness, aimless wandering) by the artist-writer (see Charles Bukowski, William Burroughs), as well as his own experience of the misery of writer's block as a mode of homelessness. One consequence of the indigence of homelessness, he explains, is being drained of all creative and persuasive energy, "a deprivation of life force, or of gumption, or of will that could leave you shuffling through a limited space …" (181). This extends not only to the profound hopelessness of the struggle for "totality" that Lukács describes, but also to the still more profound hopelessness of its abandonment (Lukács 85-86). In other words, according to Means and Lukács, irony transcends its role as content and becomes the defining trait of modern fiction, determined by the artist's paradoxically hopeless but vital struggle for "totality," represented as a Dostoevskian "inner fixity," and "death-in-life."

Lukács attributes to the novella an "exorcising power" ("eine bannende Macht") attained by the successful rendering of "mood" (51,39). According to Lukács, the novella is "the narrative from which pin-points the strangeness and ambiguity of life" (51), and according to Poe, the short story is the form most disposed to effecting "terror, or passion, or horror" (1532). With the transition of the homeless protagonist from the road to the street (and through the replacement of the chronotope of the road with the chronotope of the street), the laughter and polyphony of heteroglossia is undermined by monologic discourses of loneliness and fear — informed by Modernist and Gothic modes within short narratives of the city. Finally, the narrator's own monologue becomes, like *Notes from Underground*, a disturbing soliloquy in its desperation for the community of the critic and narratee. In *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*,

Dorit Cohn describes the difference between interior monologue and the soliloquy. While critics consider interior monologue as "associative, illogical, spontaneous," the soliloquy is "rhetorical, rational and deliberate … [with] more ordinary discursive language patterns" (12). That is, the speaker of the soliloquy is aware of an audience, while the narrator of the interior monologue is —stylistically — not. In both Dostoevsky's and Means's stories, Socratic dialogue develops into soliloquy (by way of internal monologue turning into internal dialogue). Like (metaphorically speaking) the homeless life on the street, soliloquy takes place in public — it needs the Rouseeauian oxymoronic shelter of public privacy in order to be heard.

The writer and reader (i.e. the thinker) as "transcendental homeless," and the (in)adequacy of the homelessness trope for representing this artistic sentiment is the theme that makes the form of Means's experimental text. Like Dostoevsky's Underground Man, the narrator seeks both redemption and further suffering from the torment of artistic and philosophical production. In Richard Wright's Modernist novella *The Man Who Lived Underground*, this universally modern dialectic is, however, reinterpreted before the backdrop of issues of 'race' and racism in America. Not only is the narrator-protagonist an African American fugitive (this time from the law and not the plantation), his fugitivity questions and forces the redistribution of its generic definition from Modernist Existentialist novel to the narrative of the fugitive slave. Dostoevsky's Underground Man is the suffering philosopher, the homeless old man in Means's story is the droll artsy gent, and his brother the artist-addict. But the homeless Black man must be, in line with literary history, a fugitive. Teju Cole lays a fresh layer of narrative onto the palimpsest that forms this template when, in his novel *Open City*, he makes the wandering artist-philosopher a medical student from

Nigeria. Julius's discovery of historical landmarks and plaques that designate the submerged African American cemeteries that lie beneath the pavement he is walking on, uncovers America's buried history of displacement and violence.

"The Man Who Lived Underground" gives access to the horror of American history. As pastiche it pays tribute to Dostoevsky's structural aesthetics, but as grotesque parody, it reinterprets the plight of transcendental homelessness as a privilege unimaginable to the Black man. "The Man Who Lived Underground" is one short story in the collection *Eight Men* which, as Paul Gilroy explains in his introduction, is held together by "Wright's meditations on the character and dynamism of black masculinity — enacted, feared, celebrated, worried over, lived, and beheld both by outsiders and initiates" (xiv). In the collection, as Gilroy explains, Wright moves away from Marxism and toward a "standpoint he felt was more faithful to the exacting demands of black experience in the modern world," where "[a]lienation from self, from other people and from the problematic, creative, essence of a racially indivisible humanity acquired a different significance" (xv-xvi). As a text engaged in open intertextual dialogism with *Notes from Underground*, "The Man Who Lived Underground" is informed by difference. While Dostoevsky's hero reads himself into the underground, Wright's protagonist Fred Daniels is forced into hiding in the sewage system of New York City after he has (falsely) been accused of murder. Like Everett's *James*, the intertextual allusion, by crossing 'racial' boundaries, evokes the question of genre and shifts the narrative of the modern transcendental homeless into the narrative of the hunted black man. Fred Daniels's journey is neither linear and forward moving nor addressed to an educated audience, but defined by the invisibility of the protagonist and his regression into the underground.

"I've got to hide, he told himself" (19): The narrative begins by establishing the fugitivity of the protagonist. It begins in the first person but proceeds in the third person. Therefore, it sets a different tone than that of its model by Dostoevsky which is narrated in the first person and traces the narrator's ruminations as thought processes syntactically in tact but in a monological staccato that foreshadows the syntactical mosaic of stream of consciousness. Wright's discourse is a collage of third person narration, the dialogue of overheard conversations (that exclude the protagonist), and free indirect discourse. The text in free indirect discourse is the discourse of the fugitive: it encompasses his thought process and the dialogues he engages in with himself. In Henry Louis Gates's analysis of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* and in Barbara Johnson's analysis of Gates's analysis, it becomes clear that in African American literature free indirect discourse represents the "divided voice" of its characters: Within Janies's "coming to consciousness" in *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* free indirect discourse represents "the verbal analogue" of her intersectional identity: as a woman and a Black person (Gates 193, Johnson 171). In "The Man Who Lived Underground," free indirect discourse is the "verbal analogue" that represents the intersectionality of the black writer— as artist and Black man, as (Frankensteinian) creator and monster, as transcendental homeless and homeless fugitive.

During Fred's flight within the undefined darkness of the underworld, the loneliness, fear and helplessness of the protagonist leads to the transition of his intellectual mobility into insanity. The chronotopic scaffold that provides shelter falls in the undefined darkness, and he loses not only his sense of place but also of time: "How long had he been down there? He did not know" (25), because "the blur of time lived in the underground blackness" (69). He feels like a ghost when he temporarily emerges above ground: "So used had he become to being

underground that he though that he could walk passt the man as though he were a ghost" (30). Through pipes, missing bricks, doorways, grates and holes he has etched out, he peers into the rooms of various buildings attached to the sewage tunnels he inhabits, spying on life, unseen. After stealthily breaking into a movie theater, he watches the faces of the people watching the movie as though they were zombies "sleeping in their living, awake in their dying" (30). And Fred himself, "hovered between sleeping and waking, unprotected, a prey of wild fears. He could neither see nor hear. One part of him was asleep, his blood coursed slowly and his flesh was numb" (59). Lost carnival spaces and the Menippean descent into the underworld become Gothic and infiltrated with the fear of death. "He groaned and leaped erect in the dark, his eyes wide. The images of terror that thronged his brain would not let him sleep" (35). The childlike safety and comfort of day dreaming that Bachelard describes as constitutive of home becomes the nightmare of the homeless in the underground: "His dreaming made him feel that he was standing in a room watching over his own nude body lying stiff and cold upon a white table" (58).

