

PETER FREESE (Ed.)

The *Journey of Life* in American Life and Literature

American Studies ★ A Monograph Series

Volume 260



Universitätsverlag
WINTER
Heidelberg



AMERICAN STUDIES – A MONOGRAPH SERIES

Volume 260

Edited on behalf
of the German Association
for American Studies by
ALFRED HORNUNG
ANKE ORTLEPP
HEIKE PAUL



PETER FREESE (Ed.)

The *Journey of Life* in American Life and Literature

Universitätsverlag
WINTER
Heidelberg

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation
in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;
detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

UMSCHLAGBILD

© Peter Freese

ISBN 978-3-8253-6465-6

Dieses Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.
Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes
ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt ins-
besondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und
die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

© 2015 Universitätsverlag Winter GmbH Heidelberg

Imprimé en Allemagne · Printed in Germany

Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum, 87700 Memmingen

Gedruckt auf umweltfreundlichem, chlorfrei gebleichtem
und alterungsbeständigem Papier

Den Verlag erreichen Sie im Internet unter:
www.winter-verlag.de

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| PETER FREESE Foreword | 7 |
| PETER FREESE Introduction | 9 |
| PETER FREESE The 'Journey of Life' in American Fiction | 17 |
| KLAUS BENESCH Modern(s) Walking: Rousseau, Thoreau, Heidegger | 65 |
| RÜDIGER KUNOW From Womb to Tomb: The Journey of Life in the Age of Biotechnology | 81 |
| ALFRED HORNUNG Jack London's Journeys of Life | 91 |
| CARMEN BIRKLE Westward Home! Of Pioneers, Petticoats, and Practitioners in America's Old West | 101 |
| BRIGITTE GEORGI-FINDLAY Journeys in(to) the Western Film | 121 |
| HEINZ ICKSTADT Vectors of Desire: Pynchon's Space Travels | 139 |
| MARKUS WIERSCHEM At a Crossroads of Life and Death: The Apocalyptic Journey(s) of Cormac McCarthy's Fiction | 159 |
| JEANNE CORTIEL Travels with Carl: Apocalyptic Zombiescape, Masculinity and Seriality in Robert Kirkman's <i>The Walking Dead</i> | 187 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| KARSTEN FITZ | |
| Initiation and Cultural Identity in Sherman Alexie's Young Adult Fiction | 205 |
| JOSEF RAAB | |
| The Intercultural Journey of Belonging in José Antonio Villarreal's <i>Pocho</i> | 219 |
| LAURENZ VOLKMANN | |
| Making Sense of Richard Brautigan's Short Story of (Anti-) Initiation "A Short History of Oregon." Or: A Short History of the Uses of Short Stories in the German EFL-Classroom | 239 |
| List of Contributors | 259 |

PETER FREESE
Foreword

When my university suggested that I should not let my 75th birthday go unnoticed but celebrate it with an appropriate academic event, I decided to have a small and intimate colloquy with just a dozen and, for organizational reasons, only German colleagues. Pondering whom I should invite, I thought about the numerous colleagues I had come to know and with whom I had cooperated in my almost forty years of teaching American Studies in Kiel, Münster and Paderborn (1967-2005), in my many years as board-member and then president (1993-96) of the German Association for American Studies, and in my capacity as elected DFG-*Gutachter* (2000-04) for *Amerikanistik*. I remembered the many colleagues whom I had met in my activities as *Vertrauensdozent* for the Fulbright Commission (1998-2013), and as a member of numerous selection committees and the organizer of several summer academies for the *Studienstiftung* (1971-2013), through which I have tried to 'pay back' my own scholarship. And I thought about those colleagues whose dissertations, habilitations and conference anthologies I had published as founder and editor of the scholarly series *Arbeiten zur Amerikanistik* (Blaue Eule, 1987ff.), and about those who had contributed diverse volumes to my two series of teaching materials, *TEAS: Texts for English and American Studies* (Schöningh, 1977-91) and *Viewfinder* (Langenscheidt, 1994-2013; Klett, 2013ff.), which meanwhile comprise more than 150 anthologies and thematic readers.

In the end, I invited a dozen of German Americanists with whom I share gratifying memories of long-standing joint activities and some of whom have, during the last four decades, grown from colleagues at work into personal friends. It proved to be anything but easy to find a date that all of them could fit into their well-filled appointment books, but we finally managed to agree on one. Thus, on 30 October 2014 we met for a good dinner and a relaxed evening with nostalgic stories about shared memories and leisurely small talk about both the good old days and the problems of today. On the following day, we found ourselves in the *Senats-Sitzungssaal* of the University of Paderborn for a strenuous but rewarding day with a dozen excellent papers and enthusiastic debates,

and then we closed our successful colloquy, together with several other guests, with a reception in our *Gästehaus*.

