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**AMERICA, OFTEN ONLY A PLACE IN THE MIND (A CLOSE
ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST CHAPTER OF RICHARD BRAUTIGAN'S
'NOVEL' TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA)**

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Abstract. This article focusses on a close reading of the first chapter of Richard Brautigan's iconic 'novel' *Trout Fishing in America*. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the thematic peculiarities of the novel. In fact, Richard Brautigan avoided the term 'novel', but only used the word 'book' because there is neither a conventional beginning nor a convincing ending or a coherent plot in *Trout Fishing in America*. By analyzing the first chapter of the book in detail, it can be shown that the prevailing topic of the book is an analysis of various influences which lead to the construction of 'America which is so often only a place in the mind'. Brautigan's rebellion against traditional storytelling adapts many characteristics of early postmodern literature in the 1960es. Discussing the first chapter of *Trout Fishing in America* in the modern foreign language classroom may make students acquainted with the following important topics: the illusion of the American Dream, the influence of historical myths and of popular culture (cartoons and films) on the perception of America, an introduction into postmodern literature and theories of the novel. The article employs a literary textual analysis approach, drawing on elements of postmodernist and cultural criticism.

The theoretical significance of the article is determined by its contribution to scientific research on the problems of text semantics and its interpretation. The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that the analysis can be used in teaching English as a foreign language.

Keywords: American myths, American literature in the 1960s, American culture, rebellion against realistic storytelling, early postmodernism, illusion, hypocrisy, foreign language classroom

Introduction

First and foremost, this article intends to provide future teachers with the analysis on one of the most fascinating books written in early postmodern literature, Richard Brautigan's text *Trout Fishing in America* which can be used during foreign language lessons.

As Brautigan's style is rather easy to read and, in fact, often very funny, students, even if their command of English is not yet perfect, should really feel attracted to reading this rather short chapter, which is so different from the normal

introduction into a novel. They may even become interested in reading the entire book, a book which is not really what might be defined as a novel, but rather a number of many short fragmentary chapters, most of which are only about two pages long. Brautigan did not use the term 'novel' for his book, but just called it a 'book' because he obviously played with different forms and rebelled against the structure of a conventional realistic novel. And these chapters highlight totally different aspects of life in America. Trout fishing is definitely not the central topic of the book, or, if at all, in a metaphorical way. The narrator's quest for places where he could fulfil his wish to 'fish good trout' may give the text some structure, But the dominant theme which pervades the entire novel is the idea that the reality of urban America tends to be more and more rigid, lifeless, immobile, whereas the reality of nature is 'fluid', water flows, fish swim in water. Brautigan, who loved discussing ancient Greek philosophy, seems to remember the basic description of life in Heraclitis' philosophy: *Panta rhei*, or anything flows. Everything is in a flow, there are no strict limits and definitions, Brautigan was not interested at all in writing a 'normal' realistic novel, but his writing wants to express the idea of a constant flow where nothing is limited by definitions.

As references to the history of American literature (e.g. Ernest Hemingway, Herman Melville or Jack Kerouac) and American history (e.g. representatives of the American dream like Benjamin Franklin) pervade the entire text, certain chapters may be used to introduce into characteristic aspects of the American culture.

Trout Fishing in America is available in a paperback edition, but also as an audio book or in a Kindle edition. It may even be downloaded from certain websites.

Materials and methods

Based on detailed textual analysis the article concentrates on the first chapter of Richard Brautigan's book *Trout Fishing in America*. The analysis is based on the discussion of manifold subjects, among others a confrontation between America in pre-industrial times and the commercialized America of the mid-twentieth century, or the role of American myths in present-day America. It may also give deep insights into the process of creative writing and into a postmodern, playful, ironic approach to storytelling.