In "The Man Who Lived Underground" the journey to the underworld marks the body and the mind, and grotesque corporality becomes freakishly ambivalent about its status as alive or dead. Socratic dialogue is deconstructed as a convention of loneliness and madness when (similar to Maggie and Lila) Fred asks questions that fade into the darkness, questions that echo in the tunnel and are never answered. These questions increase during the process of the narrative. On the first page of the story there is one question ("Yes, he had to hide, but where?"). Five pages later, the number of questions increases to two or three per page, and another ten pages later, there are sometimes even six or seven questions posed on a page. The same goes for laughter, which at first is suppressed ("His first impulse was to laugh, but he

checked himself" 24, 62). Soon it becomes a chuckle, then audible laughter (31, 39, 47, 58, 66, 69, 71, 73, 77), "laughing and crying" (41), "mischievous" laughter and snickering (45), "silent laughter" (50), "delirious" laughter (52), "musing" laughter (52), laughter mixed with "vague terror" (53), laughter where he "slapped his thighs and guffawed" (54), "brittle" and "hilarious" laughter (55), "icy laughter" and "mock regret" (56). Laughter turns from the comic and humorous to the grotesque and obscene: When he watches a boy being beaten, "It was so funny that he had to clap his hand over his mouth to keep from laughing out loud" (61)). Even the architecture — the diamond carpet of his cave — laughs (56), as does the world around him (through the walls he hears laughter, in the police station he is drowned in laughter). His madness is posited as coming from his loneliness and the impossibility of engaging in dialogism as a Black homeless fugitive. Revenge and death are posited side by side: for retaliation to occur it needs acknowledgement.

The chronotope of the novella, while not as extensive as that "of the road" is geographically and temporally definitive of a limited intertwined space, like that of the tunnel system Fred finds himself in. The novella is chronotopically structured through Fred's repetitious visits to various buildings that he can visually access from the underground: the church where the choir sings, the undertaker's, the movie theater, the furnace room ("hell"), the room with the safe, the radio warehouse, and the back room of the butcher's market with its hanging carcasses. The randomness of his visits is interceded by his domestic efforts to decorate his cave — making it into a shrine of revenge that reflects the greed of the humanity above. Not only does he steal tools and a radio, he also robs the safe of a jeweler: the diamonds become his carpet and the green dollar bills his wallpaper. As a pastiche of the chrystal palace in *Notes from Underground*, his cave represents a parody of the Underground

Man as an artist yearning for revenge against his critics. For Fred is forced to watch the effect of his interference from below and the subversive retaliation that it represents: a boy gets beaten and tortured into a confession for stealing the radio, and the watchman at the jewelers commits suicide. The perpetual closeness to death, the view of human folly from below, and the dramatic irony (the culprit secretly and knowingly watching the violence which is taking place against the innocent) is clearly resonant of Menippean satire, but the mixture of desire and fear reverberates the Gothic.

The homelessness trope that thematizes both the surveillance of the homeless and the ambivalence of their public private life, is parodied when the homeless protagonist Fred becomes the invisible mole who eavesdrops on those who normally (above ground) would look down on him. This, of course, is an established literary device: servants, prostitutes, immigrants and foreigners, children, the disabled and the homeless (and their definitive literary manifestations as picaro and picara) are the actual agents of surveillance in the novel. As Peter Brooks explains, "Eavesdropping itself, crucial to the plot of knowledge and nescience … has a distinguished novelistic career" (*Seduced by Story* 51). And yet, the knowledge that Fred attains (even the combination to the lock on the safe in the jeweler's office) doesn't give him the power he yearns for because he is invisible. In contrast, the hero of Dostoevsky's novel, as Bakhtin explains, "eavesdrops on every word someone else says about him, he looks at himself, as it were, in the mirrors of other people's consciousnesses, he knows all the possible refractions of his image in those mirrors" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 53). In Fred's journey within an underground setting that, as a dark and watery world, is hostile to narrative navigation, he experiences a kind of auto-estrangement, an "epistemological vertigo" (Weinstock 19) applied to the self, a fear of himself that, otherwise,

monsters evoke in the middle class readers of Gothic literature. “Yes, he was afraid of himself” (56).

When, near the end of the novella, Fred sees his reflection in the mirror in a shopwindow, he “recognizes” himself as a zombie — as an entity ambivalent about its agency, intellectually and physically in-between life and death, and risen from the grave.

> Where was he? Was this real? … He wandered into a spacious doorway of a store that sold men’s clothing and saw his reflection in a long mirror: his cheekbones protruded from a hairy black face; his greasy cap was perched askew upon his head and his eyes were red and glassy. His shirt and trousers were caked with mud and hung loosely. His hands were gummed with a black stickiness. He threw back his head and laughed so loudly that passers-by stopped and stared. (66)

The more Fred becomes invested in surveillance and revenge, that is, the longer he lives in his dark and fluid underground, spying on a life from which he is excluded, the more he wants to be seen and heard by the people he is spying on. When decorating his cave with dollar bills, diamonds and gold watches, he becomes ecstatic; “He had triumphed over the world aboveground! He was free! If only the people could see this!” (54). But he remains invisible, even when his longing to be seen forces him to rise through the manhole and above ground, in order to turn himself in at the police station, thus setting himself up for execution.

“Fictional persons,” as Peter Brooks explains, play an important communicative role in the dialogism of the novel: “They mime the dialogic relations of speaker to listener, of author to reader. They offer, explicitly or not, a model of human interaction in discourse that speaks to the desire of the text to communicate, to create dialogue” (*Seduced by Story* 99).

What Brooks is talking about here is the novel manifestation of Bakhtinian dialogism as an antidote to the solitariness of Lukács's transcendental homelessness. In Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, as Bakhtin explains, "Dostoevsky's hero is not an objectified image but an autonomous discourse, *pure voice,*" and, "He knows that he has the *final word* ... His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy" (53, Bakhtin's italics). Indeed, Dostoevsky's novel ends in medias res ("However, the 'notes' of this paradoxalist do not end here. He could not help himself and went on" (130)). In contrast, as a zombie, Fred's indeterminacy does not represent a liberating or cathartic novel kind of "unfinalizability." Instead it represents torturous "epistemological vertigo" that must be stilled through death.