I did not want our get-together to result merely in another meeting and subsequent essay collection with diverse contributions about unrelated topics, and therefore decided that it would be more rewarding if we set ourselves a thematic frame. From my dissertation on *Die Initiationsreise* (1971; rpt. 1998) to my recent attempt at a taxonomic survey of “The ‘Journey of Life’ in American Fiction” I have always been interested in ‘journey narratives,’ which, for obvious reasons, play an especially prominent part in the life and literature of the U.S. Moreover, at seventy-five my own professional journey had reached its final stage, and it seemed only natural to think of the planned colloquy as a meeting with some of my academic traveling companions. Therefore, I concluded that the ‘journey of life’ would be a suitable topic for our meeting, provided all participants with an offprint of my recent essay, which had appeared in February 2014 in the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, and asked them to use that survey of journey variants in U.S. fiction as a sort of referential horizon for their contributions. Fortunately, they all agreed to do so and presented impressive papers dealing with both real and literary journeys. The former ranged from the westward travels of pioneer women physicians in the nineteenth century to the attempts at tinkering with the stages of the human journey of life in the present age of biotechnology. The latter ranged from the omnipresent traveling in Thomas Pynchon’s novels and the ‘post-apocalyptic’ journey in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* to the journeys of initiation in Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and José Antonio Villarreal’s *Pocho*.

When not only the written versions of the papers presented at the colloquy rolled in, but also the contributions of those colleagues who could not attend our meeting but wanted to submit their papers for the conference publication, I formatted them, did the layout, and established a camera-ready copy. Since I did all the editorial work myself, it only remains for me to express my gratitude to all my colleagues who contributed to a lively and informative colloquy and the collection at hand and to my university which greatly helped to make not only the colloquy but also the publication possible.

Peter Freese
February 2015

PETER FREESE
Introduction

All of the twelve essays collected in the volume at hand deal, in one way or another, with the concept of the ‘journey of life,’ as surveyed, with regard to American fiction, in an article of mine that served as the referential horizon for the colloquy where these essays were first presented. In a revised and greatly expanded version of this article, which opens this collection, I argue that the perennially recurring journey narrative is a major archetype of the human imagination and that from the earliest days onwards it has been used by story-tellers as a means of making temporal developments more immediately experienceable by spatializing them. I point out that the concept of the journey is especially influential in a country whose earliest settlers were adventurers and refugees fleeing from persecution and searching for a better life and a major period of whose history was defined by the westward movement of the frontier, and that therefore numerous protagonists of American fiction are *hominēs viatores*.

I distinguish the three basic types of the journey, namely, the escape, the search, and the aimless drifting, and survey their realizations and combinations in U.S. fiction. I point out that the “escape journey” is constitutive for the indigenous genres of the Indian captivity tale, the slave narrative, and a variety of the road novel; that in classic American fiction it is often realized as the protagonist’s flight from the fetters of civilization into the still unsettled West; and that it finds its more recent variants in the drug-induced “trip” into the inner recesses of the human mind, in the flight into the alternative world of madness, and in the vicarious journey into the depths of the internet. Modern variants of the “search journey,” which provided the constitutive plot of the medieval romance of chivalry, the pilgrimage, the allegorical journey towards salvation, and the quest for the Holy Grail, are also prominent in American fiction and find their characteristic manifestations in the western, in science fiction, and in fantasy literature. The journey as an end in itself is most clearly realized in those road novels which depict constant and aimless movement. Frequently, both the geographical and the imaginary journeys undertaken by the characters in U.S. fiction interlink these basic types in

various combinations as, for example, in the narratives about the confrontation between the old and the new world known as the “International Theme.”

I point out that an especially frequent and characteristically American journey type is the journey of initiation which presents the protagonist’s development from childhood, ignorance and innocence to adulthood, knowledge and experience as a journey that unfolds through the stages of exit, transition, and (re)entry, climaxes in a life-changing shock of recognition, and often combines elements of escape and search. And I demonstrate that geographical journeys, whether they are realized as escapes, quests, aimless movements or combinations of the basic types, play a crucial role in American fiction. In virtually all cases the geographical journeys on which the escapers, questers and drifters embark are used to spatialize inner developments, and the travelers set out on their concrete voyages in order to reach their spiritual destinations.

I argue that the fashionable conversion of the specific genres of the *novela picaresca* and the *Bildungsroman*, which developed under unique social conditions in particular epochs in Spain and Germany respectively, into ‘timeless’ taxonomic types and their rash adoption and extremely loose application to modern American fictions is in danger of reducing these categories to arbitrary labels. Thus, an inventory of the journey variants employed in U.S. literature can definitely help to contextualize individual texts within their generic traditions, but it is necessary that taxonomic types as found at all times and historical genres as confined to specific periods be carefully differentiated.

The human desire to go on a journey is predicated upon man’s ability to move at all. This is why KLAUS BENESCH points out that the journey of life began with man’s ‘raising from the ground’ and that his newly won ability to walk was his initial means of traveling. He then discusses Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau, and Martin Heidegger as three modern walkers and shows that they “illuminate a fundamental paradox of modern life: the need to conjoin forms of being in-motion with a being *there*, a being anchored in a particular place and time.” Whereas for Rousseau “the liberating force of pedestrian travel” still served as a counterweight to the alleged health hazards of intellectual labor and as a prerequisite for the construction of art, a century later, pedestrian travel had “changed from an important source of empowerment to an essentially pointless pastime,” and Thoreau set out to “re-inscribe the activity of walking with new meaning.” His plea for a peripatetic lifestyle is con-

nected to his attachment to places, as revealed in his punning use of “saunterer” as referring to both a ‘holy-lander (*Sainte-Terrer*)’ and a ‘man *sans terre*.’ Later, Heidegger’s “move from a kinetic ontology to an essentially place-based topology” is another attempt to reconcile “the life-giving momentum of speed and mobility to an equally human need for tradition and reassurance.” Benesch shows that in their attempts to deal with such paradoxes, Thoreau and Heidegger represent the concerns of many modern artists and thinkers.