Results and discussion

The first chapter of *Trout Fishing in America* is about a photograph which serves as the cover for the novel. In this snapshot, Richard Brautigan himself, the author of the novel, is standing in front of a statue, and a young lady is sitting on a stool next to him. In his afterword to the 2014 edition of *Trout Fishing in America*, Billy Collins, who also lived in San Francisco in the late sixties and knew Brautigan well,

America, often only a place in the mind (a close analysis of the first chapter ... describes Brautigan, as he is shown in the photo as “a very tall fellow who combines hippie dress ... with 19th century pioneer clothes, including a waistcoat and boots, all topped by an enormous, beat up Western hat... he was thought of as a rather mysterious figure” [1, p. 116]. This combination between past and present, between 19th century rural America and the urban hippie culture of the 1960es, will become one of the most striking features of the novel, which seems to oscillate between glimpses at the beauty of the American nature in the past and a very critical view on the American present.



Picture 1 – The cover for *Trout Fishing in America* by Richard Brautigan

The young lady’s name is Michaela le Grand. She also seems to have been a rather mysterious person. Billy Collins remembers that it “was said that she had made a vow not to speak for an entire year. One afternoon I lingered in an apartment with her and a few others and got to witness a paltry few hours of her deep commitment to silence” [2, p. 116]. Her decision to abstain from the use of language for a longer period of time may be the reason why Brautigan wanted her to be present on the cover of his novel, which on the one hand plays with language all the time, but is also very critical of the use of language in 20th century America.

As readers, we may expect to learn more about these two characters in a chapter whose title, “The Cover for Trout Fishing in America”, focuses on this snapshot. Both of them are looking at the reader, the young lady is even smiling. In the first chapter of a realistic novel, this interesting-looking couple may have been described in more detail, their relationship may have been analyzed, their past may have been narrated, thus introducing into a new action. But this expectation is not fulfilled. In fact, there is no mention at all of these two people in the entire first chapter.

Benjamin Franklin and George Washington

Instead, the first chapter starts with the sentence: “The cover for Trout Fishing in America is a photograph taken in the afternoon, a photograph of the Benjamin Franklin statue in San Francisco’s Washington Square” [2, p.1]. So, the novel does not start with the illusion of a real situation, but with a rather superficial tourist photo of a popular place in the North Beach area of San Francisco. ‘Real America’ is obviously not the point of interest, but certain iconic characters dominating the history of America, characters representing the idea of America ‘which exists so often only in the mind’. In a later chapter, called The Surgeon, the narrator meets a surgeon who is rather confused because he realized that he doesn’t understand this country which is “often only a country in the mind” [2, p.72].

Benjamin Franklin and George Washington are two of the Founding Fathers who were of paramount importance in the development of America as a modern democratic state. In addition, Benjamin Franklin is the perfect incarnation of the American self-made man, the American Dream. He was, among others, a writer, a statesman, a scientist, a political philosopher, and his autobiography became world famous. The third iconic name in the first sentence, the name of the city, refers to St. Francis, the Catholic saint, who was able to speak with animals and represents a close relationship with nature, which made him a popular saint in the green movement of the 1960s. At first sight, these three names seem to set a very positive mood. But it must never be forgotten, *Trout Fishing in America* is not a realistic novel about real America, but about a ‘place in the mind’, an imaginary, dreamlike reality, and the contrast between this reality and ‘real’ America.

The Benjamin Franklin Statue Presented by H.D.Cogswell

In fact, the statue really exists. But, like in a fairy tale, the statue starts to speak, and it says ‘in marble’:

PRESENTED BY
H.D.COCSWELL
TO OUR
BOYS AND GIRLS
WHO WILL SOON
TAKE OUR PLACES
AND PASS ON.

It may be interesting to contrast Brautigan with H.D.Cogswell. Brautigan, who is the centre of the snapshot for the cover for TFiA, does not mention his name at all and seems to ‘disappear’ whereas H.D.Cogswell’s name is chiseled on the statue with a clear message to the next generation who should follow his (or Franklin’s) example, thus expressing his hope for a healthy future. Cogswell was a typical self-made man, like Franklin, and he was a very successful dentist who left for California during the gold rush and made enormous amounts of money. He was also a philanthropist who supported schools and always showed his dedication to the young generation. And – as a representative of the temperance movement - he dreamt of making America a healthy country by building fountains which offered cool fresh water in many towns.