Wright's text is not a definitely Gothic text but, instead, as Menippean satire, engages in an intense dialogue with monologic ideas of fear and "epistemological vertigo" that define the Gothic short story and novel. The free indirect discourse accesses the ambivalences of narrative agency, and the reverse coming-of-age within the chronotope of the street (unlike Native American novel regression within the chronotope of the road), represents a reversal toward physical and mental death: "He felt challenged and his mind began reconstructing events in reverse" (71). In his essay "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud explains that the "unheimlich" (the non-homely or uncanny) comes into being through the increasing ambivalence of the "heimlich" (the homely). As an example, he posits the doubts that arise when there is uncertainty whether "an apparent animate being is really alive" or whether "a lifeless object might not be in fact animate" (64-65). Fred's regression from human being, to rat and insect (citations of Dostoyevsky's "mouse" in *Notes from Underground* and Kafka's insect in *The Metamorphosis*), to zombie and finally to corpse occurs homologously to his

regression from adulthood to adolescence to childhood to infancy: his reasonable flight into the underworld, his "Sturm und Drang" retribution, and finally his narrative regression into verbal fragmentation and aphasia. At the police station, where he confesses a crime he did not commit, his language becomes that of a child: "'It was a long time ago.' He spoke like a child relating a dimly remembered dream. 'It was a long time,' he repeated, following the promptings of his emotions. 'They beat me … I was scared … I ran away' (70). And further on, "'I was down in the basement,' he began in a childlike tone, as though repeating a lesson learned by heart; 'and I went into a movie …'" (74). Finally, after he has been shot by the police, his language, in his last moments of life, becomes, in free indirect discourse, clear of the multiple questions that have dominated his discourse until then, "They shot me, he said to himself" (83). His executioners throw him (half-alive) back down the manhole that he came up from as a zombie, and he floats toward the same fluid annihilation as the dead (fluorescently white) baby that he encountered upon entering the tunnel at the beginning of the story.

Finally, then, the epistemological crises of the novel (as the homeless genre) in Realism, Modernism and postmodernism, are metaphorically represented by the death of the homeless protagonist. While part of the story of Dostoevsky's Man Underground is that he never will and never can finish his ruminations, his final printed words on the page of the bound book are concerned with the birth and procreation of the homeless artist: "We are stillborn, and have long ceased to be born of living fathers … Soon we'll contrive to be born somehow from an idea" (130). Again, birth and homelessness, procreation and transcendental homelessness, are brought into connection through the failure of motherhood. At the end of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, we find that mankind alone (father and son, in the absence of

the mother) has managed to martyr itself in the name of parenthood and human communality — and in the name of art. The Gothic, as Jerrold Hogle explains, embraces a "pattern of hyperbolically verbalizing contradictory fears and desires" (5). In the modern novel this contradiction is embodied in the homeless artist's desire to be free of domestic responsibilities *and* nurtured like a child when engrossed in Bachelardian day dreaming. But it is also incorporated in his desire, as a man, to take part in the creative act, to give birth. The misery that these contradictions bring about in the artistic sentiment — being at home in homelessness — is reflected in the vagrant intellectual: from Rousseau's orphaned solitary walker to Thoreau's builder of quaint domesticity in the woods; from Means's narrator with his troubled contemplations in his parked car in the driveway of his home to Wright's fugitive who shares the sewer (as both home and grave) with a dead baby. Understanding the world through art and narrative seems to have to happen at the cost of motherhood and through the foregrounding of fatherhood. This process is metaphorically realized, for instance, in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and in Lorrie Moore's *I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home* (2024) in which the narration is propelled forward by a male journey with a female corpse — taking her to her final and conclusive grave in order to generate a narrative celebrating the suffering of male homelessness.

**Portland, 2023**

Rush, Claire. “Portland, Oregon, to clear sidewalk tents to settle suit with people with disabilities.” *Associated Press*, 2 Jun 2023, https://apnews.com/article/portland-ada-lawsuit-homeless-tents-sidewalks-aee2d079440d5f9427a18d9e4771d92a.

## 4. Conclusion: American Genres and the Aesthetics of Homelessness Fiction

This project examines hostile and subversive architectures in narrative representations of homelessness. In Jonathan Cullers words (in his study on the lyric), “It does not attempt to find meaning but to understand the techniques that make meaning possible, techniques that belong to the generic tradition” (6). The project posits that the novel came into being by the necessity that modernity posited in representing the physical and psychological homelessness of humanity. However, the project also looks at the necessary adjustments made within and without the novel in order to represent the chronotope of ontic (and urban) homelessness. If, as I posit here, homelessness, as a trope, novelized literature, the question remains if the poetics and prosaics of homelessness fiction represent a genre, a subgenre of the novel, or a mode of fiction. And if so, what are the ethical implications of using the homelessness ontology as a narrative epistemology — as an aesthetic device that claims the syntactic and semantic power to encompass the diversity of life?

Genres develop but so does the idea of genre itself. David Fishelov has shown how genres are often conceptualized in metaphorical terms: for example as biological species that evolve through natural selection, or as families in which members are related in various ways — within a network of similarities — without sharing all of their features (Wittgenstein). As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain in *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphors influence our understanding of life in a powerful way when they infiltrate the language with which we make sense of the world: “Metaphors are basically devices for understanding and have little

to do with objective reality, if there is such a thing," they write (184). And further, "In a culture where the myth of objectivism is very much alive and truth is always absolute truth, the people who get to impose their metaphors on the culture get to define what we consider to be true" (160). This understanding of how we conceptualize reality through metaphors in order to understand it can, I posit, be projected onto narrative with a metonymical conceptualization of homelessness that gives us various epistemological templates (depending on the chrontope's route in history). While, on the basis of substitution and similarity, homelessness is a metaphor for the harsh processes of life, on the basis of combination and contiguity, it is a metonymy that gives narrative form to the chronopotes that construct that life.

In Barbara Johnson's poststructuralist work *A World of Difference*, she refers to "the seductiveness and complexity of metaphor as privileged trope and trope of privilege" (158). Johnson emphasizes that, as tropes, metaphor and metonymy have always stood in hierarchical relationship to one another: "From Aristotle to George Lakoff , metaphor has always, in the Western tradition, had the privilege of revealing unexpected truth" (157). And she quotes Aristotle in *Rhetoric*, "Midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace, it is a metaphor which most produces knowledge" (158). Again, like with notions of genre, a hierarchy is posited on the basis of claims having to do not only with capacity for mimetic realism, but also having to do with sociological contexts: similarity is *rooted* in truth and knowledge, while contiguity is mobile and tinged with chance. Metaphor can be discerned and interpreted immediately: there is truth involved in taking Huck for a coyote. But metonymy's truth needs contingency: as vehicle, Huck's raft — based on the contiguity between instrument and user — can only be interpreted metaphorically *in retrospect*, through

the similarity between the manner in which it floats with the current of the river and the way Huck drifts through life, never swimming against the tide. In other words, its interpretation is hinged on narrative and contingency.