The concept of the ‘journey of life’ is not only a literary theme or motif with all kinds of metaphorical implications but it can also be applied to everyone’s physical life as unfolding in daily reality. This is why RÜDIGER KUNOW reminds us that *homo viator* has “a body that will play a decisive role at various stages of the journey, especially at its beginning and end.” Starting from the important observation that our inevitable aging is not only a biological but also a cultural process and that people, especially in the U.S., try to postpone the coming of age as long as possible, he points out that recent breakthroughs in biotechnology that range from neuro-engineering and bio-banking to bio-pharming and nutraceutical foods might soon make it possible to beat the biological clock and realize a “post-body” culture. He shows that interventions in the human life journey are still extremely expensive, uncovers the close connections between the brave new world of biotech and neo-liberal capitalism, and concludes with the unsettling prediction that in the near future age might change from a universal human condition into “a form of life that replicates, even reinforces, the unequal distribution of life chances in capitalist societies.” Therefore, we may witness “a *biology-based socio-cultural apartheid*, separating the technologically enhanced sheep from the unregenerate goats.”

ALFRED HORNUNG reports on his ongoing work on a biography meant to capture the essence of Jack London’s career as acted out in “his journeys of life in reality and fiction.” Concentrating on London’s extensive journeys and their reflections in such overtly autobiographical narratives as *The Road*, *Martin Eden*, and *John Barleycorn*, Hornung shows how the autodidactic writer combined Spencer’s notion of the survival of the fittest and Nietzsche’s superman concept into guidelines for his travels. He demonstrates that London’s development from a worker into a writer, from a rampant individualist to a dedicated socialist, and from a poor nobody to “the commercially most successful author in the United States” is reflected in his books, and he shows how these books convert “the actual scenes of his early life into literary terms,” and how time and again they

make use of the journey concept. He briefly refers to the many biographies of Jack London which not only try to recreate “his journeys on land, on sea and in politics and literary imaginations,” but also “reflect the biographer’s own journey of life.” And he announces that his biography will trace London’s life as “a search for self-realization and material success” and relate it to contemporary issues from “the precariat and the financial machinations of capitalism” to “an awareness of ecological concerns and the preservation of the environment.”

Often a reconstruction of the individual life journeys of historical personages allows us insights into larger social and political developments. This is demonstrated by CARMEN BIRKLE, who reconstructs the eventful life story of Dr. Mollie Babcock Moore Atwater, a courageous nineteenth-century woman who became a physician “in spite of the obstacles put into her way in the name of religion, biology, and social norms.” By making use of such texts as Caroline Kirkland’s 1839 autobiography *A New Home – Who’ll Follow?* and Margaret Fuller’s travelogue *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, in which the history of the frontier is demystified from female perspectives and the “civilizing” effect of women in the West is revealed, Birkle establishes the socio-historical context of “Dr. Mollie’s Medical Life Journey” and shows that her ‘going west’ to Utah and then to Montana in search of emancipation and professional freedom was both an escape from social constrictions and a search for professional fulfillment. And she demonstrates how the life journey of this pioneer woman sheds new light on the history of the frontier, the history of medicine, and the history of women’s rights and how ‘Dr. Mollie’ helped “to refute the myth of the ‘Wild West’ by becoming one of the ‘petticoat pioneers’ who actively transformed the West.”

In her wide-ranging “survey of the types of journeys which we find in Western films,” BRIGITTE GEORGI-FINDLAY also takes us to the American West, but this time not to the historical region but to the mythical realm of the Wild West. Referring to several dozen films that were released over a time span of almost a century between 1923 and 2013, she shows that these films depict a rich variety of journeys that range from the early overland trails that led to the birth of a national collective in the course of westward movement to contemporary journeys that deal with long neglected female ordeals or conjure up a post-apocalyptic world, and that in between one finds journeys that deal with the interaction between man and nature, journeys of revenge, journeys of escape, journeys to manhood, and journeys toward the end. Georgi-Findlay shows that almost all of these journeys are charged with allegorical, archetypal or legendary

implications, and she demonstrates that in the flourishing genre of the Western film the journey motif is not only ubiquitous but “figure[s] as a central tool to address a multiplicity of issues.”