“Cogswell’s Franklin fountain was moral and didactic, commemorating Franklin as a historic figure but also a model of upright behavior and self-enterprising in mythic proportions... Though this fountain was not topped with a statue of Cogswell himself, it may still be interpreted as self-representative as Cogswell must have held Franklin’s ideas and values in high esteem” [3, pp.25-26]. And he was perceived, “at least in the press, as narcissistic and too ready to commemorate himself among the ranks of other great men from history” [3, p. 26].

Obviously, Brautigan builds up an ironic contrast between himself and this extremely opinionated and self-important 19th century self made man. Cogswell wants his name to ‘survive’ in stone, he wants his message to survive in the lives of a new generation. In his case, language becomes a ‘fossil’, it is lifeless, boring, hypocritical. In the penultimate chapter of *Trout Fishing in America*, Brautigan points out by quoting a book called *Man in Nature*: “Language does not leave fossils, at least not until it has become written.” [2, p. 111] While writing his book, Brautigan keeps avoiding to use a ‘fossilised’ language. As Marc Chénétier states in his brilliant study of Richard Brautigan’s books: “Brautigan is a writer concerned with defying language’s fixities and points of reference; indeed, I believe all his books are motivated by one central concern and activated by one central dialectic: they are driven by an obsessive interrogation of the fossilization and fixture of language, and by a counter-desire to free it from stultification and paralysis” [4, p. 21].

In the course of the book, Brautigan uses many devices to ‘free’ language. For example, *Trout Fishing in America* is kind of Protean, it can change its roles all the time, it is not only the title, but also a character in the book, a good friend sending letters to the author, whereas as Trout Fishing in America Shorty he turns into an extremely negative character, and there are schoolchildren in the role of Trout Fishing in America terrorists, and in one chapter Trout Fishing in America becomes the corpse of Lord Byron, in another one a hotel or a fishing rod for which Leonardo da Vinci invents a new fishing lure. The narrator even mentions ironically that the identity of Jack the Ripper, the London serial killer of the late 1880es, was never found out because he wore “trout fishing in America as a costume to hide his own appearance from the world” [2, p. 48].

A statue is solid, does not change, does not live, and the same can be said of a snapshot which 'imprisons' a moment in time. And this may be the reason why Brautigan does not mention the two characters of the photograph in the first chapter. He prefers to 'disappear'. The beginning of the first chapter introduces mythical characters from the American past, Washington and Franklin, and mentions a man, Cogswell, who died more than sixty years before the photo was taken and wanted his ideas to live on. And so, these ideas became lifeless fossils. As lifeless as all the objects on a 'normal' tourist photo.

America, a 'Welcoming' Country?

Around the base of the statue "are four words facing the directions of this world, to the east WELCOME, to the west WELCOME, to the north WELCOME, to the south WELCOME." [2, p. 1] Everybody seems to be welcome in America, the 'Land of the free'. But this idea only exists in the America 'which is only a country in the mind', in the mythological self-assessment of America. Towards the end of the first chapter, 'real America', hungry, poor people come to the park to get some sandwiches. Brautigan's emphasis on the word welcome around the basis of the statue may be an ironic allusion to the poem 'The New Colossus', which Emma Lazarus wrote in 1883. In this poem, which was cast onto a bronze plaque and can still be seen inside the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, this statue "Glows world-wide welcome" and 'cries with silent lips':

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, ...
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" [5]

An additional touch of irony can be found in the description of the pedestal "that looks like a house with stone furniture" [2, p. 1]. Only a few lines later, around "five o'clock in the afternoon of my cover for Trout Fishing in America, people gather in the park... and they are hungry" [2, p. 2]. They may get a sandwich, but sometimes there is only a spinach leaf in it. The statue may say welcome to all of them, but they are not really welcome, they will never find 'a seat in the house with stone furniture'.