In his essay "The Turn of Metaphor," Jonathan Culler explains these rhetorical processes when he writes that metaphor is, "a term which applies literally to metaphor and figuratively to metonymies" (191). The turn of homelessness as a trope, therefore, would entail its interpretation as a narrative with contingent implications (determined by generic specifications like the adventure time of Romance or the coming-of-age template of the Bildungsroman) that, in retrospect, can be interpreted metaphorically. In this way, metaphor and metonymy engage in dialogism — through the face-to-face interaction between the two that enables homelessness fiction, as a conflation of theme and form, to evolve.

If, as a trope, homelessness novelized literature by dismantling epic distance and embracing the chronotope of the road, then is it constitutive of genre, or of a mode? And if, as a trope, homelessness gives narrative form to the potential capacities of the American myth of opportunity, then is it constitutive of an American generic or modal idiosyncrasy? As a way of understanding literature, genre, to stick with the metaphorical vein, can be conceptualized as an architectural blueprint for a house. In its Aristotelian beginnings it was a plan for various sets of tract homes that were alike according to their floor plans, but furnished and decorated in the taste of their inhabitants. With the onset of Humanism, genre developed towards more subjectively unique blueprints (that were still plans for buildings) that adjusted their outer *form* (and not just the interior design) to the needs of the homeowners: The Romantics, for instance, recognized genre's susceptibility to historicity and artistic subjectivity, and Modernism conceptualized genre more philosophically when genre became

the aesthetic answer to a "historico-philosophical dialectic" — and the house became, definitively, a perpetual construction site.

Modern genre theory, and that includes Bakhtin, foregrounds that genres are not prescriptive but develop, that they are always evolving further, and that they can be defined only in retrospect. Genre evolves both on the level of content and structure, but, as Culler explains, in its flexible consistency, genre gives the author and the reader, the narrator and the narratee, shelter: Every reader that begins an aesthetically designated text, has generic expectations that help her navigate her reading. Two extreme perspectives propose that, on the one hand, every work of art is a genre in itself (Romanticism — see Schlegel) and, conversely, that we are *always* caught in genre and its web of hegemonic expectations (postmodernism — see Kathy Acker).

In his book *What is Pastoral?* Paul Alpers explains that mode "is the term we use when we want to suggest that the ethos of a work informs its technique and that techniques imply an ethos" (49). Mode, therefore, encompasses both form and content: the structure of the text and what it is about. Mode is also the term "for the literary category that includes a number of individual genres, because it is continuous with the idea that a genre is identified by both outer and inner form" (49). In Northrup Frye's catalogue of modes — myth, romance, high mimetic (epic and tragedy), low mimetic (comedy and the novel), and ironic (33-67) — the homelessness mode fits into the categorization "low mimetic," but it also transcends this category. Modes are durable even when they evolve historically. But genres are susceptible to contingency; they are defined after they have crystallized as such, and in opposition to what they did not become. The captivity narrative and the slave narrative are

generic responses to unique historical experiences, while, homelessness, if we posit it as a mode, seems to be a way of coping with change, and a way of thinking about life in general.

The American novel and the American short story are genres, and homelessness as a trope provides them with their narrative mode. American literature conflated indigenous and European templates within its own local geographies, demographics, ideological interests, and historical traumas. In its Menippean mode homelessness fiction represents "a striking combination of what would seem to be absolutely heterogeneous and incompatible elements: philosophical dialogue, adventure and fantasticality, slum naturalism, utopia, and so forth" (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 134). In its Gothic mode, homelessness fiction is haunted by America's historical traumas and the uncanniness of homeless bodies (in their "monstrous" forms — as prostitutes, eccentric artists, drug addicts, madmen, and zombies). And yet another "conjecture" which novelizes American fiction, to use Moretti's term, is contingency. "The difference between the epos and the novel," writes Christian Benne, "would lie precisely with the novelistic hero's dependence on practices of coping with contingency" (18). The internal psychological strategy of "coping" is what plagues the modern secular protagonist and informs the novel in general; in American fiction, this has to do with the conflicting theological and political paradigms that define our interpretive scope.

Life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards. The conflict of the novel is that, in its resistance to form, it needs formal indications to be able to engage in dialogism as a genre. In her essay "Giving an Account of Oneself" Judith Butler writes, "If I try to give an account of myself, if I try to make myself recognizable and understandable, then I might begin with a narrative account of my life, but this narrative will be disoriented by what is not mine." To make myself recognizable, "[t]he narrative authority of the 'I' must

give way … to a set of norms that contest the singularity of my story" (26). In other words, in order to be "accountable," and, in my interpretation, for the *novel* to be "accountable" and engage in dialogism, it must reciprocate its intertextual counterparts — it must in some way offer a common ground. In carnival, heteroglossia represents the people's theoretical potential for responding reciprocally and dialogically to one another. Humans are "polyglot" beings capable of mastering social dialects derived from parents, the clan, our class and religion, our education, country, gender, ethnic background, age, and employment: "Polyphony, the miracle of our 'dialogical' lives together, is thus both a fact of life and, in its higher reaches, a value to be pursued endlessly" (Booth, "Introduction" xxi). This ethical responsibility, I postulate, is what Julia Kristeva reveals in her application of dialogism to intertextuality. In the case of the novel, homelessness, by dismantling the limitations imposed on dialogism through social categories, opens up the genre to polyphony intratexutally and to dialogism intertextually. In this way, one can see genre itself as having both an obligation to respond to the Other and as having, as its own prerogative, the right to be Other. This, I posit, is the difference between the hostile architecture of literature *about* homelessness and the subversiveness of the homelessness mode in the novel and the short story described in this paper.

Bakhtin uses the phrase "the right to be 'other'" in chapter VI, "The Functions of the Rogue, Clown and Fool in the Novel," of his essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (158-167). Essential to these three comic figures, "is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege — the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available" (159). The novel and especially the novel of homelessness, can be considered a generic rogue. Homelessness is the

novel's definitive and simultaneously subversive modal shelter as a genre, and the homeless protagonists's journeys, whether on the road or on the street, reflect the repetitive revolutions of the novel itself. The anxiety that Lukács attaches to the novel's never being able to attain "totality" can also be interpreted, with Bakhtinian ease, as a form of (American) freedom: the right to the perpetual reinvention of the self: "Each truly original or ambitious novel seeks formal judgement in its own right, even when it claims 19th century readability" (Jameson 1). The novel is transcendentally homeless and, at the same time, an agent of its own Bildungsroman: While homelessness is a metonymy of the novel, the novel becomes a metaphor for homelessness. That is, homelessness informs the novel on the basis of contiguity, while the novel represents homelessness on the basis of similarity.