In his survey of Thomas Pynchon’s demanding œuvre, the renowned Pynchon expert HEINZ ICKSTADT demonstrates that journeys provide “the axis around which Pynchon’s fictions turn.” After a concise discussion of earlier novels from *V*, in which both Herbert Stencil, the quester, and Benny Profane, the drifter, are part of a huge conspiracy, through Oedipa Maas’ search for the mysterious Tristero in *The Crying of Lot 49* to Slothrop’s eventual dispersion in the Zone in *Gravity’s Rainbow*, he offers illuminating readings of *Mason & Dixon* with its protagonists’ travels through the wilderness, of the tangled plotlines of the voluminous *Against the Day* with its “ragbag of genres and travel types,” and of *Bleeding Edge*, in which “ingenious adventurers explore in the Deep Web unmapped landscapes and a new dimension to the concept of the journey.” Ickstadt demonstrates that the ‘journey of life’ concept stands in the very center of Pynchon’s work and that, moreover, with him “the ‘journey of life’ ties in with the journey of his writing, and travels are also part of a meta-discourse relating not only to *what* history is told but *how* it is imagined and constructed.”

In his essay, MARKUS WIERSCHEM reads Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road* as an exemplary realization of the journey plot. But before he reconstructs how this particular journey unfolds, he surveys McCarthy’s earlier works and shows that his “œuvre constitutes a veritable matrix of the various literary configurations and variations of the journey.” The journeys of McCarthy’s protagonists frequently use the imagery of an initiatory death and rebirth and lead to life-changing insights, and they often unfold the fundamental dichotomy between life and death which McCarthy considers “the major issue in the world.” Wierschem then shows that with its combination of apocalyptic and initiatory experiences, *The Road* is a culmination of previous developments. He argues that the novel’s popular definition as ‘post-apocalyptic’ must be specified and demonstrates that “whereas apocalypse affects the world, initiation affects the individual, but in realizing both *as a journey*, McCarthy merges the static, panoptic and quasi-divine perspective of the prophet with the mobile, immersed and thus limited human experience of the individual in passage.” Having demonstrated that *The Road* combines religious, secular, and scientific dimensions, mixes biblical references to the apocalypse with thermodynamic references to growing entropy, and presents a structure that mirrors the episodic nature of the journey, Wierschem concludes

that in McCarthy's last work so far "the individual 'journey of (a) life' becomes the journey of *life*, of life itself, and the wanderer at once the way and its goal: in life rather than death."

It seems a far cry from McCarthy's *The Road* to Robert Kirkman's serial comic *The Walking Dead*, which is extremely successful and has meanwhile found transmedial offshoots in a television show and a computer game. But JEANNE CORTIEL demonstrates that also in Kirkman's comic, which deals with the monster figure of the zombie in an end-of-the-world story and mixes the contradictory genre traditions of horror, science fiction, and apocalypse, the 'story of life' plays a crucial role. She explains that both the figure of the zombie as a being that is unable to die and the serial mode of the comic endlessly defer closure, but that Kirkman "deploys key elements of the classic journey plot in their zombified form, the escape from the horrors of home, the encounter with the self through the other, and the quest for meaning externalized as a new place of safety," in order to create a story of development and thereby to control his readers' anxieties about contingency. And she shows that *The Walking Dead* provides a full-fledged apocalypse which "examines key issues of contemporary American culture through the ultimate figure of uncertainty, the zombie," includes an elusive vision of a New Jerusalem with a father-son pair at the center of its family-based, pre-modern utopian community, and combines its endlessly deferred seriality with a clear goal and destination.

In his essay about two novels by the successful novelist and filmmaker Sherman Alexie from the Spokane Indian Reservation, KARSTEN FITZ, a specialist in Native-American literature, shows how Alexie "uses the journey narrative in various forms to guide his readers through the protagonists' individual quests for identity." Concentrating on two best-selling tales for young adult readers, *Flight* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Fitz shows how these novels are built on the concept of the "journey of initiation" with its tripartite structure of exit, transition, and (re)-entrance and how, in an important contrast to older 'ethnic' fictions, Alexie's youthful protagonists do not have to end their journeys in search of their true identity by painfully opting for either the customs and values of their Native-American heritage or the mores of the white majority, but that they manage "to bring the white and the Indian worlds together."

In his essay, JOSEF RAAB deals with José Antonio Villarreal's novel *Pocho*, whose protagonist Richard Rubio finds himself in the borderlands

of identity between the traditions of his Spanish-speaking father and his English-speaking surroundings. Raab reads the novel as “an intercultural coming-of-age novel centered on the notion of belonging,” and he shows how it combines the three basic variants of the ‘journey of life’ narrative in order to spatialize Richard’s development as a process of maturation that does not culminate in a decision for either the Mexican or the U.S. American culture but in his adoption of “a critical distance toward his options in terms of national/cultural belonging.” Raab explains that Richard’s insistence on “the opportunity to preserve his individualism rather than being compelled into a culture, an ideology or a cause with which he cannot completely identify” not only explains why the activists of the Chicano Movement neglected Villarreal’s novel of 1959 or even rejected it as assimilationist, but that it also makes *Pocho* an unduly neglected text which in the changing climate of today is “ready to be rediscovered as a classic journey of life narrative of multiple belonging in an intercultural environment.”