The Cypress Tree and Adlai Stevenson

Brautigan then mentions a tall cypress tree in the background, almost dark like a room. This is a different kind of 'room', a natural room. Under this tree, Adlai Stevenson spoke in 1956 before a vast crowd of people. In 1952, Adlai Stevenson lost the American presidential election campaign to Eisenhower. In 1956, he lost a second time, once again to Eisenhower. And in 1960, he aspired a third time to become the Democratic candidate, but this time he lost to John F. Kennedy. With Adlai Stevenson, Brautigan introduces another important topic, frustration and failure. The narrator will find the diary of a man called Alonso Hagen later in the novel, who went fishing for seven years without ever catching a

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single trout. It may be even more important that Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate, is used as a contrast to the fossilized myth of successful Americans like Benjamin Franklin or H.D.Cogswell. He represents the reality of America in the twentieth century, the failure of politicians who strive for a fairer society.

The Church and the Tom and Jerry Cartoon



The next object mentioned by the narrator in the first chapter is a tall church, which can hardly be recognized in the background of the photo, but it is described in much detail with its “crosses, steeples, bells and a vast door that looks like a huge mousehole, perhaps from a Tom and Jerry cartoon, and written above the door is ‘Per l’universo’” [2, p.2]. The church is the Ss. Peter and Paul Church, which was founded by Italian immigrants in 1884. The original building was completely destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, the present church was completed in 1924.

The narrator only mentions the words ‘Per l’Universo’, which is written above the main entrance, but in fact, an entire ribbon of words spans the façade of the church:

*La gloria di colui che tutto move
per l’universo penetra, e risplende
in una parte più e meno altrove.*

The glory of Him who moveth everything
Doth penetrate the universe, and shine
In one part more and in another less.

This is a quote of the first three lines of the chapter ‘Paradise’, the third part of Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, the most iconic book of the Italian literature. As Mr Gibbons Cooney, secretary of the parish of Sts. Peter and Paul, informed me, the Italian community wanted to accentuate their Italian heritage by quoting these famous lines. The photograph on the cover for TFiA does not really show these words, but obviously Brautigan wanted to allude to the beginning of Dante’s Paradise at the beginning of his own book, and he wanted to concentrate on the words “per l’universo”. Even if he was not religious himself, he must have been fascinated by the idea expressed in these lines, in which the word ‘God’ is not used, but the expression “He who moveth everything”, a glorious power which may be interpreted as the creative power in nature, which penetrates the entire universe, and which lives in any animate object as well as in beauty and in the work of creative human beings. Thus, it may also have reminded Brautigan of Heraclitus’ *Panta rhei*, anything flows. It is definitely a stark contrast to the ‘paralysis’ of Cogswell’s statue. Brautigan may have expressed the idea that Dante’s *Divina Commedia* reminded the Italian community of the glory of their Christian God as well as of their cultural heritage, the role which art and beauty played in the history of their home country. And the vast door allowed them access to this ‘universe’.

But then, as so often in Brautigan’s book, the perspective changes and “the door looks like a huge mousehole, perhaps from a Tom and Jerry cartoon” [2, p. 2]. This is the perspective of an infantilised American society of the mid-twentieth century, which has been brought up with cartoons. And this is another important topic in *Trout Fishing in America*. The American society does not see reality any longer because it is so much influenced by modern media, by cartoons and films, which either provide the public with beautiful worlds into which they can escape, but also – and above all – with a world of cruelty and crime. Tom and Jerry cartoon films are extremely violent. Both Tom, the cat, and Jerry, the mouse, hurt each other permanently in the most brutal ways, using for example hammers, axes, guns, or poison. Often Tom starts a fight, and Jerry’s methods of retaliation imply decapitation or slicing Tom in half. Brautigan introduces this topic of brutality in the first chapter of his novel. It will dominate many chapters about horror films, crime stories and stories about famous criminals. Among others, Jack the Ripper, the iconic 19th century serial killer, who becomes the protagonist in a chapter entitled “The Mayor of the Twenty-First Century”.

Combining Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, one of the most important examples of the world’s cultural heritage with one of the cartoons of America’s popular culture is, by the way, a typical example of the postmodern interest in mixing high and popular art.