Within its intertextual and intergeneric polyphony, homelessness fiction transacts heteroglossia intratextually: It puts the lonely and unsheltered subject "out there" (both lonely in judgement *before* God and lonely *without* divine guidance) and mediates the potential polyphony of the chronotopes of the road and of the street. As a trope that constitutes the novel, homelessness novelizes protagonisticy — negotiating agency and provoking the "narrative desire" to engage in dialogism: Reading for plot, writes Brooks, fulfills a kind of "textual erotics" already present within the story and aroused by the dynamics of signification and understanding (Brooks *Reading for the Plot* 37). In other words, the novel is not a thing but an act, an event that is reenacted in every reading. In his book *Inventions of the Present*, Frederic Jameson posits further that what makes the contemporary novel historically unique (and sets it apart from the privacy of fashionable autofiction) is that it "tries to write the collective or at least register the crisis of the individual attempting to do so" (2). In this sense,

the novel is an effort (not to describe or represent) but to communicate dialogically by evoking a sense of collectivity behind subjective experience.

In his discourses on carnival and dialogism (in the Rabelais and Dostoevsky books), Bakhtin aspires to the "choral vitality" (Booth xxii) of dialogism, which Bakhtin sees as "concretely sensuous" and "eccentric": In carnival "all distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: *free and familiar contact among people*" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 123, Bakhtin's emphasis). Within and through dialogism, "[a] man never coincides with himself … [Instead] the genuine life of the personality is made available only through a dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself" (59). These interpretations of the readerly act interpret dialogism as an erotic act, and in this sense, dialogism evokes carnival but also provokes the American anxiety of genre mixing. In this thesis, I further postulate that homelessness fiction, in its necessarily diverse chronotopic manifestations as novel, novella, short story and tale, describes in theme and realizes in form individual and communal ambivalences regarding the manifestation of carnival in our selves through the reciprocal reflection of the Other. The poetics and prosaics of homelessness incorporate the freedom and crises surrounding the conflation of self-reliance, self-invention and loneliness with notions of community and heteroglossia that are central both to the form of the novel and to the American identity.

While the chronotope of the road novelizes literature, the chronotope of the street reduces the scope of chronotopicity and therefore, quite simply, the length of the narrative. In each case, however, the narrative is structured thematically and formally through the intertextual traction of Menippean satire and the Gothic. Jack Halberstam postulates that "in its generic form, Gothic is the disruption of realism and of all generic purity … but it is also

the narrative that calls genre itself into question" (157). And he continues, "[R]ather than the Gothic residing in the dark corners of realism, the realistic is buried alive in the gloomy recesses of Gothic. It may well be that the novel is always Gothic" (157). At least to some extent every novel of homelessness is underscored by Gothic anxieties and uncertainties about the precariousness of subjectivity and agency, the (un)importance of the Other to myself, and the fear of death.

But as much as the Gothic defines the "*effect* to be wrought out" of the narrative of homelessness, Menippean satire is also always operating its (droll) subversiveness. According to Bakhtin, Menippean satire is the primary mode of carnival: "Menippea has been, in the literature of modern times, the primary conduit for the most concentrated and vivid forms of carnivalization" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 137). It is carnival not only because of its promotion of folk humor and street language, but because of its own malleable corporality, eroticism, and insistence on being Other. Bakhtin writes of Menippean satire, "We have seen that on ancient soil, including the earliest Christian period, the menippea already manifested an extraordinary "protean" capacity for changing its external form (while preserving its inner generic essence), a capacity to grow into whole novels, to combine with kindred genres, to infiltrate other large genres" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 136). While in antiquity, Bakhtin considers Menippean satire a genre (static and defined), in modernity it becomes a mode (changing and Other): "[T]he generic label 'menippea,' like all other generic labels — 'epic,' 'tragedy,' 'idyll,' etc. — is, when applied to the literature of modern times, a means of designating the essence of a genre, and not any specific genre canon (as in antiquity)" (137).

While the chronotope of the street represents the reduction of romance adventure time and of the chronotope of the road that makes the novel, its complexity resides in the challenges of representing 'a life worth telling about' within such a limited time-space continuum. In his discourse on various chronotopes in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin describes the chronotope of the provincial town very much in the manner of the urban village that homeless people make of their neighborhoods in the big cities:

> Such towns are the locus for cyclical everyday time. Here there are no events, only 'doings' that constantly repeat themselves. Time here has no advancing historical movement, it moves rather in narrow circles: the circle of the day, of the week, of the month, of a person's entire life. (247-248)

This chronotope is what Means calls the "vortex of non-time that comes from following a set path day after day" (180). And it informs the short stories of Sherman Alexie, Garth Greenwell, Paul Auster and David Means, as described above. Greenwell and Richard Wright embed their short stories and novellas of homelessness in short story cycles that extend their chronotopictiy into a lengthier narrative about the same or similar characters and, thereby, formulate, within the bound book, a kind of novel discourse informed by "adventure time." But to make a story of the urban unsheltered existence *interesting* without resorting to intertextual adventure time is a challenge. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes writes, "It can't be helped, boredom is not simple" (25).

Robert Coover has written two short stories about homelessness, each no longer than six pages; each of which embodies (more insistently and clearly than its counterpart) either the Gothic or the Menippean mode of narrative: The Gothic story "The Wayfarer" (1968) and

the Menippean story “The Waitress” (2014), published almost half a century apart by one of the Untied States’s greatest short story writers, represent, in their exemplary modality, the narrative processes of homelessness addressed in the four chapters of this paper.

In “The Wayfarer” a police officer confronts a homeless man sitting on a mile stone on the side of the road. All of the efforts of the police officer to communicate with the unsheltered man — through speech, eye contact, and touch — are ignored by the latter. In first person narration from the perspective of the police officer, the story traces their confrontation face-to-face: “I squatted and interposed my face in the path of his stare … I don’t know whether or not in that instance of perception he noticed my badge. I wished at the time that he would” (24)). The police officer’s monologue traces his efforts to postulate his authority and act according to the expectations of the passersby, while at the same time physical violence becomes more and more inevitable due to the frustrations and anxieties that overcome the policeman through the aphasia, corporal abjection and uncanny resemblance of the homeless man. The Gothic infiltrates the story through metaphors of Otherness that confront the protagonist (and the readers face-to-face). Judith Butler writes, “There is already not only an epistemological frame within which the face appears, but an operation of power as well, since only by virtue of certain kinds of anthropocentric dispositions and cultural frames will a given face seem to be a human face to any one of us” (23). The homeless man exudes ambivalence about his being alive or dead (even after he has been shot and a waterfall of empty signifiers spill from his mouth like blood); he reciprocates the police officer’s doubts about his own authority and power, and about his own immortality.