I have always argued that *Literaturwissenschaft* and *Literaturdidaktik* should work more closely together, and this is why by all means I wanted a methodologist to take part in the colloquy. LAURENZ VOLKMANN, who had been a colleague of mine in Paderborn for several years and contributed some successful volumes to my *Viewfinder* series, proved to be the right choice. In his article, he deals with Richard Brautigan’s “A Short History of Oregon” (1969), which he reads as an anti-initiation story that “playfully manipulates the elements of [the journey motif] by showing *in nuce* how a goal-directed trip comes to nothing and its ritualized phases are deconstructed as leading to entropy.” Volkmann shows how over the last decades “literary texts have been used for various purposes” in teaching EFL in Germany and traces how in the 1990s the combination of text analysis and cultural knowledge that had dominated the ‘70s and ‘80s was replaced by four tendencies: “creative” approaches to literature, the use of the three-stage model of pre-, while-, and post-reading, the embedding of single texts in an intertextual universe, and their evaluation according to how ‘interculturally relevant’ they are. He illustrates these changes with regard to the possible readings of Brautigan’s story, and shows that they depend on whether one concentrates on its ‘culture-general,’ ‘culture-specific,’ ‘archetypal’ or ‘transcultural’ implications. Relating Brautigan’s story to relevant verbal and visual texts and showing how it playfully deconstructs various cultural myths of the U.S., he ends with a welcome plea for giving literature once again the place it deserves: “If students are taught how to deal with literary texts by appreciating the very literariness of such texts, they may gain insights into the

specific value of literary interpretation. Literature can thus find a special place in the EFL-classroom again.”

It is obvious that the essays collected in the volume at hand can only offer a few exemplary insights into the manifestations and functions of the ‘journey of life’ in both American life and literature. But I dare say that a combination of an attempt at a ‘timeless’ taxonomy of journey types with a survey of its ‘time-bound’ historical variations as prevalent in particular periods and with close readings of its concrete realizations in individual narratives can allow fascinating insights into how a major archetype of the human imagination can help to structure our perception of the temporal nature of existence.

PETER FREESE

The 'Journey of Life' in American Fiction

"No one can learn much of anything at home. Going somewhere is the thing. And there – in all sorts of tempting variety – is your story." (Howe 1)

In western culture, *homo sapiens* is not only understood as *homo faber* who makes tools and builds machines and thus increases his means of changing his surroundings, and as *homo ludens* who engages in self-sufficient play and thus heightens his creativity, but also as *homo viator* who travels and thus broadens his horizon by experiencing the unknown. This is why the journey as a process of learning through traveling is an elementary manifestation of human life, and many languages bear witness to its role as a fundamental activity. The German verb *erfahren* originally means 'to explore while traveling;' the Latin *curriculum vitae*, the German *Bildungsgang*, *Lebensweg* and *Lebenslauf*, the English 'journey of life,' the French *train de vie* and *parcours professionnel*, and the Spanish *trayectoria profesional* and *recorrido vital* visualize experiences and developments that occur in time as movements that unfold in space. And such English idioms as 'being adrift on the sea of life' and 'sailing into the harbor of marriage' are based on the concept of human experience as a voyage 'on life's ocean.'

From the very beginnings of literature, story-tellers have used strategies of spatialization, and this is why Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg can state that "a traveller's tale, a road or journey narrative [...] is a persistent oral form in all cultures" because it allows, as in Homer's *Odyssey* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, the visualization of non-spatial events in "the simple linear form of voyage by land or sea" (73). Hans-Joachim Possin speaks of the journey narrative as a major archetype of human imagination and behavior and points out that "the elements of travel can be regarded as the essential literary means of rendering the specific idea of a work of travel literature beyond that of describing a journey," namely "the representation of a spiritual or mental process by means of the pattern of a journey" (257). And for Janis P. Stout "the journey is indeed a perennially recurrent fictional form precisely because it is [...] a 'simple linear

form' providing an obvious structure which readily accommodates secondary import" (13).

Although journey narratives exist in all literatures, they are most prominent in American writing, where – as Stout maintains – the journey is “the dominant form in which experience has been interpreted in fiction” (18). She specifies this observation by adding that “from its beginnings, the American literary tradition has been characterized to a remarkable and peculiar degree, by narratives and images of journeys” (3), and Robert Butler supports her claim by stating that “a central quest in American life is for pure motion, movement either for its own sake or as a means of freeing oneself from a prior mode of existence” (11). American novelists confirm such a diagnosis. Thus, for example, in *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), Thomas Wolfe speaks about “the hunger for voyages, the hunger that haunts Americans, who are a nomad race” (428), and in *Travels with Charley* (1962), John Steinbeck tries to explain why this is so:

Could it be that Americans are a restless people, a mobile people, never satisfied with where they are as a matter of selection? The pioneers, the immigrants who peopled the continent, were the restless ones in Europe. The steady rooted ones stayed home and are still there. But every one of us, except the Negroes forced here as slaves, are descended from the restless ones, the wayward ones who were not content to stay at home. (103)

If one understands a journey as a movement from point A to point B, the motive for such a movement can be that a traveler wants to get away from A, that he wants to get to B, or that he travels for the sake of traveling. Consequently, in a taxonomic understanding, there are three basic journey types:

- the journey as an escape from a given place with causal motivation,
- the journey as a search for a particular place or object with final motivation, and
- the aimless movement between two places with inherent motivation.