The Poor

After mentioning the Sts Peter and Paul church with its vast door, the narrator turns to the poor people gathering “in the park across the street from the church” [2, p. 2]. They are hungry and, as mentioned above, they are an ironic

contrast to Mr Cogswell's Franklin statue. They show that in 'real' America poor people are not really welcome, and they are not offered a seat in the house with stone furniture. What is even more important: in contrast to the immovable statue, they are alive, they can move when the traffic light turns green. Then they run across the street to the church to get their sandwiches which are wrapped in newspaper. They may be disappointed. But they represent 'real', lively America, and suddenly, there is an I-narrator in the chapter who remembers a friend of his who once "unwrapped his sandwich one afternoon and looked inside to find just a leaf of spinach. That was all" [2, p. 2].

This difference between 'fossilised' American myths on the one hand, like Benjamin Franklin's autobiographical hymn on the self-made man, and Mr Cogswell, the unreflected, opined, prejudiced representative of the American Dream believing in a morally healthy new generation and, on the other hand, the hungry, but lively, often humorous, often weird representatives of real America will be one of the dominating topics of the entire novel.

Kafka

The first chapter ends with an ironic reference to one of Europe's most intellectual authors, Franz Kafka. In fact, Franz Kafka intended to write a novel about America, in which a young European, Karl Rossmann, travels from New York to the west. He is lonely, dependent on help. Kafka had never visited America, but he had devoured travel guides and other books about America, among them probably Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. So, obviously, Kafka's America is only 'a place in his mind'.

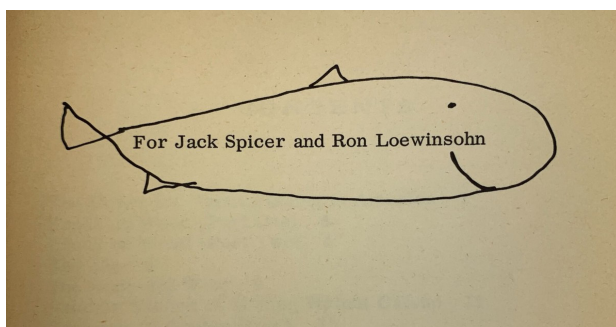
The I-narrator concludes the first chapter with a question: "Was it Kafka who learned about America by reading the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.... Kafka who said, 'I like the Americans because they are healthy and optimistic'" [2, p.2]. Brautigan obviously appreciated Kafka, he even wrote a little surreal poem in which he described an icecream in the shape of Kafka's hat. But the way in which he quotes Kafka's sentence about Americans' healthy optimism leaves no doubt that Brautigan would never accept this sentence as the result of an occupation with 'real America', but with 'fossilised' ideas. The fact that he quotes Kafka's sentence in the form of a question proves that Brautigan is not even convinced that Kafka really believed in this idea of an optimistic, healthy America, the America of Mr Cogswell. This allusion to Kafka is simply ironic.

In fact, Brautigan, whose book *Trout Fishing in America* is a rebellion against any kind of 'fossilisation', of 'normal' interpretations of America, may even find a parallel in Kafka's surreal works in which any attempt to find ultimate conclusions, for example in *The Trial*, is futile because absolute truth does not exist. Kafka wrote a very short text about the myth of Prometheus, the Titan, who was regarded in one ancient myth as the creator of the human being and in another one as the bringer of fire, which he stole from the gods. In both cases, he rebelled against the will of the gods and was punished by them. He was bound to a massive rock and an eagle ate from his liver every day. The last sentences

in Kafka's short parable are: "There remains the inexplicable mass of rock. The legend tries to explain the inexplicable. As it comes out of the substratum of truth, it has in turn to end in the inexplicable" [6]. While reading Brautigan's novel *Trout Fishing in America*, the reader realises that trout fishing is definitely not the topic of the novel. It seems that the narrator travels around America in search of 'real America', but he is always confronted with this America which is only a country in the mind. In the course of his journey, he seems to realise that his quest will always be futile, he will always be confronted with the destruction caused by commercialism. And so he moves to "that realm where all is Great Play and Transformation, the liberations of fantasy once again triumphing over the constrictions of environment" [7, p.415]. In *Trout Fishing in America*, Brautigan tries to explain the inexplicable, the 'real reality' of America. And as he is well aware that this is impossible, his book ends in the inexplicable, or rather, it does not really have a convincing ending.