Albeit the linguistic and physical violence, the text does not represent hostile architecture because Menippean satire enters the text through the unreliability of the first

person narrator. “A bad book,” Wayne Booth writes in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, “is often most clearly recognizable because the implied author asks that we judge according to norms that we cannot accept” (157). And in his introduction to Bakhtin’s Problems of *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Booth suggests that dialogism (and the novel) posit “the ability or willingness to allow voices into the work that are not fundamentally under the ‘monological’ control of the novelist’s own ideology” (xx). This seems to be another way of expressing, in Booth’s own “rhetoric of fiction,” what Keats expressed with his idea of “negative capability” (494): the ability to empathize and respect an-other without having to understand, and without claiming to have understood.

The story becomes Menippean (and ethical) when it becomes clear that it is articulating in form and theme the complexity of the encounter: when it displays the violent enforcement of an ideological platform and at the same time deconstructs it with dramatic irony that reaches the implied reader. Jeffrey Nealon writes of the importance of response in interaction, “Both Bakhtin and Lavinas insist that ethics exists in an open and ongoing obligation to respond to the other, rather than a static march toward some philosophical end or conclusion” (133). This reflects Bakhtin’s notion of answerability: the responsibility of responsiveness. The police officer cannot read the homeless man’s aphasia as a response, but only as a metaphor for his resistance; but the officer himself, through his violence, actually fails to respond. Butler explains,

> The recognition that one is, at every turn, not quite the same as what one thinks that one is, might imply, in turn, a certain patience for others that suspends the demand that they be selfsame at every moment. Suspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly,

> for complete coherence seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence that demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same. (27)

In this story then, the failure of responsiveness is metaphorically represented in the homeless man's aphasia and the police officer's violence. It is, however, thematized (and not carried through in itself) by way of irony (by way of the discrepancies between the implied author and the narrator) that evoke "negative capability." The foregrounding of the Gothic mode and its dialogic response to subversive Menippea informs the text as an example of homelessness fiction.

While "The Waitress" also poses an example of homelessness fiction it does so, in contrast, by foregrounding the Menippean. The waitress is tired of being "ogled" by men and, in front of a "bag lady" to whom she has just given a free bowl of soup, makes an impulsive wish to never be looked at by anybody again. Little does she know that the "bag lady" is actually a fairy godmother — and her wish comes true. From then on, every person she confronts face-to-face is forced, by way of a violent wrenching of the neck, to look away from her. Needless to say, she loses her job and is faced with homelessness: she befriends the only person who doesn't look away from her — a blind panhandler. While there is a hilarious process of new wishes being made and granted by her fairy godmother that make the waitress rich in the end, she — in her own act of fairy godmotherness — takes in the blind panhandler and they celebrate. "It won't exactly be happily ever after, but the bag lady never promised her that" (3).

According to Bakhtin, Menippean satire implements fantastic situations for testing the truth. The story seems to be asking if good deeds are rewarded: it asks if character is fate, in

the sense that we are born with it, or if good character brings about a positive fate. The third person omniscient narration is, once again, permeated with Socratic induction and with questions surrounding the agency of the protagonists. Grotesque realism is ornamented with the therapeutic and liberating force of laughter. Dialogism between the waitress and the fairy godmother, between the waitress and the blind panhandler, occurs intuitively and openly — without even being face to face. As Jeffrey Nealon explains, "Dialogic ethics, then, seems to offer a way out of the dead-end of identity politics by offering instead a socially grounded and compelling notion of ethics that does not resort to the ontological schemes of abstract Kantian obligation" (134). Instead of being based on the categorial imperative, every decision the waitress makes is new to her identity, and must be experienced as such (as though every work of art were its own genre). "The Waitress," therefore, is about resistance to totalizing gestures.

As pars pro toto these two stories represent the formal and thematic Menippean and Gothic elements that make homelessness fiction: formal indicators like Socratic dialogue (that is either satirized as Menippea or goes unanswered and echoes its loneliness); soliloquy and self-dialogue, as well as the dialogic relationship with other protagonists (even the use of the second person "you") and with the implied reader through irony; tropes like the outer surveillance through persons and the inner surveillance through the "unhomely," the internal polyphony of madness, violence as a failure to respond, and both mad laughter and cathartic laughter. The homeless man in the first story cannot speak, the homeless woman in the seond is not seen. While not being seen can of course be read as a metaphor for the invisibility of the homeless to the passersby on the street, within the context of a woman's homeless existence, it can also be interpreted as a form of freedom from the kind of hegemonic

surveillance that Maggie, Boxcar Bertha, and the Girl endure. The Gothic enters the story inadvertently, as a parody of Realist and Naturalist texts in which women as mothers are made responsible for both homelessness and for alleviating homelessness.

Research has shown that having family is principal in keeping a person off the street (HUD exchange). In his famous investigation on genre, Wittgenstein, describing the "affinities" between certain games, comes to the conclusion that, while there is not one single feature that all of them share ("For if you look at them, you won't see something that is common to all"), one does see "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and the small" — like various resemblance between members of a family, each of which manifest themselves in some but never in all of the members (36). The same goes for homelessness fiction as a mode of narrative: there are strong and vague resemblances, but the elements of form and of theme overlap and criss-cross, and posit a subversive reality to the hostile architecture of literature *about* the homeless. The generic and mimetic subversiveness of the Gothic (Halberstam) and of Menippea (Bakhtin) postulates homelessness as a mode freed of the hegemonic constraints of generic canonization that would only lead to a loss of the mode's subversive — its carnival —- potential. Homelessness, as a perpetually changing narrative epistemology that is continually escorted by the Gothic and Menippean modes, posits a trans-generic mimetic access to human life precisely through its plurality and polyphony.

There is, finally, a connection between American genres and homelessness as an American ontology. In a last gesture, one can look at a short story by a homeless person herself, randomly picked from the archive of the Berkeley newspaper *Street Spirit:* Tiara Swearington's "My Mind, the Haunted House." As a narrative soliloquy (the first person

narrator is aware of the audience and yet the narration is intimately personal), the story addresses themes of inner and outer surveillance, the internal polyphony of madness, and the vortex of addiction. It is outlined by unanswered Socratic dialogue, the Menippean decent into the underworld, and ambivalences about being dead or alive: The protagonist survives through a kind of fierce courage that is inseparable from madness. Swearington writes, "It's like I'm living in a haunted house, and the only thing that the treatment will do is make it pretty. It will make the haunted house pink" (3). The poetics and prosaics of homelessness are ethically bound to dismantling hostile architecture and to arriving at, what David Means's narrator, in the last sentence of the story, claims would "bring the banality of sequential reality to a location of deeper grace" (189). But this "location of deeper grace" is not a place that can be reached by following the lead of the narrative to some sort of satisfying closure, to some sort of metaphorical notion of home. Instead, it refers to our "negative capability," and the *locality* of our being, where our priorities and our social resources are in a dignified — a dialogical — balance. As Geoffrey Harpham states, "Articulating perplexity, rather than guiding, is what ethics is all about" (27).