In concrete fictions, however, the need to escape from an old life might lead to a search for a new one, a failed search can end in an attempt to escape, a journey that spatializes an inner development might unfold as a teleological journey that gradually moves towards a harmonious ending or culminates in a sudden life-changing insight, or it might consist of aimless drifting that is an end in itself. Thus, the basic types often exist simultaneously and in various combinations, as for example in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), in which the impoverished Joad family escapes from the Oklahoma dust bowl where farming has become impossible and sets out on an arduous journey along Highway 66 in

search of the promised land of California where, however, they can only harvest the grapes of wrath which, as in Revelation 14: 19f. and in the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," conjure up both the need to suffer and the hope for an eventual delivery. In the course of history, particular journey types have contributed to the development of the *novela picaresca* and the *Bildungsroman* as original narrative genres flourishing in specific periods of Spanish and German literature. Since in recent research these two timebound categories have been rather precipitately applied to American texts, the respective kinds of journey and whether they can be found in U.S. fiction need to be examined in greater detail.

The Journey as an Escape

Escape stories exist in all literatures, and the most influential examples are two classic tales: the flight of Aeneas and Anchises from burning Troy to a yet unfounded Rome as told in Vergil's *Aeneid* and the escape of Moses and the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity into the promised land of Canaan as told in the biblical book of *Exodus*. In the typological thinking of the Puritan settlers in the New World, these narratives about escapes and new beginnings, the flight from an unbearable existence in an old world and the successful home-founding in a new one, became foundation myths, and in American fiction escape stories have remained popular through the ages. A well-known example from the 1960s is the endless story of innocent Dr. Richard Kimble's narrow escape from the police in the 120 episodes of the TV series *The Fugitive*. Much earlier, however, the escape story functioned as the structural backbone of two indigenously American types of narration, namely Indian captivity tales and slave narratives.

INDIAN CAPTIVITY TALES, which were widely popular from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, recorded the mostly historical but sometimes also fictional experiences of white men and women captured by Native Americans. The plots of these first-person narratives usually unfold as journeys and often culminate in the successful flight or eventual ransom of the captives. The most famous example is *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), which went through four editions in the year of its publication and became one of the first American best-sellers. In this pious autobiographical account, the protagonist-narrator reports how she is taken prisoner by marauding Indians and forced to "travel with them into the vast and desolate Wilderness" (Derounian-Stodola 15). She was held captive for "eleven weeks and five days" (45), a period of time she recalls as an unending "Journey" (20) with many

“grievous day[s] of Travel” (23) “over Hills and through Swamps” (26) until her eventual “going home” (45) as made possible by God’s grace. Another, and controversial, example, first told about in Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* and extolling the captive woman as victor, is the gruesome story of Hannah Duston, who was taken captive together with her nurse during King William’s War and forced to keep up “with their new Masters in a long Travel of an Hundred and Fifty Miles” (59). But she escaped after having scalped ten of her Indian captors and returned triumphantly home where she received a substantial reward for the scalps she brought with her. For obvious reasons, this historical genre no longer exists, but Thomas Berger’s bestselling novel *Little Big Man* (1964) uses some of its major ingredients for revisionist and often parodistic purposes in telling the story of Jack Crabb, “a one-hundred-and-eleven-year-old survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn” (36), whose parents are massacred by the Pawnees, who grows up in a Cheyenne village, divides his eventful life between whites and Native Americans, crosses paths with many of the West’s notable figures, and, in the words of the editor of his story, “was either the most neglected hero in the history of this country or a liar of insane proportions” (447).

SLAVE NARRATIVES were a major form of African-American literature in the nineteenth century. Written by former slaves, and often edited or published by abolitionists, they revealed the gruesome reality of the ‘peculiar institution’ by offering accounts of their authors’ enslavement and daring escapes to freedom. About 150 of the thousands of such accounts were published as books or pamphlets. From *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa* (1789) through the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) to *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs, these accounts offer tales of religious redemption, case studies meant to inspire the abolitionist struggle, and/or models of intellectual and economic progress. In all of them,

the structural pattern imposed by the narrator upon his past describes a journey toward freedom: a *break away from* the enslavement of one society and the *break into* “the better day” of another. This journey is simultaneously a physical or geographical one – to the North – and a spiritual one – to acceptance into society as a human being and thus to the possibility of legitimate selfhood. (Smith 13)

Later, Mark Twain worked a fictional variant of a slave’s journey of escape into his *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Richard Wright made use of the journey plot in his autobiography *Black Boy* (1945), and actual or metaphorical journeys figure prominently in many black auto-

biographies up to such bestsellers as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). In these tales, which build upon the conventions of the slave narrative, the archetype of the life journey is frequently used. Albert E. Stone has pointed out that the black protagonists' life journeys "derive from often bitter realities of historic trips – the Middle Passage, escape from slavery, the trip northward to Harlem or westward to Watts, exile in Paris or Africa" (176). And in his readings of African-American novels from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) to Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), Robert Butler has convincingly demonstrated that "in many important ways, classic African-American fiction in the twentieth century can be seen as artfully signifying upon the open journeys imagined in nineteenth-century slave narratives" (15).