Melville: *Moby Dick* and Brautigan's *Mayonnaise Jar*

Between the cover of *Trout Fishing in America* and the first chapter of the novel is a page with a charming naïve drawing of a fish:



Richard Brautigan was certainly influenced by the Beat Generation of the fifties and sixties. He knew both Jack Spicer and Ron Loewinsohn well, and Jack Spicer supported him in publishing his book By referring rather ironically to these two authors, Brautigan obviously demonstrates that he was to some extent influenced by the Beat Generation. The protagonists in Jack Kerouac's iconic novel *On the Road* are driving at high speed across America throughout the novel, looking for new experiences and adventure and rejecting Mainstream America. The I-narrator in Brautigan's book also travels across America, but, in contrast to the Beat Generation authors, he is not interested in speed but travels very slowly in search of good fishing grounds.

Of course, the drawing of a fish may be appropriate in a book about trout fishing. However, the fish does not really resemble the shape of a trout, but rather a smiling whale. And so, indeed, it may be regarded, among other things, as an unobtrusive reference to one of the greatest American novels, Melville's *Moby Dick*. In his comprehensive study of the history of American novel writing between 1950 and 1970, *The City of Words*, Tony Tanner mentions a conversation

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with Richard Brautigan in which Brautigan explained that the inscription in a gravestone in his novel was based on a gravestone mentioned in Chapter VII of *Moby Dick* [7, p. 414]. Ishmael, a character in *Moby Dick*, reads the following marker on a gravestone:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY
OF
JOHN TALBOT
Who, at the age of eighteen, was lost overboard,
Near the Isle of Desolation, off Patagonia,
November 1st, 1836
THIS TABLET
Is erected to his Memory
BY HIS SISTER

Brautigan obviously refers to this in the chapter “Trout Fishing on the Bevel”, where the narrator reads the markers of poor people on a desolate graveyard and quotes one of them:

Sacred
To the Memory
of
John Talbot
Who at the Age of Eighteen
Had His Ass Sot Off
In a Honky-Tonk
November 1, 1936
This Mayonnaise Jar
With Wilted Flowers In It
Was Left Here Six Months Ago
By His Sister
Who Is In The Crazy Place Now.

This is obviously a reference to Melville’s *Moby Dick*, in which a young 18-year-old sailor died in the 19th century, ‘lost’ near the ‘Isle of Desolation’, on a 1st November, All Saints’ Day, when relatives and friends remember and honour the deceased. Similarly, young people die in the 20th century in America, in the brutal world of a honky tonk, which may also, in a way, be regarded as an ‘Isle of Desolation’. The entire imagery in which Brautigan describes this scene intensifies the experience of loss, of futility, poverty and despair. John Talbot’s sister will never be able to commemorate him again or put fresh flowers into the mayonnaise jar because she is mad and ‘in the crazy place’ now, and there is nobody, neither a friend nor a relative, to remember and honour the deceased.

To come back to the seemingly naïve painting of the whale. This whale seems to be smiling. And this smile seems to be an excellent introduction into the novel. Brautigan's novel is full of irony, it criticises America, the American Dream, which is based on the destruction of nature in a totally commercialised world, but at the same time the book expresses an enormous interest in a fantastic, totally imaginary world in which everything is 'fluid'. And right at the end of the novel, Brautigan refers to the sister's mayonnaise jar again. In the last sentence of the penultimate chapter, which is, as already mentioned, about the fossilisation of language, the narrator – or rather Brautigan himself – writes: "Expressing a human need, I always wanted to write a book that ended with the word Mayonnaise" [2, p.111]. In the final chapter he fulfils his own wish by writing the following postscript to a letter of condolence: "P.S. Sorry I forgot to give you the mayonaise" [2, p.112]. So, Brautigan 'concludes' his novel with a mistake, the very last word of his text, the word 'mayonaise' is misspelt, the second 'n' is missing. We all, as readers, know another 'human need', we want the book to have an ending, if possible a happy ending, but above all, an ending in which our questions are answered, in which the world is no longer a riddle, but explained. Brautigan rebels against this desire by 'concluding' his book with a mistake. To say it in Kafka's words: Brautigan wants his book to "end in the inexplicable". And he does it in a very ironic way, he seems to be writing the entire book with his tongue in his cheek, smiling, just like the whale in the seemingly naïve picture at the beginning of the book.

