

INTRODUCTION: NOVEL BEYOND NATION

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Today, the classical conjuncture between the nation and the novel seems to be challenged by the persistence of the novel despite the crisis of the nationalist social bond. According to Benedict Anderson, “nationalism’s most creative and influential theorist” (Hollinger 116), the national community is imagined in two forms: the novel and the newspaper. The novel turns the pre-modern cyclical time into the Benjaminian empty, homogeneous time of the calendar (Anderson 24), which means that newspapers are novels without plot, “one-day best-sellers” (35). Building on Anderson, one might say that the novel empties out the majestic *We* into the anonymous *we*, and that the newspaper flattens the cyclical time of religious and dynastic imagined communities into *today*. However, while nationalism is being increasingly replaced by post-nationalist identity politics, the novel is not being sublated by any new form. While the tombs of unknown soldiers, Anderson’s ingenious representational equivalent to one’s unknown national compatriots (9-10), are being overshadowed by monuments to living American presidents erected by emerging identity communities as part of their politics of recognition, Mikhail Bakhtin’s diagnosis of “novelization” (6) as the fate of all genres seems more topical than ever. In short, while everyone is talking about the post-national times, no one argues for post-novelistic times—not even the contributors to *New Imagined Communities*, a recent collection of essays in which Péter Hajdu regards Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* as “brilliant” (129).

On the contrary, while Hajdu’s acknowledgment of Anderson is enforced by the idea that “[t]he breakdown of the nineteenth-century nation state is somewhere between the Schengen Agreement or the wall on the Mexico-US border and non-transparent walls of smart residential areas,” the chapter, since it is written by “a literary scholar” (131), concludes with a literary example, which, to be sure, is a recent novel. But this is indeed a general development: many recent histories of post- or transnational lit-

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erature are to a large extent histories of the novel. The novel is the hero not only of Franco Moretti's history of the long century of European nationalism, but also of Peter Hitchcock's history of the "long space" of postcolonialism (Hitchcock 1-43); the novel is the paradigm not only of Fredric Jameson's concept of "national allegory" (Jameson, "Third-World" 69), but also of Paul Jay's "transnational turn" (Jay 1). For Jameson's (in)famous outline of the "third-world literature" of Eastern colonies ("Third-World" 65) and Moretti's by now equally (in)famous sketch of the "world literature" of Western colonizers ("Conjectures" 55) could have easily specified their "literature" as novel; but the same goes for Hitchcock's long space and Jay's transnational turn, as the former designates four postcolonial novelistic tri- and tetralogies, and the latter, the post-2000 novelistic canon. Moreover, around the time Hitchcock and Jay published their respective books, Jameson and Moretti, too, wrote books, on realism and the bourgeois, respectively (Jameson, *Antinomies*; Moretti, *Bourgeois*), that in effect are grounded in the novel—just as, say, Pierre Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art* is a reading of Flaubert, and Pascale Casanova's Bourdieusian *World Republic of Letters* is accompanied by monographs on Beckett and Kafka; Hitchcock's and Jay's, however, may be the purest examples of studies that acknowledge both the ubiquity of the novel and the transnationalist response to nationalism. In other words, there exist accounts of the withering-away of the nation-state in a time when one would search in vain for an account of the decline of the novel form; quite the opposite, discourses on the hegemony of the novel are themselves almost hegemonic, and probably rightly so.

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Finally, beyond the academic canon, the book market is flooded with paperback airport novels, ghost-written autobiographies, novelizations of blockbusters, in short, novels as commodities, which finally brings us to the moment in Anderson's theory that allows us to bridge the gap between the persistent novel and the decaying nationalism, namely "print-capitalism" (Anderson 18). Print-capitalism is the one massive feature shared by the rise of the novel in the early days of nationalism and the ubiquity of the novel in the current stage of post-nationalism.

The question arises, then, what can this persistence of the novel beyond nationalism tell us about the novel in times of nationalism and, conversely, about the nationalism in times of the novel? Does the transition from nationalism to identity politics imply a transition within the history of the novel itself, or does the continuing centrality of the novel imply a continuation of nationalism within identity politics? Or is there perhaps time to return to Benedict Anderson and to rethink his groundbreaking framing of nationalism in the newspaper and the novel? Is the novel perhaps the genre not of nationalism, but of capitalist modernity itself? These are some of the questions addressed by the contributors to this volume.

In the opening contribution titled "Novels before Nations: How Early US Novels Imagined Community," Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse propose an alternative to the mainstream procedure of linking the novel to the modern nation. They identify the narrative moves by which novels of the early US republic brought

intelligibility to the colonies of North America. The phenomenon of these novels implies either that they simply abandoned the standard set by other national novels, or that the new US was not a nation in the sense that later novels would insist it was; Armstrong and Tennenhouse hold both implications to be true. They propose five notions these novels introduced to narrate unstable networks instead of nationally representative individuals: dispersal, population, conversion, hubs, and anamorphosis. Finally, they find a homology to this pre-national novel in the contemporary post-national novel, as they trace the contemporary neoliberal biopolitics back to its eighteenth-century birthplace.

In my “Pre-modern Joking Relationships in Modern Europe: From *Le Neveu de Rameau* to *Le Neveu de Lacan*,” I undertake a synoptic reading of Franco Moretti’s theory of modern European literature and Rastko Močnik’s theory of modern European political institutions. I use these respective conceptualizations of the European novel and the European nation-state in order to outline a set of texts that effectively assess modernity from the perspective of the paradigmatic pre-modern institution of joking relationships between uncles and nephews: Denis Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau* (ca. 1761-74), Karl Marx’s *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1851-52), Louis Althusser’s *L’avenir dure longtemps* (1985), and Jacques-Alain Miller’s *Le Neveu de Lacan* (2003). A set of quasi-(auto)biographic accounts of the micro-structure of joking relationships thus becomes part of the macro-history of the pre-revolutionary, the bourgeois revolutionary, and post-May ’68 France.