The ESCAPE PLOT, however, was not only used in captivity tales and slave narratives, but also in many classic American novels which deal with their protagonists' flight from the fetters of civilization into the still unsettled territory of the West. Thus, in James Fenimore Cooper's five Leatherstocking Tales (1823-41), Natty Bumppo moves from Lake Otsego in the East ever farther westwards into the treeless prairie, and in Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), the restless protagonist sets out on a dangerous journey to the South Sea. In *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), Richard Henry Dana leaves the intellectual world of Harvard and embarks on a voyage as a cabin boy to the still 'uncivilized' California, and in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1850), Ishmael escapes from the "damp, drizzly November in [his] soul" (93) onto a whaling ship that takes him out onto 'life's ocean.'

The journey of escape is also still very much alive in modern and contemporary American fiction. In J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), the deeply disillusioned Holden Caulfield runs away from his East coast boarding school and dreams of a pastoral existence with his girl friend in a lonely log cabin in the deep woods "with a brook and all" where they can "chop all [their] own wood in the winter-time and all" (138). In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the nameless protagonist is expelled from what is a fictional variant of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and decides "to get to New York as quickly as possible" (131), thus trying to escape from the racist South into the allegedly free North and to embark, as Ellison himself said in *Shadow & Act* (1964), on "the road to freedom – the movement upward" (174). At the end of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1955), whose chapters about Yossarian being AWOL in Rome vary the mythical *descensus ad inferos* (see Daskow), Yossarian

is “going to run away” to Sweden “to save [his] life” (440). In Richard Wright’s *The Long Dream* (1958), Rex Tucker, aka Fishbelly, grows up in racist Mississippi and after a painful maturation process travels “eastward on the first lap of a journey that would take him far, far away” (346). And in John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* (1960), Harry Angstrom tries to escape from his claustrophobic hometown and must learn from a gas station attendant that “the only way to get somewhere, you know, is to figure out where you’re going before you go there” (25).

In Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962), in which the inmates of the enclosed ward experience their liberating breakthrough during a fishing trip, Chief “Broom” Bromden escapes from the asylum, catches a ride with a truck going north, and decides that after a visit to his home on the Columbia River he will go “to Canada eventually” (272). In Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream* (1965), Stephen Rojack, after the murder of his wife, flees from New York and after a short stay in Las Vegas sets out “on the long trip to Guatemala and Yucatán” (252). In Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), the three youthful protagonists undertake a similar journey when they ride into the unknown world of Mexico, which is symbolically characterized by the map they consult: “There were roads and rivers and towns on the American side of the map as far south as the Rio Grande and beyond that all was white.” (34) And in Douglas Coupland’s *Generation X* (1991), three dropouts from the success-driven rat race, have “left their old lives behind them and set forth to make new lives for themselves in the name of adventure” (88). In their “quest to find a personal truth, they willingly put themselves on the margins of society” (88), live in the desert, and tell stories “to make [their] own lives worthwhile tales in the process” (8). Numerous other novels could be named, but these examples suffice to confirm Stout’s claim that “the escape [...] is the most fully characteristic form adopted by the American imagination and comprises a part of the mythology of the American experience from its origins” (31).

In *The Escape Motif in the American Novel*, Sam Bluefarb also maintains that “the presence of escape, or flight, in the modern American novel has long reflected a dominant mood in American life” (3). To illustrate his thesis, he analyzes eight novels from Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) to Wright’s *Native Son* (1940), which once more show that the urge to move into new territories and overcome new challenges is a central motive in a country whose earliest settlers were adventurers and refugees fleeing from persecution and searching for a better life, and a major period of whose history was defined by the westward movement of

the frontier. This motive is so pertinent that even when there was no longer a territory to move to ahead of the rest, the need to escape did not abate but was simply reversed. Now the protagonists no longer ran from the constricting rules of city life into the rural West with its promise of freedom, but the other way round. Thus, "in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries escape took the form of what Carl Van Doren had called 'the revolt from the village,' in which the escaper deserted his own hometown to head for the city" (11).

In view of this development, it is no surprise that Bluefarb diagnoses a gradual shrinking of possibilities and a steady increase of pessimism. Huck Finn's escape is still filled with the optimism associated with America's westward advance, but Wright's Bigger Thomas can hardly cross the borders of his urban ghetto, and when Holden Caulfield, the latter-day urban Huck Finn, goes west, he cannot "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (Twain 366), but ends in a sanitarium in the vicinity of the hateful dream factory of Hollywood. Bluefarb concludes that, despite the ever shrinking success of the protagonists' flights, all historical variations of the escape plot share some central ingredients, among which are the fact that "virtually all of the escapers [...] need to embark on a geographical journey in order to reach some sort of spiritual destination" (157) and the fact that "for whatever reason – out of hope or hopelessness – escape seems to be as much an 'inalienable right' as those other guaranteed rights Americans have usually taken for granted" (163). Thus, he confirms once more that the geographical journey plays a crucial role in American literature and that it is frequently used to spatialize an inner development.