The first chapter of Brautigan's text does not fulfil the readers' normal expectations, it does not really introduce into a plot. And neither does the ending come up to our normal expectations. In this context, the ending – or rather the rejection of an ending - in Brautigan's 'novel' *A Confederate General from Big Sur* is particularly interesting. The I-narrator starts five very short 'endings' of the book with the sentence: "A seagull flew over us" [7, p.115]. In the fifth 'ending', he ran his hand along the beautiful soft white feathers of the seagull until the seagull slipped off his fingers into the sky. "Then there are more and more endings: the sixth, the 53rd, the 131st, the 9,435th ending, endings going faster and faster, more and more endings, faster and faster until this book is having 186,000 endings per second" [7, p.116]. Just like the seagull disappearing into the sky like a beautiful vision, the book avoids any kind of final ending, it simply seems to dissolve into a beautiful idea to become 'another place in the mind'.

Postmodernism

I mentioned right at the beginning that *Trout Fishing in America* is a typical early postmodern novel. While discussing the first chapter in detail, students may become acquainted with some of the characteristics of postmodern literature without being confronted with the often overloaded theories of postmodernism. It may suffice to focus their attention to the following points:

- Brautigan does not believe any longer in the possibility to represent 'the real'. Instead, he 'deconstructs' an 'America which so often only exists in the mind'.

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- Brautigan develops skepticism towards the generally accepted explanations and interpretations of life in America.

- As an author, he rebels against even the most accepted rules of novel writing.

- He plays with literary allusions and refers to a great number of both masterpieces of American literature and items of popular American culture, such as cartoons and popular films.

- His skepticism is often mixed with biting irony.

Instead of devoting too much time to discussing the theory (or rather: theories) of postmodernism, trying to understand Brautigan's very special, often surprising, sometimes despairing and sometimes even hilarious way of writing by concentrating on a close reading of the first chapter of his best-known book may help students to understand some of the basic ideas of postmodernism. The insights gained by working with a concrete example may be at least as valuable as studying the often extremely complex and sometimes not very convincing theories of postmodernism. Brautigan wrote a postmodern novel before the concept of postmodernism became one of the most important terms in philosophy and social sciences.

Conclusion

If the text is used in the modern foreign language classroom, it allows many different approaches. Students may be asked to find information about the various characters mentioned in the first chapter, e.g. Benjamin Franklin (and other Founding Fathers) and about some of the authors who influenced Brautigan. They may then inform the entire class about their findings. They may also speak about their own experiences as readers, e.g. by comparing the beginnings and endings of novels they know. Another interesting topic might be discussing the influence of cartoons, Hollywood films and other aspects of popular culture on the 'construction' of the idea of America. In addition, a lesson on this chapter may conjure up the rebellious spirit of the 1960s, be it by criticizing traditional values and ideas or by introducing into a playful, ironic, rebellious new way of writing.

In this context, it may also be mentioned that H.D. Cogswell's statue exemplifies the role of hypocrisy in the history of America, in particular in the idea which has dominated the self-assessment of White America ever since the Pilgrim Fathers landed in Cape Cod in 1620. Was America really a 'land of the free' welcoming people from all over the world and providing them with all they needed to be able to pursue their happiness?

After reading the first chapter of Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, many relevant topics may be discussed in the foreign language classroom. Studying literature may be used to develop a better understanding of the history of another culture, for example the difference between the rural American past of the 19th century and the entirely commercialised world of present-time America. Topics like the American dream may be approached critically.

Furthermore, it could be the beginning of a more in-depth discussion on literature, for example the structure of epic literature, the importance of a beginning and an ending and a plot. And reasons why Brautigan rejects the traditional form of a novel. It may also help to understand in more detail what postmodernism means.