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## 6. Appendix: Summary in German

Die Dissertation mit dem Titel "*Homelessness" und der amerikanische Roman* beschäftigt sich mit "homelessness" als Tropus, mit dessen poetischen Eigenarten und prosaischer Umsetzung, gattungsspezifischen Tendenzen und philologischen Implikationen für die amerikanische Literatur. Die Arbeit postuliert, dass die Entstehung des Romans mit einer Notwendigkeit der Moderne einhergeht die physische und psychologische Obdachlosigkeit und Heimatlosigkeit der Menschheit zu verstehen und darzustellen. Genauer stellt sich die Frage, ob durch die thematische Prävalenz und die strukturellen Eigenarten fiktionaler Prosatexte, die sich mit Obdachlosigkeit und Heimatlosigkeit beschäftigen, von einem Modus oder sogar von einem Genre gesprochen werden kann, der oder das für die amerikanische Literatur einzigartig ist. Um dieser Frage nachzugehen, werden vor allem die Romantheorien von Georg Lukács und Mikhail Bakhtin angewendet, um den Amerikanischen Roman (und zudem die Short Story) vor dem Hintergrund diverser Epochen, Subgenres, und Modi zu untersuchen, wie auch um der pluralen und intersektionalen obdachlosen Bevölkerung gerecht zu werden.

Der Begriff Homelessness umfasst die deutschsprachigen Begriffe Obdachlosigkeit und Heimatlosigkeit, und zieht ebenfalls Formen der emotionalen Entfremdung in Betracht, die Georg Lukács in seiner Studie über den Roman als "transcendentale Obdachlosigkeit" bezeichnet; also die, die sich durch die existentielle (immer gegenwärtige) Suche des modernen, säkularen Menschen nach einem psychologischen, philosophischen und

ästhetischen Zuhause auszeichnet. In dieser Arbeit umfasst aber weiterhin und absichtlich der Begriff "homeless" sowohl "the unhoused" als auch "the transcendental homeless", denn die Arbeit möchte abschließend gerade auf die relevanten ethischen Fragestellungen blicken, die durch die Zusammenführung dieser beiden Diskurse um Obdachlosigkeit und "transzendentaler Obdachlosigkeit" aufgeworfen werden, eine Verschmelzung, die sich als Konvention im Canon der amerikanischen Literatur manifestiert. Daneben werden aber auch Texte außerhalb des Canons in Betracht gezogen, die, wie Bakhtin behauptet, ihr gesellschaftskritisches und gattungssubversives Potential bewahren.

Die Arbeit postuliert, dass Homelessness in den USA eine wesentliche identitätsstiftende Rolle spielt, die die ethnische Pluralität, die Amerika ausmacht, umfasst, wenn nicht überragt; dass Homelessness also die amerikanische Kultur — als immer gegenwärtiges Thema, wenn nicht Trauma — in unvergleichlicher Weise beeinflusst hat, von der amerikanischen Volksmusik und der Musik des Blues, zum Beispiel, bis hin zur bahnbrechenden Photographie der Great Depression; dass aber auch (und ganz besonders) die *Literatur* der Vereinigten Staaten uns wesentliche Einblicke geben kann, wie und warum Homelessness in den USA nicht nur soziologisch und demographisch sondern vielmehr lebensphilosophisch so relevant ist. Diese Relevanz verdeutlicht sich gerade dann, wenn die Menge an Texten in Betracht gezogen werden, die sich mit Obdachlosigkeit als modus vivendi beschäftigen, wobei sich gattungsspezifische Manifestationen des Tropus entlarven, die mit epistemologischen Deutungsmechanism zu tun haben, und Homelessness in diversen Abstufungen der Notbedürftigkeit und Freiwilligkeit verstehen: Vom wandernden und naturverbundenen Philosophen eines Thoreaus, bis hin zum verwahrlosten Junkie-

Schriftsteller eines Bukowskis; vom fortziehenden jugendlichen Lehrling des Bildungsromans, bis hin zum verwaisten Schelm mit seinem täglichen Kampf ums überleben.

Die amerikanische Literaturgeschichte muss im Kontext der Kolonisations- und Migrationsdynamik Nordamerikas gesehen werden — dazu gehören, neben einheimischen Erzählungen aus der Native-American Tradition, die Übertragung spezifischer europäischer Gattungsschablonen, die Heimatlosigkeit und Obdachlosigkeit thematisieren *und* formell umsetzen: wie zum Beispiel der Bildungsroman, der Roman des Picaro oder Menippeische Satire. In diesen Genres stellen Armut und Obdachlosigkeit nicht nur die soziologischen Rahmenbedingungen einer Erzählung dar, sondern bestimmen stilistisch und formell — also (nach Bakhtin) "polyphonisch" durch Diskurse diverser Gesellschaftsschichten und "chronotopisch" durch spezielle Raum-Zeit Strukturen — das Gerüst eines narrativen Werkes.

Der Ausgangspunkt der Arbeit kann mit Georg Lukács's Postulation zusammengefasst werden, dass Genre einer "geschichtsphilosophischen Dialektik" ausgesetzt sei. Das heist, dass die Arbeit gerade im Roman nach gattungsspezifischen Tendenzen und Veränderungen sucht, die die Widersprüche der amerikanischen neoliberalen Ideologie reflektieren, eine Ideologie, die sich fortwährend damit befasst amerikanische Ideale der Selbstbestimmung mit der puritanischen Auffassung des Auserwähltseins zu vereinen, und mit den bestehenden Realitäten der Obdachlosigkeit zu versöhnen. Mit anderen Worten, Homelessness steht generell literaturhistorisch in einem besonderen Bezug zur Literatur und zu den Gattungsprinzipien des Romans — der ja auch nach Mikhail Bakhtin und Georg Lukács durch seine offene Form als "homeless genre" gesehen werden muss. Andererseits steht Homelessness auch speziell in ganz besonderem Verhältnis zu den kulturellen

Eigenartigkeiten der Vereinigten Staaten**,** und zu den widersprüchlichen theologischen und politisch-philosophischen Diskursen ihrer Entstehungsgeschichte.