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Marko Juvan, in “The Nation Between the Epic and the Novel: France Prešeren’s *The Baptism on the Savica* as a Compromise ‘World Text,’” shows that the novelistic imagining of nations is dominant only in the core of the literary world-system, while outside it, the same role of literary nation-building is played by the romantic return to the pre-modern epic. One such example is *Krst pri Savici* (*The Baptism on the Savica*), a 1836 verse tale written by France Prešeren, the Slovenian “national poet.” Juvan reads *The Baptism* as an example of Franco Moretti’s modern epic, a hybrid between the epic and the novel that emerged along with the modern novel to supplement its nationalism with a supranational or even “world” viewpoint. In Goethe’s *Faust*, Moretti’s key example, such a viewpoint is provided by Occidentalism. In *The Baptism*, it is provided by Christianity, the victorious community that interpellates the pre-Christian epic hero of the defeated proto-national community of a Slavonic people.

In “The Narrator and the Nation-BUILDER: Dialect, Dialogue, and Narrative Voice in Minority and Working-Class Fiction,” Alexander Beecroft traces the ways literature has given voice to the subaltern without either eliciting comic effect or polishing their speech to avoid this effect. The usual solution is the compromise between the character’s vernacular and the narrator’s literary registers. This applies to national (or ethnic) as well as to class marginality. Even subaltern authors sympathetic to their equally subaltern characters tend to make their narrators speak in the high styles of the characters’ masters, as examples of Thomas Cooper, Émile Guillaumin, Martin

R. Delany, Toni Morrison, and others show. Hence, Beecroft views the narrator's literary consolidation of characters' non-literary styles as an aesthetic dimension of the consolidating work of the nation-state-itself. Which may be why this type of narrator persists as stubbornly as the nation-state resists contemporary transnationalist projects.

Emilio Sauri examines, in "Autonomy after Autonomy, or, The Novel beyond Nation: Roberto Bolaño's 2666," a recent idea that Bolaño's novels mark the shift from the Latin American Boom with its nationalism, Bolivarianism, and literary autonomism to the new generation of novelists with their postnationalism, commodity fetishism, and post-autonomism. Sauri links this post-*l'art pour l'art* autonomy to the restrictions of artistic autonomy in the periphery of the world-system. This restricted autonomy is acknowledged not only in Bolaño's interviews, but also in the very structure of his 2004 novel 2666. For the way this novel incorporates a plethora of non-literary as well as literary genres is even more radical than that of the modern, relatively autonomous Western novel. So, 2666 approximates, not the modern Western novel, but the contemporaneous postmodern and post-autonomous one. Unlike postmodernism, however, 2666, as a peripheral novel, marks late capitalism as a crisis-ridden, rather than triumphant, age.

350 Hrvoje Tutek's "Novel, Utopia, Nation: A History of Interdependence" returns to utopia, a major genre of twentieth-century literature and politics that today is being replaced by apocalyptic and other anti-utopian genres. He rethinks utopia by linking it to the novel. And in order to reject ahistorical readings of utopian fiction as a merely monologic subgenre dialogized by the novel, he then links both to the nation. For the nation is imagined not only by the novel, but also by the utopia. Moreover, with Thomas More, the utopia conceives of the very nationness that the novel after, say, Daniel Defoe then narrates. However, while utopias locate the ideal society outside the societies of their readers, novels address their own readerships as ideal societies. Hence, even the national(ist) realist novel cannot subsume the utopia; on the contrary, realism is followed by even more concrete estrangements of the given in novels as well as utopias, in James Joyce as well as William Morris. Finally, if novels can still narrate social relations today, these tend to be novels that manage to return precisely to the utopia.

In her "Neomedievalism in Three Contemporary City Novels: Tobar, Adichie, Lee," Caren Irr reminds us that the post-national condition can mean a return to pre-national medieval particularism as well as a step toward global cosmopolitanism. As the new global city-states with their rentier classes override national jurisdictions, tackling national economies with their neoimperial and/or regionalist projects, the national *Bildungsroman*, too, is being replaced by novels of the metropolis. Analyzing the ways in which the medieval chronotopes of the wall, the gate, and the road are reused in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), and Chang-rae Lee's *On Such a Full Sea* (2014), Irr shows how contemporary urban fiction forsakes the liberal *flânerie* of the modernist city for the

neomedieval fantasy of the postmodern city-state.

Finally, in his “Crisis of the Novel and the Novel of Crisis,” Suman Gupta unpacks the chiasm of his title by sketching a transition from presupposing the crisis of the novel to analyzing the novel of crisis. To this end, he first demystifies the commonplace about the proximity of nation and novel, showing that the novel has always been beyond nation. Gupta stresses that Benedict Anderson traces the imagining of national communities in books and newspapers, not just in novels and news. This move from the genre to book circulation also allows Gupta to demystify the topos of the crisis of the novel by looking at the broad circulation of novels that narrate the current economic crisis. Moreover, this crisis is not only a topic but also the very discourse of the contemporary novel, concludes Gupta. The volume hence closes with an implicit suggestion that the situation named by the volume “Novel beyond Nation” is older than the contemporary crisis of the nationalist social bond, if not as old as the novel itself.

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