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АМЕРИКА, КӨБІНЕСЕ ТЕК САНАДА ҒАНА БАР ОРЫН (РИЧАРД БРОУТИГАННЫҢ «TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA» АТТЫ «РОМАНЫНЫҢ» БІРІНШІ ТАРАУЫНА МҰҚИЯТ ТАЛДАУ)

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Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала Ричард Броутиганның әйгілі «Trout Fishing in America» («Америкадағы форель аулау») атты «романының» бірінші тарауын мұқият талдауға арналған. Мақаланың мақсаты – шығарманың тақырыптық ерекшеліктерін көрсету. Шын мәнінде, Ричард Броутиган бұл шығарманы «роман» деп атамаған, тек «кітап» деген сөзді қолданған, себебі Trout Fishing in America-да дәстүрлі бастау да, нанымды аяқталу да, сондай-ақ үйлесімді сюжет те жоқ. Бірінші тарауды жан-жақты талдай отырып, кітаптың негізгі тақырыбы – «көбіне тек ойда ғана болатын Америка» бейнесін қалыптастыратын түрлі ықпалдарды саралау екені көрсетіледі. Броутиганның дәстүрлі әңгімелеу тәсіліне қарсы шығуы 1960 жылдардағы ерте постмодернистік әдебиетінің сипаттарын айқын көрсетеді. «Trout Fishing in America» шығармасының бірінші тарауын заманауи шет тілдер

сабақтарында талқылау студенттерді келесі маңызды тақырыптармен таныстыруға мүмкіндік береді: Америкалық арман иллюзиясы; тарихи мифтер мен бұқаралық мәдениеттің (мультфильмдер мен киноның) Америка туралы қабылдауға ықпалы; постмодернистік әдебиетке және роман теорияларына кіріспе. Мақала әдеби мәтінді талдау әдісін қолдана отырып, постмодернистік және мәдени сын элементтеріне сүйенеді.

Мақаланың теориялық маңыздылығы мәтін семантикасы мен оның интерпретациясы мәселелерін ғылыми тұрғыдан зерттеуге қосқан үлесімен айқындалады. Зерттеудің практикалық мәні ұсынылған талдауды ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытуда қолдану мүмкіндігімен байланысты.

Тірек сөздер: америкалық мифтер, 1960-жылдардағы америкалық әдебиет, америкалық мәдениет, реалистік баяндауға қарсы бүлік, ерте постмодернизм, иллюзия, екіжүзділік, шет тілін оқыту

АМЕРИКА, НЕРЕДКО СУЩЕСТВУЮЩАЯ ЛИШЬ В СОЗНАНИИ (ДЕТАЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ПЕРВОЙ ГЛАВЫ «РОМАНА» РИЧАРДА БРОТИГАНА «TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA»)

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена детальному анализу первой главы культового «романа» Ричарда Бротигана «Ловля Форели в Америке». Цель статьи – продемонстрировать тематические особенности в романе. Бротиган, впрочем, избегал употребления термина «роман», предпочитая слово «книга», поскольку в «Ловля Форели в Америке» отсутствуют как традиционное начало, так и убедительный финал, равно как и связный сюжет. Показано, что уже в первой главе выявляется основной тематический фокус книги — анализ множества факторов, формирующих образ Америки как пространства, которое зачастую существует лишь в воображении. Попытка Бротигана противостоять традиционному нарративу демонстрирует многие черты раннего постмодернизма 1960-х годов. Рассмотрение первой главы «Ловля Форели в Америке» в аудитории при обучении иностранному языку может способствовать знакомству студентов со следующими ключевыми темами: иллюзия Американской мечты; влияние исторических мифов и массовой культуры (мультфильмов и кино) на восприятие Америки; введение в постмодернистскую литературу и теории романа. Методологически статья опирается на литературоведческий текстовый анализ, соединяющий элементы постмодернистской и культурной критики.

Теоретическая значимость статьи определяется её вкладом в научное изучение проблем семантики текста и его интерпретации. Практическая значимость исследования состоит в возможности использования предложенного анализа в преподавании английского языка как иностранного.

Ключевые слова: американские мифы, американская литература 1960-х, американская культура, бунт против реалистического повествования, ранний постмодернизм, иллюзия, лицемерие, обучение иностранным языкам

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