Schon Aristoteles hat in seinen Reflexionen über Genre soziologische Rahmenbedingungen und psychologisch-emotionale Affekte mit formellen Vorgaben in Verbindung gebracht: die Tragödie als Gattung der Könige, die Komödie als Gattung der niedrigen Klassen. Im Gegensatz zu Bakhtin, der in seiner Romanhistorie chronologisch beginnend in der griechischen Antike, die Entstehungsgeschichte des Romans formal nachzeichnet, sehen Franco Moretti und Ian Watt "the rise of the novel" im 18. Jahrhundert angesiedelt, mit dem Aufkommen einer mittleren gesellschaftlichen Schicht im Rahmen der Industrialisierung. Das Paradigma der protestantischen bürgerlichen Arbeitsethik findet im amerikanischen Puritanismus sein Pendant. Die Formen der Sozialisation, die aber zum Beispiel den europäischen Bildungsroman prägen (Reisen, Salon-Gespräche, Tanz, Musik) und sich dem Alltag der Aristokratie zu nähern versuchen, werden in Amerika anders geschrieben: Der amerikanische Bildungsoman orientiert sich eher (als Ausgangspunkt) an einer Ontologie der Armut und Obdachlosigkeit und bestrebt nicht das Erklimmen eines höheren Bildungsgrades, sondern den Aufstieg auf der sozialen Leiter durch finanziellen Erfolg — nach der bekannten Schablone "from rags to riches".

Philologisch wird mit der Aufklärung und deren Aufwertung von individualisierten Erfahrungsmechanism eine neue — "a novelized" — Auffassung von Realismus postuliert, also einen *neuen* und romanhaften Ansatz das Leben darzustellen: einen Ansatz, der sich einer subjektiven Wahrnehmung der Welt widmet und die Tatkräftigkeit und den Eigensinn des Protagonisten in den Mittelpunkt stellt. Der herkömmliche (mittelalterliche) Held, der sich als universell gültigen Typus (ohne Plot und Kontingenz) in "adventure time" bewegt,

wird im historischen Kontext der Aufklärung ersetzt — durch einen Protagonisten, der von Mündigkeit und Aspiration getrieben wird. Dieser Paradigmawechsel hat wichtige Konsequenzen für die Art und Weise wie obdachlose Figuren beschrieben und aufgefasst werden: als Opfer ihres Schicksals oder als selbstbestimmende Architekten ihrer eigenen Lebensgeschichte. In der literarischen Aufarbeitung des "myth of upward mobility" amerikanischer Erfolgsgeschichten werden Mündigkeit und Kontingenz also zu narrativen Komplizen**,** die zusammen in der Spannung um die Dialektik des amerikanischen Traums dem Roman Form geben, nicht zuletzt auch dadurch, dass die Entscheidungsprozesse einer Protagonistin erst im Nachhinein moralisch interpretiert werden können. Diese Spannungen beruhen auf und bleiben bestehen durch die Resilienz der theologischen Diskurse um puritanische Auserwähltheit gegenüber den säkularen politischen Diskursen um Eigenverantwortung der amerikanischen Aufklärung.

Dabei untersucht die Arbeit auch konkret, vor dem Hintergrund von Bakhtin's Postulation, dass Genre chronotopisch bestimmt wird, die Unterschiede und Schnittstellen zwischen narrativen Erzählungen, die Obdachlosigkeit in ländlichen und in urbanen Lebensräumen darstellen. Unter "chronotope of the road" stellt Bakhtin sich die geographische Fortbewegung des Protagonisten vor, die entlang eines von Begegnungen geprägten physischen oder metaphorischen Weges im zeitlichen Rahmen seiner Lebenshistorie gegliedert wird. Das "chronotope of the street", das ich in dieser Arbeit dem entgegensetze, beschreibt die Zeit- und Raumverhältnisse der Erfahrungen der Obdachlosen, die durch als eine Art "vagrancy" (also ein sich "ziellos" Umhertreiben) bestimmt wird. Dieses "chronotope of the street" steht im Gegensatz zur zielstrebigen und linearen "American mobility" (welches sich in der amerikanischen Literatur sowohl horizontal durch

Raum und Zeit, als auch vertikal auf der sozialen Leiter bewegt). Statt dessen agiert das “chronotope of the street” anti-chronotopisch, räumlich non-linear und zeitlich flüchtig, was ein ambivalentes “coming-of-age” darstellt, und sein literarisches Pendant in der short story findet.

Die Arbeit ist in zwei Teilen aufgeteilt. **“On the Road”** beschäftigt sich mit dem Roman als Realisierung von Bakhtin’s “chronotope of the road,” und damit als Diskurs, der subversive (und “carnivalesque”) narrative Architekturen ermöglicht. Kapitel 2.1 soll “carnival” als obdachlosen Ontologie positionieren und an Beispielen aus Literatur und Film erläutern (dazu gehören die Gattungen des Tramps, des Picaros, und des Coyotes). Kapitel 2.2 untersucht an Hand exemplarischer Romanen und Filmen diverse modi des “carnivalesque”, wie Menippeische Satire und Sokratischer Dialog. **“On the Street”** hingegen soll die Tragweite der Verlagerung des Themas Homelessness in die Großstadt (nach der “Schließung” des amerikanischen Frontiers 1890) für den Roman erkennen. Durch die Einschränkung des “chronotope of the road” entsteht in verkürzten Literaturformen (Novelle und short story) eine von mir postulierte “chronotope of the street,” die jene urbane Formen der Obdachlosigkeit darstellt. Kapitel 3.1 untersucht Romane des Realismus und Naturalismus, und soll in den mimetischen Ambitionen dieser Epochen (wie auch in realistisch angesetzten Texten anderer Epochen) eine Tendenz erläutern, bei denen die Autorität der Texte durch eine Poetik der Hagiographie und der “Gothic literature” gefestigt werden soll. Kapitel 3.2 untersucht Texte der Moderne und der Postmoderne, um einen Kontrast ziehen zu können zwischen den seelischen (künstlerischen) und den körperlichen (traumatischen) ontologischen Interpretationen von Homelessness — dem "transcendental homeless” und dem “ontic homeless”. Im Schluss der Arbeit werden ethische Fragestellungen

in Erwägung gezogen und gleichzeitig der Frage nachgegangen, ob es sich bei “homelessness fiction” um ein Genre oder einen Modus handelt. In den analytischen Ansätzen wird stets auf eine Auswahl von Texten geachtet, die der Intersektionalität der obdachlosen Bevölkerung gerecht wird.

In einer Zeit, in der der Mythos um “upward mobility” und “rags to riches” in den Vereinigten Staaten inzwischen an so vielen Straßenecken durch obdachlose Menschen in Frage gestellt wird, ist das Erkunden einer obdachlosen Literatur historisch relevant. Zusammengefasst will die Studie erläutern, wie, einerseits, durch den bewussten Einsatz etablierter Gattungsgerüste im Roman Homelessness ästhetisch als chronotopische Leistung postuliert wird, und, andererseits, wie gleichzeitig, durch die Implementation gewisser Modi und Gattungsverschiebungen, subversive— und nach Bakhtin “carnivalistische” — Diskurse dieses Vorbild immer wieder in Frage stellen.