In postwar American literature the escape journey has found yet another variant in the DRUG-INDUCED TRIP as a specific concretization of the traditional concept of the 'imaginary voyage' (see Gove). And the very metaphor of the 'trip' once more reveals that here, too, experiences in time are visualized as journeys through imagined space. Inspired by either individual experiments with mind-expanding drugs as undertaken by Aldous Huxley in Los Angeles and Timothy Leary at Harvard (see Stevens) or by mass experiences with LSD as orchestrated by Ken Kesey in San Francisco and described by Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), several writers used their fictions to open Huxley's new *Doors of Perception* (1954) and sent their protagonists into the hallucinatory realms of the human psyche. William Burroughs closes his autobiographical first novel *Junkie* (1953) with the announcement of yet another 'trip': "I am ready to move on south and look for the uncut kick that

opens out instead of narrowing down like junk.” (153) And in the non-linear plot of his best-known text, *Naked Lunch* (1959), he organizes the drug-induced visions of William Lee as his literal and metaphorical journeys from New York into the mythic West and then to Mexico, Tangier, and into the dreamlike “Interzone.”

In Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971), the two protagonists Raoul Duke and his attorney Dr. Gonzo, the fictional projections of the author and the Chicano activist Oscar Zeta Acosta, set out on two drug-addled rampages to Las Vegas with the official purpose to cover the off-the-road race of the Mint 400 and the National District Attorneys’ Conference on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, but with the deeper aim “to find the American Dream” (6, see 11, 12, 20, 47, 161, 164ff., 191). Provided with a huge supply of recreational drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, LSD, ether, cocaine, and mescaline, they spend their days between aimless meanderings through a “grossly atavistic” (173) Vegas that represents the superficiality of American consumer culture, and bizarrely violent hallucinogenic trips, all the time ruminating on “the meaning of [their] journey” (8) or “the meaning of this trip” (56) and constantly bemoaning the failure of the counter-culture of the sixties (see 178f.). And from Mark Vonnegut’s narrative autotherapy of his drug-induced schizophrenia in *The Eden Express* (1975) and Hubert Selby’s exploration of the frightful results of addiction in *Requiem for a Dream* (1978) to Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984) and Bret Easton Ellis’ *Less Than Zero* (1985), real and imaginary journeys are used to spatialize drug-induced experiences.

Similar voyages into the other world of the imagination are undertaken in FICTIONAL EXPLORATIONS OF INSANITY that range from Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963) and Joanne Greenberg’s successfully filmed *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964) to Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977) and T. C. Boyle’s *Riven Rock* (1998). In Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), for example, the hapless Chicana Consuelo “Connie” Ramos is diagnosed as a schizophrenic after “her dark journey” (31) through poverty, crime and drug abuse and finds herself in a closed mental institution in which she is subjected to inhumane experiments in mind-control. She conjures up the imaginary character of Luciente, who is “a voice of an alternate self” (252), and joins her in “time traveling” (302) into the utopian world of an agrarian village in Massachusetts in the year 2137. In Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), the perturbed “time-traveler” (141) Billy Pilgrim sets out on an interplanetary “trip to Tralfamadore” (39), the imaginary planet on

which he finds an alternative and almost Edenic mode of existence. Piercy's novel leaves it undecided whether Connie's visions are the results of her mental disease or meant to be taken literally, and Vonnegut's text "leaves it vexingly open whether it is the narrator 'Kurt Vonnegut' who uses the science-fiction strategy of time-travel to distance his trauma of Dresden or the protagonist Billy Pilgrim who hallucinates a more hospitable fantasy world to escape from the chaotic world around him" (Freese 2009: 326). Both fictions depict their protagonists' journeys into madness as "a legitimate response and an effective challenge to the superficial sanity of the social order and the historical process" (Lupack 18), and Piercy's text offers "one of the starkest visions of madness as a preferable alternative to reality by using literary utopian exploration" (Baker et al. 47f.).

Besides drug-induced trips into the imaginary world of hallucinations and desperate journeys into the beckoning realm of insanity, contemporary American fiction offers the first examples of a third variant of the escape journey into alternative worlds, namely, TRAVELS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE INTERNET. These vicarious journeys begin to replace real ones in Dave Eggers' bestselling dystopia *The Circle* (2013), in which a powerful company "subsume[s] Facebook, Twitter, Google" (23) and creates a completely transparent world in which "All That Happens Must Be Known" (67), "Secrets Are Lies" (298), and "Privacy Is Theft" (303). But instead of bringing about the promised freedom and equality, these developments turn life into "a totalitarian nightmare" (481). The notion of internet traveling becomes central in Thomas Pynchon's latest novel, *Bleeding Edge* (2013), whose title is borrowed from "what's known as bleeding-edge technology" (78). In the paranoid New York of 9/11, Maxine Tarnow, a hard-boiled fraud investigator and caring mother of two precocious boys, tries to unravel the financial and political mysteries surrounding a suspicious computer-security firm that is owned by a shady survivor of the dotcom crisis who tries to get hold of the valuable source code for a second-life website called DeepArcher – "like 'departure'" (36). DeepArcher is "not a shooter, so far anyway, there's no story line, no details about the destination, no manual to read, no cheat list" (403), and its alternative realm is not a place but "it's a journey" (37; see 404) to be undertaken by the user's "avatar" (69). Its limitless digital realm with the "vast undefined anarchism of cyberspace" (327), in which "we cannot be gamers, we must be travelers" (373), provides Maxine with a means of escape and invites her to "wander" (357; see 426) and to "travel" (75; 355): During her imaginary journeys, she is "interested not so much in where she might get to than the texture of the search itself"